Statement by Switzerland at the 4th session of the Preparatory Committee for the United Nations Conference on the Arms Trade Treaty

14 February 2012

Mr. Chairman,

Let me express my delegation’s satisfaction to see you chairing this fourth and last session of the Preparatory Committee for the Arms Trade Treaty. I can assure you of my delegation’s full support throughout our deliberations and we would be happy to work with you as chair of the UN Conference in July 2012.

The maintenance of international peace and security and the fight against the global scourge of armed violence have always been important aspects of Switzerland’s foreign policy. As the ATT is an important means to contribute to these objectives, Switzerland from the very beginning of this process supported the initiative to elaborate a legally binding instrument regulating the international arms trade.

Switzerland favors a strong and robust treaty which prevents the international transfer of conventional arms that contribute to human suffering or facilitate serious violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law. Therefore, it is of great importance that the process at hand is inclusive, transparent, and efficient and results in the highest possible common international standards regulating the lawful trade in conventional arms and preventing their illicit transfer.

As regards the draft rules of procedures at hand, there are two important issues to address.

First, the inclusion of civil society in the process leading to the ATT seems to us crucial and highly desirable. We should take into account their views as well as their broad research and experience. As discussed at yesterday’s consultation, we would very much welcome giving more room to representatives of non-governmental organizations to express their views. Accordingly, we support the proposed amendments in Rule 63 para. d as well as in Rule 57 para. 2 in the provisional rules of procedure.
Second, on section VII "decision making", we share the view that the spirit of resolution 64/48 should be translated into the rules of procedure. As we stated in our explanation of vote in 2009, we do not think that the language of OP5 requires that decisions be taken only by consensus. A requirement for consensus on every decision in the process could undermine our work. A rigid consensus rule would give a single Member State the possibility to veto everything and would run the risk of agreeing on the lowest common denominator rather than the highest-possible common standards. We should do our utmost to avoid such a situation. In our view, Rule 33 para. 1 on its own accurately reflects our understanding of the language of OP5 of Resolution 64/48. Based on your consultations, we kindly encourage you to propose a new version of the decision making rules.

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation is aware of the unique character of this undertaking and once again assures you of our full support in your endeavors.