Statement by Mr. Suljuk Mustansar Tarar, Counsellor, Permanent Mission of Pakistan to the United Nations, New York at the First Committee Thematic Debate on Conventional Weapons (67th Session of the UNGA)

01 November 2012

Mr. Chairman,

Notwithstanding the mass destruction potential of nuclear weapons and the growing threat to nuclear disarmament efforts, it is the conventional weapons that fuel conflicts, destabilizing states and societies.

Despite the on-going financial, food and fuel crises at the global level, the current world military expenditure is increasing. It now stands at US $ 1.7 trillion; representing close to 3 % of the world GDP. The last ten years have seen a fifty percent increase in the global spending on conventional weapons.

Ironically, the weapons that propel and sustain conflicts come from areas that enjoy peace. Only four countries account for two thirds of global arms exports, while major importers are the developing countries, mostly in the Middle East, Asia and Africa.

Yet another irony is that the total UN budget constitutes a paltry 3% of the world military expenditure. Hence we are spending 33 times more on breeding, exacerbating and maintaining conflict than preventing it.

Mr. Chairman,

The international community has made several efforts to regulate conventional armaments, before, between and after the First and Second World Wars- in Asia, Europe and elsewhere. After 1945 different bodies of the UN have adopted numerous resolutions, guidelines and decisions related to conventional arms. However, given
the complex and intricate nature of conventional arms issues, international as well as regional initiatives to control and regulate these arms have so far been ineffective or only partially successful.

Chief among the reasons for lack of success is the pursuit of a partial approach i.e. the attempt to separate the motivations for arms production from the controls of their trade and transfer. There are other reasons as well i.e. an exclusive focus on managing the effects of trade in arms, without adequately addressing the causes that propel such a trade in the first place and the lack of full implementation of existing regional or national commitments and obligations. The recent breakdown of ATT negotiations also reflects the futility of a partisan approach.

Mr. Chairman,

The history and politics of arms regulation dictate a comprehensive approach which takes into account priorities and security interests of all Member States. It is essential that the pursuit of elimination of nuclear weapons does not give way to the unworkable conventional imbalance that spawned the two World Wars.

The final document of SSOD-I provides clear direction in this regard: “Together with negotiations on nuclear disarmament measures, negotiations should be carried out on the balanced reduction of forces and of conventional armaments, based on the principle of undiminished security of the parties with a view to promoting or enhancing stability at a lower military level, taking into account the need of all states to protect their security”.

Mr. Chairman,

As we commence efforts to reconvene the Conference on the Arms Trade Treaty, it would be vital to address both the supply and demand side of the conventional arms equation. Any treaty which seeks to address only the transfer of arms but not their development, production and deployment will be internationally inequitable against countries which do not produce such armaments. Such a treaty would inevitably be difficult to conclude or implement.
It is, therefore, imperative for any arms trade treaty proposal to strike a correct balance between motivations for production and acquisition of such arms. Even as we address humanitarian concerns, we must also ensure a balance between the legitimate interests of exporters and importers both in terms of principles, scope, implementation and final provisions of the treaty.

An arms trade treaty needs to avoid controversial criteria that can be misused by major producer states for political and strategic interests. It would therefore be essential to incorporate legitimate safeguards against any potential misuse of the proposed criteria. The ATT must not be allowed to add yet another layer of export control cartels, which too often have practised discrimination and double-standards in the area of non-conventional weapons. For all these reasons, we must craft a treaty that is concise, implementable, non-discriminatory and anchored in a strong international consensus.

Mr. Chairman,

Pakistan welcomes the successful outcome of the 2nd Review Conference on Small Arms and Light Weapons. We are pleased with the reiteration of international consensus on the 2001 UN Programme of Action on SALW.

As we move towards inter-sessional work, it is important to stay focused on the implementation of existing commitments. Pakistan supports the full and effective implementation of the PoA. International Assistance and Cooperation are central to the implementation of the PoA. In the absence of meaningful and sincere effort in this regard, full implementation of the PoA will remain elusive.

The Government of Pakistan has taken several measures to promote the implementation of PoA. Last year, we established an Inter-Ministerial Group to address the SALW related issues in an integrated manner. We have filed national implementation reports at regular intervals, outlining the measures that we have taken over the years.

Mr. Chairman,
Pakistan, as a party to the CCW as well as its five Protocols, is fully committed to the faithful implementation of the Convention. The CCW has made significant progress to make this treaty an indispensable element of contemporary humanitarian, disarmament and arms control machinery, as well as to provide a forum to consider how best to protect both civilians and soldiers from the effects of such weapons.

In order to further maximize the positive impact of this Convention and its Protocols, we need to focus on expanding their membership as well as enhancing their implementation. The delicate balance in these instruments – to minimize the human suffering without sacrificing the legitimate security interests of states – must be maintained.

Pakistan recognizes the serious humanitarian consequences stemming from the indiscriminate use of cluster munitions and as such welcomes efforts to mitigate their negative consequences. The CCW in harmonizing the humanitarian concerns with security imperatives provides an ideal platform to deal with this subject. Pakistan therefore supports further efforts on this issue within the CCW framework. While Pakistan has never used cluster munitions it continues to recognize their military utility as legitimate weapons of self defence.

Pakistan has been a State Party to Amended Protocol-II since 1999 and remains committed to its full implementation. We continue to believe that the human suffering resulting from the indiscriminate use of mines, booby traps and other devices can only be minimized if the maximum number of states commits themselves to the successful implementation of the Protocol. The Protocol’s strength lies in the balance it creates between the humanitarian concerns and legitimate security imperatives of States.

Pakistan remains in full compliance with the provisions of the Amended Protocol II. Our Armed Forces have fully incorporated, at all levels, the requirements mandated by the technical annex of Amended Protocol-II. In the spirit of cooperation and assistance, our armed forces, being the largest contributor to UN peace keeping operations, have been successfully undertaking de-mining operations in various parts of the world. We remain committed to providing all assistance that we can, within our national capacity to help global demining efforts.
We note with interest the development of new technologies that have the potential to protect civilians against indiscriminate effects of mines. Such technologies can be of immense benefit in preventing the injurious, indiscriminate and lethal effects of mines. We, therefore, urge the states in possession of such technologies to share their know-how with other states parties in order to help minimize the humanitarian impact of mines, booby-traps and other devices. Indeed the transfer and sharing of technology and experience, within the framework of this Protocol, is an important step towards achieving our common objectives and goals.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.