THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN
AND NORTHERN IRELAND

STATEMENT ON CONVENTIONAL WEAPONS

By

Guy Pollard
Deputy Permanent Representative
to the Conference on Disarmament

to the

69th UNGA First Committee

New York, 22 October 2014

Please check against delivery
Mr Chairman,

At the outset let me align myself with the statement delivered by the European Union. I'll be giving an abridged version of the full UK statement that will be available on papersmart.

Mr, Chairman,

Last year the seven years of hard work that led to the opening for signature of the Arms Trade Treaty meant a landmark moment had arrived. Today we welcome the forthcoming Entry into Force of this Treaty on 24th December 2014. Instruments on arms control are difficult to negotiate and a rare commodity so we should all share in this success.

The pace of signatures and ratifications of the ATT has surprised many – but it shouldn’t. This momentum behind the ATT shows the energy and commitment of states to ensuring it lives up to its potential.

I am proud to say that as a leading advocate of the Treaty, the UK has signed, ratified and is already implementing the provisions of the ATT. We welcome Mexico stepping forward to lead the inclusive preparations for the ATT’s Entry into Force and host the first Conference of States Parties in 2015.

Our hope is that the First Conference of States Parties will agree the important issues for the administration of the Treaty in a positive and constructive atmosphere. These include the Rules of Procedure, financing and Treaty Secretariat. We welcome the offers from Austria, Switzerland and Trinidad and Tobago to host the Secretariat and look forward to an open and meritocratic process for selecting the Head of Secretariat. In this way we can all ensure that the ATT makes the best possible start.

Our priorities from now on will be twofold. First and foremost, we will continue to promote the universalisation of the Treaty. On that note, we would like to encourage all states here, which have not yet done so, to sign and ratify the Arms Trade Treaty as soon as possible.

Secondly, we will encourage the full implementation of the ATT once it Enters into Force. The UK has already allocated £700,000, over $1m, to support states in ratifying and provisionally implementing the Treaty in Africa, South America and South East Asia. We have contributed to UNSCAR and we remain committed to assisting and advising where we can.

Mr Chairman,

The UK played an active role in June at the fifth biennial meeting of States Parties to the UN Programme of Action on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all their aspects.
The POA remains an important instrument in its own right and we must ensure that it maintains its relevancy and is supported by all States. In this respect we were pleased to successfully conclude the meeting by achieving consensus on the outcome document.

As the UK highlighted at BMS5, the misuse of SALW, fuelled by their illicit trade, is responsible for more human rights violations and other heinous crimes than any other weapon. The lives of hundreds of thousands of men, women and children are affected every year as a result of small arms and light weapons traded illicitly. However, the amount of attention devoted to small arms and light weapons is far less than it should be, given that they are being truly used as ‘weapons of daily destruction’.

We must turn the negative impacts of small arms and light weapons such as slowed development and increased poverty into positive action towards building peaceful and stable societies. The UK stands by all efforts made at BMS5 to work to this end and will support the technical work of the Meeting of Governmental Experts next year to further our shared commitments.

Mr Chairman,

The UK took an active part in the successful Fifth Meeting of States Parties to the Oslo Convention on Cluster Munitions in San Jose, Costa Rica in September this year. At that conference we were delighted to formally report that the UK destroyed the last of our stocks of cluster munitions in December 2013, five years ahead of the Treaty deadline.

We welcome the outcome of the 3rd Review Conference of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention in Maputo, and continue to support the fundamental goal of the Treaty to end the suffering and casualties caused by anti-personnel mines.

For over 20 years, the UK has supported some of the worst affected countries around the world to clear landmines and explosive remnants of war (ERW) after conflict. Between 2010 and 2013, the UK spent over £38 million to support Mine Action in ten countries worldwide.

This year we begin our next multi-year mine action programme, with a commitment of £30m over the coming three years in addition to our existing bilateral commitments. As ever, this prioritises UK funding to countries affected by cluster munitions, mines and other ERW where the needs are greatest. Phase One of this work began in July: in Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Sri Lanka and Mozambique.

Mr Chairman,

In the UN Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) we thank France for leading a productive, informal meeting of experts on lethal autonomous weapons systems in May.
This important issue sits well within the remit of the CCW and we support discussions continuing in this vein next year.

Mr Chairman,

Allow me to end with two pleas; first, we urge the international community to support Libya in tackling the weapons proliferation which is having such a destabilising effect in the country and the wider region.

Second and finally, the UK believes that the ATT can be part of the solution to uncontrolled arms proliferation. 2014 has been a momentous year. To this end we will be introducing resolution L32 marking the entry into force of the ATT and welcoming the offer of Mexico to host the first Conference of State Parties. So let us take the next step for the ATT together and with energy, whether that is by signalling your support through support for the resolution, by signing and ratifying the Treaty, by ensuring its effective implementation in your own countries or by actively looking to where we may be able to assist others. Working together, the ATT can and will make a difference to the lives of many.

Thank you.