67th SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY
FIRST COMMITTEE

THEMATIC DEBATE: CONVENTIONAL WEAPONS

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Prepared for the record
Mr Chairman

New Zealand welcomes the recent impetus evident toward the adoption of stronger standards and humanitarian outcomes on conventional weapons issues. We are pleased that, for the most part, the need to deal with the human security impacts of these weapons is attracting the urgency it deserves.

We see this most clearly in our work to address the humanitarian impact of the unregulated trade in conventional arms through the negotiations on an Arms Trade Treaty. New Zealand remains wholly committed to adopting an ATT that meets our humanitarian ambitions.

We have been told that the July Conference was not a “failure” because of the “huge progress” it made towards a high standard and well-supported ATT text. And it is certainly true that very many delegations worked hard throughout July towards that objective. Above all, our President, Roberto Garcia Moritan, directed huge talent, diplomatic flair, and patience towards securing this outcome. Our two excellent facilitators, Ambassadors Paul van den IJssel of The Netherlands and Bouchaib El Oumni of Morocco, worked assiduously to the same end. Nonetheless we did not end up with a Treaty. Whether or not everyone calls this a “failure”, there should be no one who could call it a success.

My Government uses a benchmark of ‘what success looks like’ as a tool to evaluate progress in securing the policy outcomes it seeks to achieve. I would like to outline what success would look like, for New Zealand, on the ATT.

Success for my Delegation is the adoption of a Treaty with strong and comprehensive standards - not one with clever loopholes, but instead one that offers a real prospect of contributing meaningfully to global as well as regional peace, security, and stability. A Treaty that we can expect to contribute significantly, over time, to the increased protection of our populations.

Success is not a Treaty that is set at such a low level that it does little except enshrine the status quo. Success is not a Treaty that permits individual countries to choose a different scope, or different standards, as part of their “national implementation” of the Treaty. Nor is success a Treaty that will take 10 years to enter into force because its threshold on this has been set so - unusually - high.

Instead, New Zealand and its fellow members of the Pacific Islands Forum - in a common position adopted in June this year - call for the conclusion of an ATT which is broad in scope, and capable of comprehensively covering the full range of conventional weapons which are traded on the international market including small arms and light weapons as well as ammunition. Members of our Forum do not support proposals that arms for civilian use - such as sporting and hunting firearms - should be excluded from the scope of the Treaty.

But we do believe that travel across international borders with personally-owned weapons, for a limited period of time in order to take part in sporting competitions or other legitimate recreational activities - with no intention of selling them and every intention of returning back home with them - should not be affected by the terms of the Treaty.
Mr Chairman, I have outlined what success will look like for New Zealand. I am confident that there are many, many, other governments here for whom success looks very similar.

I am sure we will all be working together next year to strengthen the text which was on the table at the end of the July Conference. Some substantive drafting changes – combined with the legal scrub which should be carried out during the concluding Conference by a Drafting Committee – will make us all much more confident about the ATT’s ultimate success in preventing irresponsible arms transfers and forestalling their diversion to the illicit trade.

The outcome agreed at the recent Review Conference of the *UN Programme of Action (PoA) on Small Arms and Light Weapons* gives us now a solid platform for taking forward implementation of the PoA in the coming years.

New Zealand was pleased at the RevCon’s agreement on a clear schedule of meetings, on new modalities to facilitate donor support, and on steps for further consideration of the implications of recent trends in weapons manufacture and design. We also commend the practical steps agreed on priority issues - such as border controls and stockpile management - and on the importance of considering new and emerging issues.

The PoA urgently needed a strong reaffirmation and a clearer sense of direction. We congratulate the RevCon’s Chair, Ambassador Ogwu of Nigeria, and her four excellent facilitators for their role in achieving this. The challenge will now be to translate this into practical and effective action with a real humanitarian impact. In this regard my Delegation emphasises the need to sharpen our monitoring and assessment of both implementation as well as international assistance, and to enhance coordination with other related international processes, including that around our future ATT.

We are heartened by the significant strides that have been made both in terms of the universalisation and also the implementation of the *Convention on Cluster Munitions*. Only four years after it opened for signature, the Convention now has 77 States parties working to meet the full range of their obligations under the Convention. Excellent results are being achieved: States parties are well on their way to meeting their clearance and stockpile destruction obligations, and improvements are being made to the support structures provided to victims. This is good news.

New Zealand is pleased to have continued its leadership role in the CCM as Co-ordinator for National Implementation Measures. We stand ready to assist all States parties - as well as prospective parties - to put in place the national legislation needed to give full effect, domestically, to the Convention’s provisions. We look forward to working closely with Zambia, the host of our next Meeting of States parties in 2013, to carry this work forward.

Given the strong norm that is being developed against cluster munitions, Mr Chairman, the alleged use of cluster munitions in any context, including most recently in the Syrian conflict, is of grave concern to New Zealand. There can be no excuse for any use of these weapons. Given their long-lasting impact it is nearly always civilians who suffer most from
them. New Zealand calls on all States to desist from any usage in any context of cluster munitions.

The Oslo experience in banning cluster munitions was inspired by the trail blazed previously by the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, which this year celebrates the 15th anniversary of its adoption. The progress made in clearing landmines, destroying stockpiles, and supporting victims with social and economic reintegration, pursuant to that Convention is another good news story and one to be proud of. Our pride in this achievement is rightly, however, to be shared with civil society who - as so often in areas of humanitarian concern - led the global community along the Ottawa Convention path.

The pioneering approach that led to the Ottawa Convention – like many of the processes noted above – quite rightly had at its core the protection of people, of communities. It is this objective that should continue to inspire and guide us.