EU Statement

By
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at the

68th Session of the
UN General Assembly First Committee - 18th Meeting
Thematic discussion on Conventional weapons
(agenda items 89 to 107)

United Nations
New York
28 October 2013

- CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY-
Mr. Chairman,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union.

The Candidate Countries Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, Montenegro*, Iceland+ and Serbia*, the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova, align themselves with this statement.

The EU warmly welcomes the adoption of the landmark Arms Trade Treaty by the UN General Assembly: it is the outcome of a comprehensive and inclusive, seven year-long process within the UN. It is a landmark for the UN: one that was achieved thanks to the tireless efforts of governments, diplomats, NGOs and industry from every corner of the world. The EU had supported the Treaty from the outset by promoting the Treaty's principles through world-wide awareness-raising activities. The Treaty establishes robust and effective common international standards for regulating or improving the regulation of international trade in conventional arms and provides a new multilateral framework for transparency and accountability in that trade. It also helps prevent arms from being transferred irresponsibly and illegally.

We have seen how the illicit and poorly-regulated trade in arms can create instability and exacerbate conflicts, atrocities, and violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. The ATT is the first treaty that addresses these risks at a global level, by establishing clear and legally binding criteria, inter alia with regard to international human rights law and international humanitarian law. It also recognizes the link between gender-based violence and the illicit or poorly-regulated international arms trade.

When effectively and widely implemented, the ATT will contribute to more responsible and transparent international arms transfers and help eradicate illicit trade. By signing and ratifying the Treaty, States can sustain the international momentum generated by the ATT. EU Member States are playing their part: they are all signatories of the Treaty and national ratification procedures are either complete or well under way. Let me use this opportunity to warmly welcome the new signatures (29 alone in the month of September) and ratifications registered so far and to call on all other States who have not yet done so, to become signatories of the Treaty.

For the Treaty to be effective, it needs to be implemented globally and effectively. The EU, for its part, intends to contribute to addressing those challenges including through a new Council Decision expected to be adopted before the end of the year, which will enlarge the EU assistance portfolio by funding inter alia national implementation assistance programmes and regional awareness-raising seminars.

Mr. Chairman,

Twelve years after the adoption of the UN Programme of Action (PoA) on small arms and light weapons (SALW), the EU continues to consider this politically binding international instrument as a key universal tool to respond to the challenges posed by the illicit trade and excessive accumulation of SALW at national, regional, and global levels. The EU is very pleased that the 2012 Review Conference agreed on a substantive Outcome Document, which affirms our renewed commitment to the full and effective implementation of the PoA and provides for concrete measures and steps to achieve this aim. The EU remains convinced that efforts to better

* The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.
+ Iceland continues to be a member of EFTA and the European Economic Area.
control SALW have to be intensified in particular in those areas, where significant obstacles to full implementation persist. We believe that these areas are the issue of diversion of SALW, stockpile management, stockpile security and stockpile destruction, marking and tracing, the integration of ammunition and the gender perspective, as well as the need to better address the humanitarian and socio-economic consequences of the illicit trade in SALW. The potential of technological progress of the last decade to enhance the effective implementation of the PoA should be further explored, too. The EU remains strongly committed to the effective implementation of the International Tracing instrument which is one of the most important achievement of the PoA on SALW, inter alia, by the increased exchange of tracing results and information sharing.

We are looking forward to the first informal consultations in preparation of BMS5 and a focused discussion with the aim to identify priority topics for this meeting. The EU welcomes the recent adoption of UNSC resolution 2117 of 26 September 2013 on small arms and light weapons. This resolution, the first one adopted by UNSC on this topic for five years, takes on board the recommendations of the August 2013 report of the UN Secretary General and allows to take forward the dynamics initiated by the ATT. Six EU member States co-sponsored this resolution.

The EU reiterates its strong support for the UN Register on Conventional Arms. We call upon States to report regularly to this transparency instrument. The EU believes that SALW should constitute a mandatory category of the Register.

Mr. Chairman,

We are proud that all 28 EU Member States are now States Parties to the Anti-Personnel Landmine Convention, demonstrating our collective commitment to the goal of a world free of anti-personnel mines.

Since the last Review Conference in Cartagena, significant progress has been achieved in the implementation of the Convention, but much remains to be done. We are, inter alia, particularly interested in moving ahead in our efforts to effectively address post-demining challenges, ensure long-term support to victim assistance, promote further universalization and donor coordination, as well as in exploring the potentials for further complementarity with other instruments, as applicable. The EU will continue to work in close cooperation with the countries concerned and provide, where possible, assistance to address the significant remaining challenges.

The European Union has supported the organisation of two regional workshops, in Lima, Peru with the participation also of Ecuador and in Dushanbe, Tajikistan. A third workshop will be held in Kinshasa, DRC in November. Our High Level Task Force on Universalisation comprised by HRH Prince Mired of Jordan, HRH Princess Astrid of Belgium and Colombian international celebrity Juanes has already started high level missions to engage with leaders of States not party to the Convention. The European Union also supports the holding of a high level conference on victim assistance which will take place in Medellin, Colombia in April, 2014. In addition to the significant contributions made by its Member States, the EU, in total, has committed more than 47 million Euros to mine action in heavily affected countries and areas in 2012.

We are looking forward to the annual meeting of States Parties and the Review Conference preparatory meeting in December and we stand ready to engage constructively on the road to the Convention's Third Review Conference in Maputo.
Mr. Chairman,

The European Union supports the humanitarian goal of the Convention on Cluster Munitions. In this regard, we are deeply concerned about the reported use of cluster munitions against civilian populations by Government forces in Syria. We call upon the Syrian regime to refrain from the indiscriminate use of cluster munitions.

We took note of the Lusaka Progress Report, monitoring progress and identifying key questions which were addressed by States Parties in Lusaka last September with regard to implementing their commitments.

For the European Union, victim assistance is a core component of mine action and there is also a clear commitment to strengthening care rehabilitation and socio-economic reintegration of victims. We also wish to highlight the strong linkage with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. While recognizing the sovereign right of States to be bound only by the Treaties to which they have acceded to, the European Union supports the development of synergies in the implementation of international humanitarian disarmament instruments, as applicable. The respect for relevant International Law is crucial to ensure the protection of civilians in armed conflicts.

Mr. Chairman,

With a view of strengthening international humanitarian law, the EU remains firmly committed to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) and its Protocols, which is a unique forum to gather diplomatic, legal and military expertise, and to address emerging issues.

The EU is concerned by the alleged use in Syria of incendiary weapons in attacks by military jets against civilian targets which have unacceptable humanitarian consequences.

For the EU, universalization of CCW is an issue of high importance. Unfortunately, the rate of adherence remains slow in Africa, South East Asia and parts of the Middle East. We therefore welcome the accession of Kuwait and Zambia to the Convention and to all its annexed Protocols this year. We further note that many States not yet Party to the CCW are affected by mines and Explosive Remnants of War (ERW). Therefore, universalization of the CCW and all its annexed Protocols should remain a priority objective.

We look forward to the CCW annual meetings in November to further discuss ongoing and future topics and find more effective ways to advance our common objectives.