STATEMENT BY H.E. M. WERNER BAUWENS, HEAD OF THE BELGIAN DELEGATION TO THE ARMS TRADE TREATY PREPARATORY COMMITTEE

New York, February 14th 2012

Mr. Chairman,

I am very pleased to see you, Ambassador Moritan, again in the chair of our meetings.

I fully align myself with the intervention made by the European Union.

This week’s session concludes the preparatory process leading up to the Diplomatic Conference in July.

At previous sessions we have been able to introduce, explain and clarify our respective positions on what each of us believes would constitute a strong and robust Arms trade Treaty, as called for in the relevant resolution of the UN General Assembly. I welcome the very outspoken support from the wide UN membership for achieving the goals and objectives of this resolution and I hope that this illustrates our joint commitment to make this enterprise succeed within the fixed timeframe.

The Chairman’s Draft Paper of July 14th 2011, circulated at the end of the previous session of the Preparatory Committee, is a most valuable tool for our negotiations in July. We should in the interval prepare ourselves to turn into concrete treaty language the elements we have addressed during our deliberations.

This session must prepare the procedures and organizational matters to guide us throughout the Diplomatic Conference. I welcome the fact that we have been able to already agree on the agenda and various organizational matters, thanks to your efficient leadership. It is quite natural that much attention is given to the decision-making procedures in view of the importance we all attach to the outcome of our future negotiations. I would like to call for a sober and factual approach. However innovative we could try to be in formulating the concept of consensus, it is my strong conviction that at the end of the day we will fall back on the established practice in multilateral UN negotiations and work on the basis that nothing is agreed as long as not everything is agreed. It is important to recall that we are here to negotiate in good faith, which is after all one of the core principles in international law. The formulation you propose in rule 33 of the draft rules of procedure is based on this principle and has the capacity to guide us towards the desired result, which is the adoption of a strong and robust treaty, negotiated in an open and transparent manner and aimed at universal adherence.
On the involvement of non government organizations, as reflected in rule 63 d of the draft rules of procedure, I believe that there has been some misunderstanding based on the fact that the first sentence refers to “one” meeting, whereas the second sentence stipulates that these “meetings” (in plural) will not coincide with other meetings. I would suggest that we use the plural in both sentences, adding my voice to those who argue in favor of reasonably larger number of meetings at which non governmental organizations would be allowed to address the Conference.

I hope that we can resolve the few outstanding procedural issues as soon as possible so that we can start our work on substantive issues without delay.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman