Statement

by

Ambassador Zamir Akram
Permanent Representative of Pakistan
to the United Nations, Geneva

at the

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Conventional Weapons
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Mr. Chairman,

Notwithstanding the mass destruction potential of nuclear weapons maintained primarily for deterrence purposes, it is the widespread use of conventional weapons that fuel conflicts, destabilize states and societies bringing innumerable pain and suffering to humanity.

Collectively, we are spending close to 2.4 percent of the world’s GDP on military expenditure. The last ten years witnessed a spike of fifty percent in the global spending on conventional weapons.

Ironically the weapons that propel and sustain conflicts come from areas that enjoy peace. Only four countries account for two thirds of global arms exports, while major importers are the developing countries, mostly in the Middle East, Asia and Africa.

Yet another irony is that the total UN Budget constitutes a paltry 3 percent of the world’s military expenditure. Hence we are spending around 33 times more on breeding, exacerbating and maintaining conflict than preventing it. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, at the opening of Mexico City Conference in September 2009 said and I quote, “The world is over-armed and the peace is under-funded”.

Mr. Chairman,

Another Disturbing trend is the development of new types of weapons, such as Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems (LAWS). LAWS are rightly being described as the next revolution in military affairs which are going to pose numerous new challenges. LAWS are by nature unethical, because there is no longer a human in the loop and the power to make life and death decisions are delegated to machines which inherently lack compassion and intuition.

LAWS will lower the threshold of going to war resulting in armed conflict no longer being a measure of last resort.

LAWS will also create an accountability vacuum and provide impunity to the user due to the inability to attribute responsibility for the harm that they cause.

The states that are currently developing and using LAWS cannot afford to be complacent that such capabilities will not proliferate over time and hence they too shall become vulnerable.

The introduction of LAWS would be illegal, unethical, inhumane and unaccountable as well as destabilizing for international peace and security with grave consequences. Therefore, their further development and use must be pre-emptively banned, and the states currently developing such weapons should place an immediate moratorium on their production and use.
Armed drones are another new type of weapons. The use of armed drones against civilians constitutes a violation of International Law, the UN Charter, International Humanitarian Law and International Human Rights Law. Their use contravenes State sovereignty as well as the UN Charter restrictions on the legitimate use of force for self-defence in the absence of any imminent danger and without express permission from States in whose territory the armed drones are used.

The use of armed drones is characterized by a lack of transparency, proportionality, responsibility and accountability. Civilians have been targeted and killed through signature strikes. In the absence of credible information against the targeted individuals warranting use of drones, their use is tantamount to extrajudicial killings since no due process of law is followed.

The proliferation of drone technology over time would make it more dangerous. Even more challenging would be the task of preventing and deterring non-state actors and terrorists from developing, deploying and using drones.

The issue has assumed added urgency in the wake of reports regarding the development of fully autonomous armed drones.

Mr. Chairman,

The international community has made several efforts to regulate conventional armaments. The UNGA adopted the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) which would be entering into force by the end of this year. The lack of consensus in its final approval reflected the complex and intricate nature of conventional weapons.

We welcome the ATT as a first step towards regulating trade and transfer of conventional weapons and expect that the treaty will be implemented in a non-discriminatory manner in accordance with its Principles, and that the criteria included in the treaty would not be abused politically. This would be the key to promote the effectiveness and universality of the treaty.

In our view, an exclusive focus on managing the effects of the trade in arms, without adequately addressing the causes that propel such trade in the first place does not offer a comprehensive solution. Moreover, associated issues like 'excessive production', 'sale' and 'arms control' need to be addressed. We have to look into both the supply and the demand side of the conventional arms equation.

The history and politics of arms regulation dictate a comprehensive approach which takes into account the priorities and security interests of all states. It is essential that the pursuit of elimination of nuclear weapons does not give way to the unworkable conventional imbalance that spawned the two world wars during the last century.
The Final Document of SSOD-I provides a clear distinction in this regard: I quote “Together with negotiations on nuclear disarmament measures, negotiations should be carried out on balanced reduction of forces and of conventional armaments, based on the principle of undiminished security of the parties with a view to promoting or enhancing stability at a lower military level, taking into account the need of all states to protect their security” Unquote.

Mr. Chairman,

The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons has caused havoc all around the world, abetting crime, terrorist activities, narcotics trafficking and sadly, deaths and disabilities of civilians including women and children. The easy availability of these arms is being facilitated inter alia by lack of or weak regulatory controls, excessive production, transfers and sale motivated by profits and politics and above all, misuse.

Pakistan values the contribution made by the UN Programme of Action, the International Tracing Instrument and the Protocol on Firearms in addressing the challenges arising from misuse or unauthorized use of these weapons. Pakistan welcomes the revival of consensus as manifested by successful outcome of the 2nd SALW Review Conference on Small Arms.

International Assistance and Cooperation are central to the implementation of these international mechanisms. In addition, a comprehensive and integrated approach is needed to address SALW both from the “supply” and “demand” sides. Unresolved disputes, growth in terrorist activities, the rise in illicit narcotic and organized crimes are the driving force behind the demand for illegal small arms trade.

Pakistan has developed the necessary legislative, regulatory, enforcement and institutional mechanisms to address the range of issues relating to small arms and light weapons. An Inter-Ministerial Group addresses these issues in an integrated manner. Policy guidelines on the export of conventional arms are in place as also a national evaluation mechanism to regulate trade in these arms. We plan to take additional measures to strengthen the enforcement regime, which covers imports and licensing.

Mr. Chairman,

Pakistan is a party to the CCW and all of its five Protocols including the Amended Protocol-II. The CCW has made significant progress to make this treaty an indispensible element of contemporary humanitarian, disarmament and arms control machinery, as well as a forum to consider how best to protect both civilians and soldiers from the effect of such weapons.

The delicate balance of these instruments – to minimize human suffering without sacrificing the legitimate security interests of states – must be maintained. The human suffering resulting from the indiscriminate use of landmines can be minimized if maximum number of states commit themselves to the successful implementation of CCW’s Amended Protocol-II. Similarly, the CCW provides an ideal platform to deal with
the subject of cluster munitions since it harmonizes the genuine humanitarian concerns with the security imperatives of states.

Development of new technologies has the potential to protect civilians against indiscriminate effects of mines. Such technologies can be of immense benefit in preventing the injurious, indiscriminate and lethal effects of mines. Sharing of know-how with other states particularly by those states in possession of such technologies will go a long way in minimizing the humanitarian impact of mines, booby-traps and other devices. Indeed the transfer and sharing of technology and experience, within the framework of this Protocol, is an important step towards achieving our common objectives and goals.

Pakistan remains in full compliance with the provisions of Amended Protocol II. The Government of Pakistan has fully incorporated, at all levels, the requirements mandated by the technical annex of Amended Protocol-II. Pakistan has also made contribution to the de-mining efforts as one of the largest contributor to UN peace keeping operations. We will continue to support global demining efforts.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.