

**STATEMENT BY DR. PETIO PETEV, HEAD OF THE DELEGATION OF THE
REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA
FIRST COMMITTEE
63RD SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

Mr. Chairman,

Bulgaria fully endorses the statement made yesterday by France on behalf of the European Union laying out the views which Bulgaria also shares. I won't repeat them, but would like to highlight a few points.

Let me reiterate Bulgaria's full support for an effective multilateral mechanism in the sphere of disarmament and non-proliferation with the United Nations playing a strong role. Disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation of WMD, as well as the strengthening of the international treaty system should be a priority to all states, as the list of risks and challenges to our common security is, regrettably, a very long one. In this regard, the need for full and universal implementation of the NPT regime is, and must remain, a priority. Thus, the early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty is also indispensable.

Bulgaria attaches great importance to the Convention on Conventional Weapons and its Protocols. This Convention forms a key part of the International Humanitarian Law and my country is firmly committed to working for its strengthening. We take active part in the work of the Group of Governmental Experts on the development of a legally binding instrument on cluster munitions that cause unacceptable harm to civilians. It is our belief that consensus will be reached and the group will be able to fulfill its mandate. Bulgaria regards the work of the Group of Governmental Experts within the CCW framework and the newly adopted Convention as mutually reinforcing. We believe that the results of the work of the Group will be compatible with the standards set by the new treaty.

We actively participated in the negotiations of the newly adopted Convention on Cluster Munitions which is to be opened for signature in Oslo in December this year. Led by the deep concern with the humanitarian consequences resulting from the use of cluster munitions which cause unacceptable harm to civilians, Bulgaria is of the opinion that the need of the quick entry into force of a legally binding document banning such weapons is thus undisputable. Its policy on this issue is oriented towards achieving this highly humane objective.

Having that in mind, the Bulgarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, together with the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, co-hosted a Regional Conference on the Convention on Cluster Munitions adopted in Dublin in May this year. The Conference was held on 18-19 September 2008 in Sofia. More than 80 representatives from the RCC countries as well as the civil society took part.

The objective of this forum was to provide a venue for an in-depth discussion of the newly adopted Convention on Cluster Munitions. There were three sessions – each with a different focus. The first one was on the Convention as a new legal norm. The second panel was on the humanitarian aspects of the new treaty, and the last one was on more technical issues – such as stockpile destruction. The speakers were government representatives, civil society activists, as well as professionals working in the sphere of cluster munitions from international organizations, such as ICRC, UNMAS and others.

The full implementation of the UN Programme of Action against the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons remains among Bulgaria's priorities. We were particularly encouraged by the fact that the Third Biennial Meeting held in July this year produced a substantive report. The near consensus it was adopted by illustrates the relevance and significance of this instrument.

In a similar vein, Bulgaria is strongly committed to working for the adoption of a legally binding international Arms Trade Treaty. The demand for such an instrument is strong both on the side of civil society as well as of most states.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman!