IRELAND

Statement

at the

Sixty-seventh session of the United Nations General Assembly
First Committee
Conventional Weapons

New York, October 2012

Check against delivery
Mr. Chairman,

In taking the floor on behalf of Ireland, I wish to align myself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union.

Recent decades have seen some significant developments in disarmament issues as they relate to conventional weapons. Growing from an increased recognition that the humanitarian consequences of conflict must be addressed in addition to the peace and security considerations in disarmament and arms control, the international community has increasingly sought to implement measures which mitigate impact of conflict in a broader sense than before.

The Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons was an important step in recognising and attempting to limit use of certain types of weapon because of their humanitarian impact. Now, almost forty years after its entry into force and with five Protocols, it remains relevant. Ireland joins others in encouraging all States to join the Convention and all of its Protocols.

Indeed, its ongoing relevance is reflected in the establishment by last year’s Review Conference of an open ended meeting of experts to examine the application of International Humanitarian Law to Mines Other than Anti Personnel Mines. The three day meeting in Geneva in April this year provided an invaluable opportunity for experts to exchange views on the issue of MOTAPM and we hope that this year’s meeting of High Contracting Parties will build upon that exchange and provide an opportunity in 2013 to again examine this issue in greater detail.

Mr. Chairman,

2012 marks the twentieth anniversary of the foundation of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, the ICBL. Within five years of the ICBL’s foundation, a Treaty was signed in Ottawa to which 160 States are now Party. Ireland remains convinced of both the value of this Treaty and the importance of securing further adherence to it. We fully support its comprehensive implementation and the goal of expanding its membership.

We are also strongly committed to the Convention on Cluster Munitions, and proud of the role we played in bringing it into existence. We are especially pleased that less than four years after it was opened for signature 77 States have become Parties to the Convention, and we look forward to further ratifications and accessions over the coming year. Ireland is deeply committed to taking forward the implementation of the Convention, and in our current capacity as joint coordinator on clearance and risk reduction, along with the Lao PDR, we will be developing and presenting ideas which will help States to speed up their efforts to end the suffering caused by these deadly weapons.
Mr. Chairman,

Ireland urges all states to refrain from using cluster munitions; in doing this, we are part of an increasing global consensus. We are concerned at recent reports of the use of cluster munitions in Syria and urge the Syrian authorities to refrain from all use of cluster munitions, bearing in mind their severe impact on civilian populations.

Mr. Chairman,

It had been Ireland’s hope that agreement could be reached this year on a robust treaty with universal application to regulate the global trade in conventional arms, one that would set the highest possible international standards, and which would take full account of human rights obligations and international humanitarian law.

Like many others, we were therefore greatly disappointed that it was not possible to conclude an Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) earlier this year. We are nonetheless encouraged that so much progress was made under the deft and assured chairmanship of Ambassador Moritán.

Securing an ATT with the widest possible scope remains a major foreign policy priority for Ireland. We are determined to maintain the momentum generated in July and are also strongly of the view that the draft he produced as President on 26 July must form the basis for continued work to secure an ATT. We therefore support the proposal to convene a final conference next March to conclude our unfinished business. We urge others to support and, if possible, co-sponsor the draft Resolution which has been tabled by the ATT’s seven co-authors under agenda item 95 (b).

At the same time, we must recognise that the draft is far from perfect. For instance, we consider that the draft provisions in relation to ammunition and other munitions represent a minimalist treatment of the issues, and we would certainly like to see them brought fully within the scope section of the Treaty. We consider also that the treaty should address the question of military explosives.

Let us also be quite clear that the talks cannot be allowed to continue indefinitely without result. We are in agreement with many other states and civil society groups in this respect. While Ireland sees considerable value in the principle of consensus, we must be prepared to consider other options if consensus cannot be achieved in March to ensure that this critically important new instrument can be adopted without further delay. We cannot allow the continuation of the present situation, where an inadequately regulated arms market causes untold misery for millions of vulnerable people across the world. The international arms trade must, as a matter of the utmost urgency, be made firmly subject to the most stringent set of rules which we can collectively agree to. While it cannot be the answer to all our concerns, a strong, meaningful and comprehensive ATT is an absolutely essential element in addressing the suffering caused by the arms trade in both its legal and illicit forms.

Ireland also welcomes the adoption of a consensus outcome at the Review Conference on the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons earlier this year. We encourage all states and UN bodies to use the outcome document to its maximum potential to reduce the incidence and impact of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.
Mr. Chairman,

In closing, I would like also to remark on one of the chief characteristics of advances in the disarmament agenda as it relates to conventional weapons: the high degree of cooperation between us, as States, and civil society. Civil society has not only helped to develop understanding and awareness of some key issues, but it has also encouraged us to bring forward new ideas and has undertaken significant tasks at the practical level which have made a direct impact on the lives of millions of people. It is a model of cooperation which we believe still holds much potential and we look forward to further developing that potential.

Thank you.