Statement by

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at the

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Mr. Chairman,

Ireland aligns itself fully with the statement delivered by the European Union.

Ireland is particularly pleased that the Arms Trade Treaty will soon enter into force, the first legally binding instrument to regulate the international trade in conventional weapons. The success of this process shows just what the international community and civil society, working together, is able to achieve on the important questions of our time.

My delegation remains committed to ensuring that irresponsible flows of arms, which destabilise states and contribute to gross violations of human rights, violence and conflict, are stopped. Ireland has argued for a strong and robust Arms Trade Treaty from the very beginning, working with other countries and with civil society to achieve that goal. With the entry into force of the Treaty, we now have an opportunity to establish robust and effective international standards which will set a strong new norm for the regulation of the international trade in conventional arms.

My delegation is not complacent. While the early entry into force is a great achievement, effective measures to implement the Treaty’s provisions and universal membership are what will make the real difference. We would like to thank Mexico for hosting the first round of informal consultations on the necessary elements for a successful preparatory process, and we look forward to continuing these important consultations in Berlin.

The UN Security Council last year adopted its first resolution devoted solely to the problem of small arms and light weapons; UN Security Council Resolution 2117, another encouraging development. Ireland welcomes this step and the adoption of the outcome document of the Fifth Biennial Meeting of States under the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons. In our world, the majority of deaths in conflict are caused by the use of small arms; more human rights abuses are committed with small arms than with any other weapon, and armed insecurity is one of the major impediments to development. My delegation strongly supports these steps as the first of a number of essential measures needed to stop the scourge of armed violence and its consequences.

Women have been, and continue to be, a powerful force for change in relation to disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control affairs. Indeed the first two women to receive the Nobel Peace Prize were advocates for peace and disarmament, and the roll call of women Nobel Peace Prize winners shows what can be achieved when women are empowered and gain agency in disarmament and peace making processes. My delegation believes that the knowledge, experiences, perceptions of or threats to security and women’s perspectives should be factored into all disarmament activities. For this reason we strongly support efforts to increase the numbers of women active in policymaking, planning and implementation processes related to disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control.

We were also pleased to welcome, for the first time in an international treaty, the link between international arms transfers and gender-based violence in the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). We encourage States Parties to fully implement the provisions of the ATT including Article 7 (4). UN Security Council Resolution 2117 also recognizes the interrelationship between small arms and light weapons, women, peace and security, and human rights. We welcome the leadership of Trinidad and Tobago in bringing forward the latest resolution on 'Women, Disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control' which we are pleased to sponsor, and look forward to its adoption by this Committee.
We share, with the overwhelmingly majority of States, the vision of a world free of the threat of landmines and unexploded ordnance, where individuals and communities live in a safe environment conducive to development, and where mine survivors are fully integrated into their societies. Remarkable progress has been made in 2013 to achieve this goal with the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) destroying 1,480,000 landmines and explosive remnants of war (ERW). Quite simply, this vital work enables development and save lives.

But challenges remain; this year saw reports of use of anti-personnel mines by non state actors and states, even including state parties to the Convention. However we are encouraged by progress made on stock pile destruction and land release. This year, the Third Review Conference of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production & Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines took place in Mozambique. The significance of returning to Maputo and the achievements which surrounded us there continue to serve as inspiration to ensure the implementation of the time bound obligations outlined in the Maputo + 15 Declaration and Action Plan. We also welcome the recent commitments made by the United States in relation to its use of APLs.

With regard to the Convention on Cluster Munitions, Ireland welcomes the progress noted in the San Jose Progress Report. However, we were horrified to hear of ongoing use of cluster munitions in Syria, this year and are deeply concerned about reports of use in Ukraine and in South Sudan. We would call upon all states and non-state actors to refrain from using these inhumane weapons. Indeed, we cannot ignore the fact that the ratification figures fall short of the universality my delegation would wish to see on a Convention whose aim is ‘to put an end for all time to the suffering and casualties caused by cluster munitions at the time of their use’. The First Review Conference due to take place in Croatia next year provides a valuable opportunity to address these ongoing challenges of implementation and universalisation.

The mandate of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and its Protocols is to regulate or ban the use of specific categories of conventional weapons that have effects which trouble the conscience of humanity. The drafters of the Additional Protocol to the 1977 Geneva Convention recognized that constant evolution and technological progress would require also constant responsibility to ensure that new weapons, means and methods of warfare are not in violation of relevant international law, including international humanitarian law.

My delegation considers that the four-day meeting of experts convened by States party to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) in Geneva in May, provided an important opportunity to explore the fundamental legal, ethical and societal issues raised by one such possible advancement, lethal autonomous weapon systems. The debate on lethal autonomous weapons reaches far beyond legal and technical complexities, raising fundamental questions about the role of humans in taking lethal decisions in armed conflict. The decisive question may very well be whether such weapons are acceptable under the principles of humanity, and if so under what conditions. We look forward to the meeting of the CCW High Contracting Parties this November where we look forward to continuing this important discussion.

My delegation has consistently taken the view that the use of drones or unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) must be in accordance with international law, including international human rights and humanitarian law and we welcome the continued discussion of this topic both within the CCW and human rights sphere.

Another area of concern to the international community is the use of weapons which use depleted uranium. We recognise the need for further research to assess the health risks and environmental impact of the use of arms and ammunitions containing depleted uranium in conflict situations and welcome the inclusion of language to this effect in this year's
resolution on the subject introduced by Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement. Just as Ireland voted in favour of General Assembly resolution 67/36, we will vote in favour of this year’s resolution on this important subject.

As we increasingly turn our focus on the Post 2015 Development Agenda, my delegation wishes to recall that last year, global military spending exceeded $1.7 trillion. UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon has stated that ‘the world is over-armed and peace is underfunded’ and asked the question ‘Do we not have alternative uses for even a fraction of this amount, to meet basic human needs and to achieve the MDGs?’ My delegation fully agrees with the Secretary General and hopes that through our collective actions in this and other fora we can truly begin a genuine and committed process of change.

Many of the advances made by States in this field and in particular in relation to conventional weapons, exhibit a common thread that is the constant engagement, encouragement and cooperation and above all tireless work of civil society. Successes, for example the Arms Trade Treaty, are shared successes, an example of what we, the international community and civil society can do with consultation, collaboration and cooperation.

To conclude, Mr. Chairman, my delegation welcomes the progress made this year while acknowledging that persistent challenges remain. We look forward to redoubling our efforts to address these challenges together with the international community and civil society.