Statement by

Mr. Breifne O’Reilly
Director for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

at

UNGA68 First Committee

Thematic debate on conventional weapons

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Check against delivery
Mr. Chairman,

Ireland aligns itself fully with the statement delivered by the European Union.

Activity in relation to conventional weapons is extraordinarily dynamic. At any given moment, the international community is debating issues relating to a significant number of weapons types and systems. This is a reflection of the importance of addressing the problems caused by the weapons which are most commonly used in armed conflict and which cause the greatest number of casualties. However, so dynamic and active is the field that it is simply not practical for me to speak in detail about all of the various issues which we are debating within the time allotted for statements, so I will confine myself to comments on a few specific topics of particular importance.

Illicit and irresponsible trade in conventional weapons can have devastating consequences. We share a responsibility to ensure that the trade in arms does not endanger stability or facilitate breaches of international humanitarian law, human rights law or contribute to gender-based violence. For this reason, Ireland joins others in signalling a profound welcome for the conclusion of the Arms Trade Treaty. We encourage all states to sign and ratify the Treaty as quickly as possible, and I congratulate those States which have already ratified it. Ireland’s domestic ratification procedures are at an advanced stage, and we remain committed to completing them rapidly. Over the next year, our attention will undoubtedly turn to ensuring the most effective implementation of the Treaty possible. I am confident that if the same spirit of constructive engagement between states, and between states and civil society, is demonstrated in implementing the Treaty as was evident in its negotiations then we can look forward to a successful period ahead.

I would also like to give a particular welcome to Security Council Resolution 2117 on small arms and light weapons. This will help not only to keep attention on a vital issue but also to focus thoughts in the lead-up to next year’s Biennial Meeting of States under the Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons.

Mr. Chairman,

The same principles which provide the foundation for the Arms Trade Treaty must also be applied to all topics of debate in relation to conventional weapons. Whether with regard to anti-personnel landmines, cluster munitions, transparency measures, the environmental impact of weapons, or the use of incendiary weapons, to name a few, our focus must always be to ensure respect for international humanitarian law and human rights, including the rights of women. These same principles must also apply to weapons which will be developed in the future, such as fully autonomous weapons systems. Constructive engagement and debate is essential to ensure that our actions comply with the principles which underlie the United Nations and international law.

Ireland is committed to taking the conventional weapons agenda forward on that basis, and we look forward to engaging with states and with civil society in all relevant fora.

Thank you.