

**United Nations General Assembly  
60<sup>th</sup> Session  
First Committee**

**New York, 3 October – 3 November 2005**

**Statement by  
Ambassador John Freeman  
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland,  
on behalf of the European Union**

**Conventional Weapons**

**New York, 13 October 2005**

**(Check against delivery)**





## **Cluster: Conventional Weapons**

I am speaking on behalf of the European Union and the Accessing Countries Bulgaria and Romania, the Candidate Countries Turkey and Croatia\*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro, the EFTA country Liechtenstein, member of the EEA, as well as Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova align themselves with this declaration.

1. Last month, world leaders stressed in the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document the negative effects of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. As we set out in our General Statement, the EU believes that easy access to small arms and light weapons exacerbates conflicts, facilitates violent crime and terrorism, impedes post-conflict reconstruction and undermines long term sustainable development. SALW have been the most instrumental factor in regional conflicts that, since 1990, have cost the lives of almost 4 million people and have forced over 18 million to leave their homes or countries. The European Union is convinced that there is much still to be done to tackle this scourge. To that end, we are currently drafting our own Strategy to combat the illicit accumulation and trafficking of SALW and their ammunition, which will complement the United Nations Programme of Action (PoA). On the PoA, a lot of work still remains to be done regarding its implementation and strengthening in particular areas. We look forward to an ambitious and forward-looking Review Conference in 2006 and we would welcome an early identification of a Chair for both the Review Conference and the Preparatory Committee. We hope for close consultation in New York and Geneva and stress the importance of strong representation from States. To this end, we welcome a sponsorship programme within the United Nations Development Programme.

2. The EU welcomes the hard work done by the Open Ended Working Group on Marking and Tracing, under the Chairmanship of Ambassador Thalmann. However, it is regrettable that no operational provisions on ammunition and peacekeeping operations were included, and that the instrument is not legally-binding. It is however an important step in implementation of the 2001 PoA. In that sense, it represents a positive signal from the international community to those countries most affected by this scourge. If it is applied by States with the necessary political will, the content of the instrument will help to discourage, and thus reduce, the illicit trafficking of SALW. We hope that it can be strengthened at further review meetings. The EU will be strongly committed to promoting further the issue of ammunition, thus taking up the recommendations of the Chairman's Procedural Report.

3. Brokering and transfer controls are a high priority for the EU. Illicit brokering and trafficking are recognised as among the main factors fuelling the illegal global trade. The EU was amongst those who insisted on the inclusion in last year's First Committee resolution of a mandate to establish a group of governmental experts on illicit brokering. This group should be convened as soon as possible after the 2006 PoA Review Conference and should be mandated to examine the feasibility of developing an international instrument to prevent, combat and eradicate illicit brokering in small arms and light weapons and their ammunitions.

4. On transfer controls, the EU encourages the use of minimum common standards, including criteria or guidelines to determine authorisation for transfer, so as to prevent small arms and light weapons from being diverted and used to fuel conflict, repress human rights, and undermine development. Many other groups have joined the EU in calling for increased co-operation on transfer controls within the framework of the PoA. We welcome recent progress made on transfer controls in Central America, the MERCOSUR region, the Caribbean and the Great Lakes region and Horn of Africa. We strongly encourage these and other regions and individual States to voice support for the further elaboration of common principles for transfer controls, so that such principles could be considered further in preparation for the 2006 Review meeting. The EU also underlines the importance of supporting the on-going work on end-user certificates with a view to agreeing, in the long-term, in the UN framework, a consensus on general principles on end-user certificates and best practice in the verification of the recipient.

5. But EU members have not just implemented agreements, important as that is. The EU is tackling the problem at the grass roots level. From 2003 to date, in addition to national contributions from Member States, the European Union has allocated 88 million Euros for action undertaken by affected countries to deal with the excessive and destabilising accumulation of small arms and light weapons. The EU has become one of the foremost international actors in efforts to combat the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. EU Member States are committed to a continued leading role in this area, and call on others to maintain momentum on the implementation of the PoA in the coming years.

6. Furthermore, the EU was encouraged by the expansion of the scope of the UN Register of Conventional Arms to include MANPADS and welcomed moves to encourage reporting on all small arms and light weapons as part of voluntary background information. The EU considers that the time is now ripe for small arms and light weapons to be reflected fully within the Register's scope and encourages the next review of the Register's scope and operation to address this as a priority. The EU would see this as an important step towards maintaining the relevance of the Register as a practical instrument, unique in the area of conventional arms and to complement the broad-based work being undertaken through the PoA.

7. It is recognised that the easy availability of small arms and light weapons, and high levels of armed violence, act as a major barrier to sustainable development. It is important to take this issue forward, notably in view of attention given by both the High Level Panel, the Secretary General and the World Summit Outcome Document to the link between security and development. In this respect the EU calls on States and development agencies to increase their capacity to control the supply of small

arms, lower the demand for these weapons, and reduce levels of armed violence. Progress on this issue should be reflected through more resources to the implementation of the PoA in developing countries. This support will be more effective because it will be tied to long-term development needs. We can also build on progress at the UN Summit. The new Peacebuilding Commission could systematically incorporate measures to regulate SALW in its work and improve training in weapons management procedures.

8. In the wider context of the need to control the undesirable proliferation of conventional weapons the EU is supportive of calls for an international agreement on the arms trade. Such a new comprehensive instrument should be based on universally accepted norms and standards. The EU encourages other states and regions to engage in the discussion and to express their support for action in this area.

9. The use of Man Portable Air Defence Systems (MANPADS) by terrorists and non-state actors as a tool for threatening civil aviation (and also aviation involved in peacekeeping operations) warrants worldwide attention and immediate action. MANPADS are extremely lethal, easily concealable and inexpensive. In this respect, the EU firmly supports broader efforts, in various multilateral fora, focusing in particular on export controls including the Wassenaar Arrangement, the OSCE and the G8 initiative to internationalise controls.

10. EU Member States have been working with other States in the field of MANPADS destruction and stockpile and security management and will continue to work proactively to help those States, not in a position to do so, to secure their stockpiles and to destroy surpluses of these weapons. The EU encourages other States, where they are able to, to participate actively in stockpile and security management and destruction activities, to help guard against further illicit use.

11. The EU welcomes progress achieved in universalising the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Treaty, destroying stockpiled anti-personnel mines, clearing mined areas and assisting the victims. The EU considers the First Review Conference which took place in Nairobi last year as a landmark success, that provided the international community with an opportunity both to assess and reflect on the progress that has been made on the path to a mine free world and to refocus our efforts to achieving this goal. In order to overcome the remaining challenges for the full implementation of the Convention, the Nairobi Conference agreed on an ambitious Action Plan for the next five years, to which the EU is fully committed.

12. Building on this success, the EU welcomes the appeal of the World to the Parties of the Mine Ban Treaty to fully implement their commitments as well as to all states in a position to do so to provide greater technical assistance to mine affected States. We wish to call upon all states that have not yet done so to ratify or accede to the Mine Ban Treaty as soon as possible.

13. The European Union has provided assistance to affected states and communities and will continue to do so. From 2003 to date the EU Member States and the European Community have allocated 384 million Euros for mine action. Speaking on behalf of the European Union, we would like to point to the European Community's

strategy - in particular its strategy for 2005-2007 - which, in the light of an interim target of zero new victims, seeks to reduce the threat of landmines on the ground and in stockpiles by offering social, economic and medical assistance to local populations affected and to the victims of landmines. The EU as a whole will continue to support humanitarian mine action focused on the poorest countries. We will continue to work to improve the effectiveness of the international mine action system.

14. Finally, the European Union is looking forward to a constructive 6th meeting of States Parties to be held in Zagreb later this year. For this meeting, which will take place in a mine-affected country in Europe, we believe it to be important to measure the progress achieved so far in pursuing the Nairobi Action Plan 2005 to 2009 and therefore welcome the initiative to elaborate a Zagreb Progress Report.

15. The Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) is an important and influential instrument of international and humanitarian law in restricting the use of certain types of weaponry. 2003 saw the adoption of a fifth Protocol, on Explosive Remnants of War, which we hope will soon enter into force. The EU attaches great importance to this protocol and is pleased to note that of the 11 of the 20 ratifications needed, 9 are either EU members or Associated countries. The EU calls upon all States Party to ratify and implement the Protocol as soon as possible and to report on their progress in ratification.

16. The CCW is focussed at present on the serious humanitarian, developmental and economic concerns posed by the irresponsible use of Mines Other Than Anti-Personnel Mines, or MOTAPM. Reliable reports from humanitarian organisations and NGOs working in conflict zones, as well as from States, highlight these concerns. At the same time, we acknowledge that MOTAPM are legitimate weapons, which serve important military purposes with regard to self-defence and other military operations. It is important to strike a balance between humanitarian concerns and military considerations. We very much welcome and support the efforts undertaken by the co-ordinator and fully support his efforts to work out a substantive protocol on MOTAPM, which together with Amended Protocol II, will be an effective instrument in preventing the irresponsible use of MOTAPM.

17. We firmly expect to reach a substantive agreement on this issue at the meeting of States Parties in November and we call upon all States Parties to spare no effort to achieve this objective. The EU will continue to work with the objective of agreeing a legally binding instrument on MOTAPM as soon as possible.

18. We also hope that we will be able to make progress on the other issues currently being discussed, such as compliance and the implementation of existing principles of International Humanitarian Law and on possible preventive technical measures to minimise the risk of munitions becoming Explosive Remnants of War.

---

\*) Croatia continues to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process