My delegation wishes to commend your efficient and skillful chairmanship of the meetings of the preparatory committee for the UN Conference on an Arms Trade Treaty.

Belize aligns itself with the statement delivered by Trinidad and Tobago on behalf of CARICOM.

This final Preparatory Committee meeting is a culmination of the long preparatory process beginning in 2006. Belize remains confident that despite the remaining divergent views on some elements of the ATT, there is sufficient commitment, common cause, and urgency to overcome this divergence. We are heartened by the continuing overwhelming support for an ATT as indicated by the number of member states which voted in favour of resolution 64/48 and the more recent decision of the Assembly, during this current session, to extend the preparatory committee meeting.

It is the absence of a legally binding treaty to regulate the trade in arms, and recognition of the consequent devastating impact of the diversion of arms into the illegal trade -- a devastating impact to which my country bears witness on a daily basis -- that compels us to conclude a legally binding instrument which does not fall short of establishing the highest possible common international standards for the transfer of conventional arms.

Having spent the last several years discussing the feasibility of and then the substantive elements for an effective ATT, our task now is to finalize the organizational and procedural aspects of the diplomatic conference. In this regard our overarching goal should be to set arrangements which will be constructive and conducive to a positive outcome, and which respect fully the sovereign rights of all Member States.

In this respect please allow me to share my government’s initial reactions to your proposals on the draft agenda and the draft rules of procedure for the diplomatic conference as well as a few other relevant matters.

Resolution 64/48 which outlines our agreed common goals for the ATT as well as precedent, the usual practice for the conduct of past diplomatic conferences, are instructive.

The draft provisional agenda of the Conference appears to be consistent with relevant standard practice except for the proposed order, where we note in many past instances the adoption of the agenda precedes the adoption of the rules of procedure -- on this we could seek some clarification for the rationale for the present proposal. We would also propose a final agenda item for “Signature of the Final Act and of the Convention and other documents.” And finally on the agenda we would propose consideration of an agenda item on “Consideration of an Arms Trade Treaty in accordance with General Assembly resolutions 64/48 of 2 December 2009,” though we remain flexible on this proposal.

Similarly, the proposed provisional rules of procedure of the Conference is for the most part consistent with the standard text of this kind in these circumstances. First on some technical matters: your proposal does not yet specify the exact size of the Bureau, we would propose XX, to ensure appropriate representation reflective of the membership; Rule 14 should be explicit that the Secretary General of the Conference will be the Secretary General of the UN or a person designated by him; Rule 18 (a) regarding the adoption of the rules of procedure should include the phrase “the draft of which shall, until such adoption, be the provisional rules of procedure.”
The treatment of decision-making, in the proposed provisional rules of procedure is a bit novel -- a direct consequence of attempting to marry standard practice with the exhortation of resolution 64/48 that consensus must be the basis of the Conference. Rule 33 states that the Conference shall make every effort to ensure that all its substantive decisions are taken by consensus -- we believe this is faithful to the intention of resolution 64/48 and we understand this to mean that there will be every effort to reach general agreement, and which we regard as pertaining to final adoption. The approach to decision-making must respect the positions of Member States while also allowing for progress and compromise. On this basis we fully support your proposal of sub-paragraph 2 of Rule 33 which allows for decision-making on proposals if best efforts at general agreement has failed. Rule 33 sub paragraphs 1 and 2 alone appear to us to be sufficient to govern decision making. We consider this a feasible way forward, bearing in mind that adoption does not signal a consent to be bound nor carry any obligations.

My delegation notes your proposals for the establishment of main committees, other committees and working groups, we wish to register our concern about the challenges faced by small delegations such as my own, in attending to simultaneous committee meetings -- perhaps a solution can be found in organizing our work.

Finally, in relation to documents of the Conference, we consider your draft papers of 14 July 2011 to be a generally accurate and sound reflection of our discussions to date. It reflects a summation of our work and we support its inclusion among documents of the Conference as it can serve as a useful platform for our work at the Conference.

Again Mr. Chairman I wish to express my delegation’s full confidence in your chairmanship and you can be assured of our fullest support.

I thank you.

Check against delivery