Statement by Urmas Paet
Minister of Foreign Affairs of Estonia
at the signing ceremony of the Arms Trade Treaty
New York, 3 June 2013

Mr Secretary General,

Dear Colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a profound honor to take the floor at the signing ceremony of the Arms Trade Treaty.

Today, we have taken a commitment to be responsible arms exporters, importers and transit countries.

This Treaty enables us to foster responsible arms trade, to contribute to peace and security, to reinforce cooperation and confidence among states.

But this Treaty is not merely about arms and trade. It is about respect for human life and dignity. Thousands of people are killed and injured in armed conflicts around the world every day. We saw how strongly the governments of the conflict affected states fought for this treaty, which would help them to advance the rule of law at home.

We also witness regimes killing their own people, families escaping their homes, and many people living in fear under threat of weapons. We now have a Treaty that will help to prevent irresponsible and illegal arms transfers, which destroy human lives. The Treaty will make a real difference to people.
This landmark agreement also proves that the United Nations is successful in resolving complex challenges of our time. I hope that it will give impetus to other global disarmament and non-proliferation forums to live up to their expectations.

We can accomplish truly important things through cooperation. The role of the civil society, non-governmental and regional organisations in building up this Treaty has been remarkable and irreplaceable. Now, we need to continue to work together to effectively enforce and implement this Treaty.

We also need to share the experience already available. Estonia, together with other European Union countries and partners has and will continue to share our practice with other states in establishing and maintaining national control systems and control lists.

The Treaty provides for the possibility to review and update it taking into account developments in the field of conventional arms. We hope that all countries will join the Treaty and implement it with full severity. We hope that the ATT standards will become universal. We firmly believe that signing this treaty will save lives.

[Let me finish by thanking all people who have made it possible to open this Treaty for signature – Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, and the Secretariat for their guidance and support, cosponsors and negotiators for their hard work and strong spirit, Ambassador Peter Woolcott of Australia and Ambassador Roberto García Moritán of Argentina for their vision and leadership during the negotiations, and the organizers of today’s special event.]

Many important elements and principles have been incorporated into the Treaty, now they need to be fulfilled. I wish us all determination and cooperative spirit in achieving that.

We are looking forward for the Arms Trade Treaty to enter into force.