Statement by

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First Committee

Thematic Debate: Conventional Weapons

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Mr Chairman,

In addition to the statement of the European Union, we would like to make the following remarks.

**Arms Trade Treaty**

The Netherlands is looking forward to a wonderful Christmas present this year with the entry into force of the Arms Trade Treaty. This landmark Treaty will set the standard for the regulation of the international trade in conventional arms. We consider it very good news indeed that so far 121 States have signed the Treaty and 53 States have already ratified it. The Netherlands has almost finished its ratification process, and expects to be able to conclude this procedure before entry-into-force.

After its entry into force, we should turn our focus on implementation of the Treaty. This is what really matters as we look forward to the first Meeting of States Parties to be held in Mexico next year. We would like to thank Mexico for their excellent leadership so far, which enabled us to make a lot of progress during the first preparatory meeting. We hope we can continue in this constructive spirit at the second preparatory meeting in Berlin as well as the formal preparatory process. We call upon all states in a position to do so to contribute to UNDP’s sponsorship program which enables all countries to participate in this ATT-preparatory process. The Netherlands contributed US$30,000 as we believe this is crucial for a genuine universal treaty.

We hope that we can find early and pragmatic solutions to important, but technical parts of the Treaty as to the composition, location and financing of the secretariat; the rules of procedure; reporting formats and other matters. Our main aim should be to concentrate on the implementation of the Treaty itself.

**Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems**

The CCW expert meeting on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems in May this year proved to be an excellent first exchange of views on this new and important subject. We find it very positive that this is a concerted effort by both states and civil society. From the discussions it is clear that there are many legal, ethical and policy questions regarding LAWS for which we are only beginning to find answers. These questions do not however exist only for LAWS, but also for enhanced autonomous functions of weapons systems in general.

International law and in particular International Humanitarian Law is the framework we look at with regard to the legality of weapon systems. While developing new weapon systems, both LAWS as well as weapon systems with more advanced autonomous functions in general, states should remain within the boundaries of international law. A particular issue that needs to be discussed further is what we exactly mean by ‘meaningful human control’ when we talk about weapons systems. The Netherlands intends to start a multiyear research program to develop our own national perspective on this issue. We should also deepen our understanding of the related ethical issues. Meaningful Human Control could be a very relevant subject of our CCW-meeting on topic in 2015.

We will continue to participate actively in discussions on LAWS and will advocate strongly for a new mandate at the upcoming Meeting of States Parties in November to be able to continue our discussions within the framework of the CCW.
Small Arms Light Weapons

Small Arms and Light Weapons continue to deserve our utmost attention. They are still responsible for most arms-related casualties worldwide and remain in practice the real weapons of mass destruction.

In our view the Bi-Annual Meeting of States Parties showed a mixed result. We were pleased with the attention that was given in the final document to gender related aspects, the incorporation of wider security sector programmes and the role for UN peace missions in countering illegal trade of Small Arms.

However, we would like to have seen clear references to the synergy with the ATT, standards for physical security and stockpile management, UN Security Council resolutions and arms embargo’s, ammunition and assistance in technology transfers.

We should continue to develop the UN Programme of Action, while implementing the actions we agreed to in order to better deal with the continuing threat of these weapons.

Anti-Personnel Landmine Treaty

The Anti-Personnel Land-mine Treaty can truly be considered a success. The problem of anti-personnel mines has decreased considerably over the last 15 years. However, work remains to be done.

During this year’s review conference in Maputo all States Parties agreed to the political commitment to clear all anti-personnel mines before 2025 thereby effectively ending the threat from these horrible weapons for once and for all. We also agreed on an action plan on how to move forward on the outstanding issues. We would like to use this opportunity to once again thank Mozambique for their excellent leadership.

It is now up to us to implement this action plan. Cooperation with and assistance to countries with outstanding clearance obligations will be key in this endeavor. As a major donor for mine related assistance, the Netherlands is willing to do its share. We are already funding programs in Afghanistan, Cambodia, DRC, Iraq, Laos, Lebanon, Libya, Mozambique, the Palestinian territories, Somalia, and South Sudan.

Cluster Munitions Treaty

During this year’s successful Meeting of States Parties of the Cluster Munitions Convention in San Jose, Costa Rica, it was clear that the main challenges the treaty is facing are its universalization and the strengthening of the norm to non-use of cluster munitions. These are also the main issues we will have to address at next year’s first review conference in Dubrovnik, Croatia. Civil society can play an important role in identifying possible solutions for these issues.

Compliance with the convention is of utter importance for the Netherlands. We are appalled by the continued use of cluster munition in populated areas by the Syrian regime and call upon them to immediately stop the further use. We are also deeply concerned about reports on the alleged use of cluster munitions in South Sudan and in Ukraine. We call upon all governments to react to allegations in an open and transparent manner and take any necessary measures to protect its citizens from cluster munitions. In addition we are deeply concerned by reports about the use of cluster munitions by ISIS. We call upon all to refrain from the use of cluster munitions.
In addition we call upon all states that are currently participating in military actions in Iraq and Syria to refrain from using cluster munitions.

Explosive Weapons in populated areas

The emerging international discussion on the use of large caliber explosive weapons in populated areas is welcomed by the Netherlands. We think this discussion is important and should continue. In our view this discussion should focus on concrete and practical measures in order to limit casualties and damage. Much will depend on the exact circumstances and context in which weapons will be used.

Mr Chairman,

In conclusion, we think the conventional arms treaties show us that progress is indeed possible in multilateral disarmament. Moreover, these treaties make a real difference on the ground. The Netherlands will continue to engage actively in these treaties and is committed to make their implementation a success.