STATEMENT DELIVERED BY AMBASSADOR JORGE VALERO
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Mr. President,

I avail myself of this opportunity to congratulate you on your election and to wish you the best of success.

Mr. President,

For the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, the establishment of an eventual international instrument to regulate the trade of conventional arms will depend on two fundamental elements:

1. First, there must be a collective agreement on a set of mechanisms of practical implementation available to all States, which in no way threatens the former’s security, sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence.

2. Second, there must be effective safeguards in order to prevent the politicization or manipulation of a possible international instrument, by the largest producers and exporters.

Mr. President,

We live under an oligarchic international system, unable and uninterested in ensuring the safety and security of States and their populations. Each State, therefore, has to exercise its sovereignty to ensure the protection of its people and its borders.

The legitimate defense of political sovereignty and independence, and the maintenance of internal order and stability, as well as the welfare of the population, are the supreme tasks of States. For this, States must have the necessary means to deal with external and internal threats that may arise.

Therefore, we emphatically reaffirm that no potential international instrument may limit the capacity of a sovereign State to produce, import, and transport conventional weapons for the purposes above described.

We must also recognize the sovereign right of States to regulate the transfer of weapons within its territory, in accordance with their respective domestic legal systems.
In this regard, transparency must be promoted, based on parameters that cannot be manipulated for political, commercial or economic reasons.

Mr. President,

Only parameters that have been agreed collectively may be established, and these must be free of ambiguity, measurable and relevant, and able to be implemented by both the exporting and importing States.

We must not leave any room for exporting States to undermine the spirit and intent of an eventual international instrument on conventional arms, on the basis of subjective judgments, and political, commercial and economic interests.

Mr. President,

Some major exporting countries have argued that the trade of arms to less developed States should be suppressed, on the basis that they should focus their investments in areas of development.

First, no country, regardless of how small or poor it may be, can relinquish the defense of its borders and the maintenance of order and security within its jurisdiction. Second, that decision is up to each sovereign State. Third, it must be noted that those countries that call for the prioritization of development are the same ones that condition international finance and assistance to the reduction of the State, the mass dismissal of public employees, including teachers, doctors, nurses and policemen; the reduction or elimination of the social budget; the elimination of agricultural production; and the concentration of capital in few hands. So, it is worth asking: Are the proponents of these criteria really interested in the development of States that have limited resources?

The same duplicity applies to the proposed criteria on human rights and international humanitarian law. It has been clearly demonstrated that the protection of civilians and the so-called responsibility to protect are no more than an excuse for imperial powers to fulfill their interests.

We must remember that, despite the existence of an arms embargo by the Security Council, imperial powers supplied heavy weapons to rebel groups in Libya. The consequences are obvious: the illegal transfer of weapons has endangered the entire region.
Is it not true, as well, that the imperial powers, the largest producers of weapons in the world, use their conventional weapons to violate human rights and international humanitarian law all around the world? But little is said about measures for enabling the control or restriction of the use of conventional weapons by the imperialist powers.

Mr. President,

This potential international instrument must not be transformed by the imperial powers into a tool of control and blackmail.

If these countries were really interested in peace and international security and in the rights of the peoples of the world, they would reduce their production and their arsenals of weapons of mass destruction and of advanced conventional weapons.

Mr. President,

It is unusual that given the importance of this Conference, there is still no negotiating text. A case such as this which convenes us today should have merited greater maturity, debate and understanding between States. This was not the case.

Mr. President,

On the eve of a potential international legal instrument on conventional weapons, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela cannot help but to reaffirm the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations, which enshrine the sovereign equality of States, non-interference in internal affairs of States, and the right to self-defense, including the acquisition of weapons for meeting its legitimate needs of security and defense.

I thank you, Mr. President.