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Conventional Weapons Debate

Statement by

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to the United Nations in Geneva

Austria

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Mr. Chairman,

Austria aligns herself with the statement delivered by the European Union earlier during this debate. In the following, I would like to highlight a few priority issues for Austria.

Austria is honored to currently serve as Chair of the “Human Security Network”. This cross-regional informal group of states promotes an international response to global challenges to peace and security that is people-centered, gender-sensitive, comprehensive, context-specific and prevention-oriented. For Austria, this approach is essential for a responsible international engagement on conventional weapons issues – the weapons that continue to cause casualties and human suffering at a large scale around the globe.

Prevention of human suffering and assistance to victims of armed conflict and armed violence must remain at the heart of our efforts. UNSC Res. 1325 (2000) was the first to address the disproportionate and unique impact of armed conflict on women. Since then, the international awareness and response to the gender implications of weapons, armed violence and armed conflict has developed further, but much remains to be done. The gender implications of specific types of weapons, including conventional weapons, and their effects on women and children are issues that deserve more attention and focus in research and in the political debate. A gender perspective should be incorporated in all disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control efforts. The full and equal participation of women and men at all stages and levels of decision-making must be ensured.

Having ratified the Arms Trade Treaty, Austria expects that its effective implementation will make an important contribution to human security, human rights and development, and also to contribute significantly to
countering gender-based armed violence. We thank Mexico for a successful first preparatory meeting and look forward to the next meeting in Germany in November. Strongly committed to the objectives of the ATT, Austria is a candidate to host the future permanent ATT Secretariat in Vienna, a global hub for security, legal, export control and development issues, which would offer a great spectrum of expertise and valuable conditions for a Secretariat to carry out its duties in a transparent, effective and efficient way.

The indiscriminate effects and unacceptable humanitarian consequences of anti-personnel mines and cluster munitions have led to their total ban. It is horrifying to witness that these indiscriminate weapons continue to cost human life and cause human tragedy. This underlines the necessity of the full universalization of the Mine Ban Convention and the Convention on Cluster Munitions. Austria reiterates that the obligation to protect civilians from unnecessary harm applies to all States.

At the Third Review Conference of the Mine Ban Convention in Maputo in June 2014, States Parties have renewed their commitment to fully implement all Treaty obligations and agreed on clear targets for completing the time-bound obligations under the Convention and on actions to address victim assistance and cooperation and assistance in a measurable way.

The First Review Conference of the Convention on Cluster Munitions in Dubrovnik in September 2015 will be an important milestone for further strengthening the norms of the CCM to the inside and the outside. Austria will be pleased to contribute her efforts as a Coordinator together with Chile to specifically advancing the effective cooperation and
assistance between all relevant stakeholders and across regions. Austria is concerned about recent reports on the possible use of cluster munitions in the conflict in Ukraine and calls on all actors to refrain from the use of these indiscriminate weapons.

The increased use of explosive weapons in populated areas has become a huge concern for the international community, witnessing high numbers of civilian casualties and devastating effects of these weapons to infrastructure, socio-economic development as well as forced displacement. The international community should step up its efforts and explore ways on how to more effectively implement the existing legal framework in order to provide adequate protection to civilians from the severe harm of these weapons. Austria in partnership with the International Network for Explosive Weapons will host a side event on this issue today at 1:15 hours in Room A and I invite you all to participate.

Finally, another area of concern for Austria is the use of ammunitions from depleted uranium. Recent studies suggest that the radiation as well as the heavy metal toxicity of uranium accumulate to a significant long term detrimental effect on the environment and on people in contaminated areas. Since scientific evaluation of these effects seems not to be final at this stage, Austria is in favor of continuing research in this area.

Thank you.