Statement

by

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Deputy Permanent Representative of Pakistan

at the

United Nations Diplomatic Conference
on the Arms Trade Treaty

New York, 9 July 2012
Mr. President,

On behalf of Pakistan delegation, I felicitate you on your well-deserved election to lead this important Diplomatic Conference. I assure you and members of the Bureau of my delegation’s full support and cooperation.

This Conference affords an opportunity to all UN Member States to participate as equal partners in a process that will affect them all. It is an unusual event since it is after several years that we are commencing treaty negotiations. We hope the process would be inclusive, transparent and not characterized by selective multilateralism.

Mr. President,

The international community has made several efforts to regulate conventional armaments, before, between and after the First and Second World Wars and 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. Another factor is 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. Another major reason is the lack of full implementation of existing regional or national commitments and obligations.

Mr. President,

Some of these missteps have unfortunately been visible in the debate and discussions leading up to this Conference. The four PrepComs did help Member States in better understanding the diversity of perspectives, even as they agreed on the negative effects of irresponsible trade and use of some of these weapons on societies and states. However, it is regrettable that the opportunity presented by the PrepComs to harmonize and bridge the divergent views on the approach, principles, scope, and implementation of an ATT could not be utilized fully.

As we move from a deliberative mode to negotiations, we hope that delegates begin in earnest reconciling the diversity of positions to forge consensus. Only a consensual outcome can ensure treaty’s ownership and its effective implementation.

Mr. President,

The history and politics of arms regulation dictate a comprehensive approach which takes into account priorities of all Member States in a non-discriminatory manner.

From Pakistan’s point of view any treaty or agreement that is aimed at regulation of conventional arms must address both the supply and demand side of the 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.
Some Member States have argued that ATT is not about disarmament or arms control. We agree. But neither is a potential ATT a trade or human rights instrument! The constant rise in global military expenditure and the increased trade in conventional arms would arguably necessitate adequate restraints in their production. Similarly, while we must address humanitarian concerns, we should not ignore the interplay of commercial, political and strategic considerations of the major producers in a potential ATT.

It is, therefore, imperative for any arms trade treaty proposal to strike a correct balance between motivations for production and acquisition of such arms. Such a treaty 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 must steer clear of controversial criteria that can be misused by major producer states for political and strategic interests. An 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. President,

A clear determination of the ATT’s scope is essential. However, the Prepcom discussions have not yielded a common approach. Consensus has remained elusive. In our view, clarity is needed on the types of weapons that need to be brought under the scope of the treaty. In doing so, we must address questions of relevance, impact and scale. We must decide as to which category of arms and their diversion from legal to illegal modes accentuates organized crime, facilitates terrorists acts, helps drug trafficking and perpetuates violence.

Trade in the seven categories of conventional arms as defined in the UN Register involves State to State transfers and is subject to established end-user procedures, precluding the possibility of their diversion to illicit channels. We share the majority view that it is the small arms and light weapons that are primarily traded and used illegally in terrorist acts, organized crime, drug trafficking and cause human suffering. We trust that Member States will evolve agreement on this vital aspect of the treaty.

Mr. President,

Let me take this opportunity to share with the Conference the steps that Pakistan has taken at the national level to promote the objectives of responsible arms transfers and control. Last year we established an Inter-Ministerial Policy Group to address, comprehensively, the conventional arms issues, including small arms, in an integrated manner. This Group includes representatives from the concerned Ministries and Departments to examine the legislative, regulatory and enforcement measures with a view to identifying possible gaps and putting in place remedial steps and improvements, where needed.

Among other important initiatives, the Inter-Ministerial Group has adopted policy guidelines on the export of conventional arms thereby strengthening the existing national evaluation
mechanism to regulate trade in these armaments. This Policy Group is in the process of instituting additional measures to augment the enforcement regime in the areas of imports, licencing and private ownership of small arms.

Mr. President,

We look forward to working constructively with other delegations on all these issues in the weeks ahead. We hope all of us can marshal the true spirit of multilateralism which necessitates flexibility, compromise, consensus and a balance of interests of all States.

Such a spirit is not without precedent within the UN context. The unanimous adoption of UNDC guidelines on international arms transfers, the successful conclusion of UN Programme of Action on Small Arms and the UN Fire Arms Protocol, along with voluntary transparency mechanisms of UN Arms Register and the UN Report on military expenditures, together represent a firm foundation for the structure of an Arms Trade Treaty.

I thank you Mr. President.