European Union
Statement by

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Second Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty

Geneva, 22 August 2016

- CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY -
Mr. President,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.

The Candidate Countries Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, Serbia* and Albania* and the Republic of Moldova align themselves with this Statement.

At the outset let me congratulate you on your election as President and assure you of our full cooperation and support in your endeavours.

The Arms Trade Treaty is a robust, balanced and effective instrument. It is the successful result of many years of comprehensive and inclusive negotiations achieved across regional boundaries and supported by a vibrant international momentum by States, civil society and industry. The EU and its Member States, all of 28 are party to the Treaty, have long supported and encouraged the process leading to the Treaty.

As we are now meeting for the Second Conference of States parties, it is our responsibility and shared interest to maintain such international momentum and to further promote the translation of the Treaty into concrete and measurable action on the ground. This is indeed where the nett effect of the Treaty is most expected and needed: to establish the highest possible common international standards for regulating or improving the regulation of the international trade in conventional arms and to prevent and eradicate the illicit trade in conventional arms and prevent their diversion.

Under the very able Chairmanship of Mexico and Ambassador Lomonaco, the First Conference last year in Cancun laid successfully the groundwork for a functioning Treaty. The Secretariat’s structure has been agreed and the priority for this second Conference should be to ensure that the Secretariat becomes fully operational by appointing without delay a Permanent Head and completing staff recruitment. Commendable ownership by and guidance from States Parties has been demonstrated via the Management Committee and the Evaluation Committee.

This Second Conference has now the responsibility to use this groundwork to make actionable decisions and recommendations, notably in order to address the challenges of effective implementation and universalisation. Allow me to briefly elaborate on them.

*The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

On universalisation, regulating international arms transfers is by definition a global ambition. The difference the Treaty can make is therefore impacted by its scale of adherence. Yet a
considerable number of the major arms exporters and importers are not yet party to the ATT. Therefore in deciding our future actions we must bear in mind the requirement to promote universalization to the greatest extent feasible. In this regard, many States on the doorstep of accession or ratification are watching the first developments of the ATT and what the Treaty actually implies in terms of reporting, financial contributions interactions among States parties and interaction with relevant stakeholders. Promoting universalisation may require as appropriate raising awareness, providing clarification and addressing concerns.

Regarding effective implementation, the Treaty clearly specifies that implementation is exclusively a national responsibility within the framework of national control systems that States parties have to establish and maintain. There is no one size fits all approach as systems have to be tailored according to legal traditions and specificities, arms trade profiles and levels of existing and available administrative resources. While implementation is a national competence, it is up to the Conference of States Parties to review the implementation of the Treaty and consider and adopt recommendations regarding the implementation and operation of the Treaty.

However, within this core principle of national implementation, there is undoubtedly room for further exchange of good practices and possibly for the development of common guidelines since the Treaty's core requirement of establishing national arms control systems and national control lists is new to many States. A wealth of good practices and resources already exists. It may be possible to adapt these so as to ensure concrete and effective implementation of the Treaty rather than seeking to duplicate them with new measures.

In support of the effective implementation and universalisation of the Treaty, the EU provides a concrete and significant contribution with its dedicated outreach programme. This programme has so far been active in 16 partner countries across Latin America, the Caribbean, Africa and Asia. This is done in partnership with civil society, NGOs and regional organisations. The EU intends to continue such support in the years to come.

Supporting effective implementation and working towards universalisation is no small task. We therefore need to summon our limited resources in a coordinated manner and it is very welcome that dedicated sessions will address these challenges later on. The EU and its Member States stand ready to contribute to the successful outcome of this Conference and to lend their support to you Mr Chairman for the task ahead.

Thank you.