THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN
AND NORTHERN IRELAND

GENERAL STATEMENT

By

Ambassador Joanne Adamson

UK Head of Delegation
to the
67 UNGA First Committee

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Please check against delivery
Thank you Mr Chairman,

At the outset allow me to align my delegation to the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union on Monday 8th October.

Mr Chairman,

The UNGA First Committee is often cited as a chance to take stock against developments across the disarmament and international security agenda. Whilst this is certainly the case, it is more than that; it is an opportunity for progress. This sixty-seventh session of UNGA First Committee will cover issues which represent the most significant challenges to international peace and security facing the world today. If we are to hope to see tangible progress across this range of issues, we must all be prepared to work together on a balanced, realistic approach to multilateral arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation.

Mr. Chairman,

The UK plays a leading role across a range of disarmament and related international security issues that are the subject of our deliberations here in New York. If I may, I would like to give a few examples of the work we have been doing in the last year.

On nuclear disarmament, we have built upon the significant reductions announced in our 2010 Strategic Defence and Security Review with a number of additional important disarmament steps. We co-hosted with Norway a workshop with non-nuclear weapon states to share information from the groundbreaking collaborative work we have conducted together so far on the verification of nuclear warhead dismantlement. Earlier this year, the UK hosted the first ever meeting of the P5 to discuss nuclear disarmament verification, where we shared our lessons from the UK-Norway Initiative and exchanged views on this work. The P5 also met in June at the Washington P5 Conference. This was the third time that policy officials, military staff and nuclear scientists from all five NPT nuclear weapon states have met in this format, following on from the London and Paris conferences, and was a valuable opportunity to discuss taking forward our disarmament and non-proliferation commitments under the 2010 NPT Review Conference Action Plan.

As one of the three states that are co-convenors of the proposed Conference on a Middle East Weapons of Mass Destruction Free Zone, we continue to support the objective of establishing such a zone. We are providing practical and financial support to the appointed facilitator of the Conference, Jaako Laajava, of Finland. The process presents an important opportunity for states of the region to discuss how they could work towards a Middle East Weapons of Mass Destruction Free Zone. Their constructive engagement and agreement will be required to deliver a successful conference.

At the Nuclear Security Summit in March 2012, the UK led a new multinational initiative on nuclear information security, which was supported by 31 countries. Through our contribution to the Global Partnership against weapons and materials of mass destruction, we have delivered improved nuclear and biological security, implementation of UNSCR 1540 and scientist engagement. We will continue to encourage tangible progress against these four priority areas when we assume the presidency of the Global Partnership in 2013.
The United Kingdom is deeply committed to the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention, and the role of the OPCW. By August 2012, 75% of the world's declared stockpile of chemical weapons agent had been verifiably destroyed.

But we cannot be complacent: significant threats remain, and the Convention does not yet have universal reach. As we have seen with Syria, real threats exist. We recall that the use of chemical weapons is prohibited by general international law and by treaties including the 1925 Geneva Protocol, and stress that any use would be unlawful.

The United Kingdom welcomes the outcomes of the 7th Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention Review Conference in December 2011 and the goals set for the 2012-2015 intersessional process. One key area for us under cooperation and assistance relates to biosafety and biosecurity capabilities. The challenge now is how to implement appropriate solutions around the world. This will require international leadership and coordination as well as local engagement.

Mr Chairman,

The work to prevent and eradicate the illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons remains a vital component of the global effort to tackle the problems caused by the poorly controlled proliferation of conventional arms. We welcome the successful outcome of this year’s review of the UN Programme of Action. In partnership with many of the member states we have already heard from, the United Kingdom worked hard on long list of possible improvements that could strengthen the Programme of Action. Whilst we couldn't achieve everything we might have hoped for, we were delighted that the conference achieved a positive result that will move us a number of steps forward. In particular:

- The recognition that small arms and light weapons can be used to undermine human rights laws
- The improvements to the implementation of the International Tracing Instrument to promote international cooperation in marking and tracing illicit SALW; and
- The creation of a voluntary sponsorship fund to provide assistance to States on SALW issues

I’d like to add my voice to those that have thanked our excellent Chair, Joy Ogwu, who led us through the review process by building consensus on this most important issue through an open and inclusive style of work. Thanks are also due to the NGO community who have worked on this issue for eleven years. Our work is far from over and we hope that the partnerships between governments, civil society and industry continue to flourish as we implement the results of the review conference.

Mr Chairman,

We shared the disappointment of many states that we were unable to adopt an Arms Trade Treaty at the end of the Conference in July. We said then that although disappointed we remained determined. Since then the international community has had time to reflect on the outcome of the Conference.
I want to make absolutely clear that the Conference did not end in failure. To say it did ignores the huge progress that has been made towards our ultimate aim of a high standard and well supported ATT. Crucially, the appetite to finish our work remains undiminished, and there is a strong sense that agreement on the Treaty is close.

And we have not sat idly since July. Extensive consultations amongst ATT supporters have taken place, to try and identify the most effective way of finalising work on the Treaty and ensuring the continued participation of the entire UN Membership in that work. For the ATT’s strength will not only be found in the effectiveness of its provisions, but also in the breath of support that it secures.

The overwhelming view of the states that we have spoken to is that a further short conference should be convened as early as possible in 2013. And the conference should operate under the same rules of procedure as July; as its objective will be to finalise the work of that conference. Our intention should be clear in that respect; to secure agreement on a robust and effective ATT during this UN General Assembly session.

To this end the Co-Authors will submit a Resolution setting the timing for a short, final, consensus-based conference to finalise work on the Treaty. At the end of July, some states asked for some more time to consider the President’s draft text, and it is only right that we give them that time, and the conference will provide the platform from which to conclude our work.

To achieve this, we must build on the progress already made and the President’s draft Treaty text has given us a solid base from which to work. The text is strong and with a small amount of additional work we can make it more coherent and more effective.

Our work on the ATT should finish in the same manner that it began, as part of an inclusive UN process. In this way it can find the broad support the Treaty needs to be effective. In this way, we can make a positive impact to millions of lives.