Statement by
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At the 1st Committee, Thematic Debate on Conventional Weapons

New York, 23rd October 2012
Mr Chairman,

Denmark aligns itself with the comprehensive statement made by the European Union at the beginning of this cluster’s debate and I will therefore be brief with a few additional remarks from our national perspective.

I take the floor in this thematic debate to underline Denmark’s strong focus on conventional weapons control, regulation, transparency and disarmament. This is an area where millions of civilians suffer every day from the consequences of insufficient international regulation and insufficient action to combat illicit trade of conventional arms. We are talking about tangible consequences in the form of missed social, political and economic development; of humanitarian assistance not reaching its destination; and devastating internecine violence and conflict.

In many respects Small Arms and Light Weapons are the real weapons of mass destruction as they are the weapons that kill and maim by far most people around the world, while at the same time destabilizing districts, countries and whole regions. The causes of violence and conflict, including gender-based violence, are many. But the all too easy access to illegal and unregulated arms trade as well as diversion and corruption are certainly among them. And here we can collectively do a difference.
In July a window of rare opportunity opened up to us. We came very close to achieving the global Arms Trade Treaty we need: A solid, clear-cut, comprehensive, universal and legally binding Treaty.

Our job now is to build on the momentum created in July. We are grateful to the President of the Conference, Ambassador Roberto Garcia Moritan, for doing a magnificent job. This work should be continued and it should be based on his draft text of 26th July 2012.

Denmark will work for a treaty that covers all types of conventional weapons, including ammunition, parts and components. It should oblige arms-exporting states to conduct comprehensive risk assessment based on robust transfer criteria that ensure respect for human rights and international humanitarian law. Furthermore, transparency and accountability should be guiding principles in the Treaty and to this end we also need regular and public reporting on authorizations or actual transfers of conventional arms.

Hence, we strongly support the draft resolution presented by the seven co-authors that we co-sponsor and encourage others to do the same. By convening a shorter and final United Nations Conference on the Arms Trade Treaty in March 2013 we can finish the job. From our side we will do our utmost to contribute to a successful conclusion. In Danish we share the English language proverb “Well begun is half done”. This Treaty is far more than half done; it is within reach – let us reach out and grab it.

Thank you, Mr Chairman.