

**Statement by Belgium on behalf of the European Union - 1st Committee - 65th
UNGA**

First Committee - Conventional Weapons

18 October 2010

1. I speak on behalf of the European Union. The Candidate Countries, Croatia , the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia* and Iceland +, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, as well as Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova align themselves with this declaration.

2. The past twelve months have been particularly productive in the field of conventional weapons with, inter alia, the Fourth Biennial Meeting of States on the UN Programme of Action on illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, the first and second sessions of the Preparatory Committee for an Arms Trade Treaty, the entry into force of the Convention on Cluster Munitions and the Cartagena Summit for a Mine-Free World. The EU has been and will continue to be a very active and committed player in all these processes.

Mr Chairman,

3. Each year small arms and light weapons, and their ammunition, cause the death of or injure hundreds of thousands of people, including women and children. Their illicit trade and excessive accumulation adversely affect regional and international security and stability, fuel conflicts and armed violence and threaten the lives of individuals. The EU remains committed to working with all UN Member States in addressing these challenges, within the framework of the 2001 UN Programme of Action to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects. The EU continues to consider this international instrument as the main multilateral framework to respond to challenges posed by the illicit trade and excessive accumulation of SALW.

4. The activities of the EU in this field are guided by the EU SALW Strategy of December 2005 and implemented through various instruments and a variety of concrete projects. The EU supports third States and regional organizations in their implementation of the UN Programme of Action as well as other relevant instruments, such as the International Marking and Tracing Instrument and the UN Firearms Protocol. The EU is similarly in the front line in promoting regional cooperation in the field of SALW. Regional cooperation is a key aspect in the achievement of sustainable results in complementarity to national efforts.

Inter alia, specific projects are also being implemented to support third countries' efforts to dispose of their SALW and ammunition surpluses and to improve their stockpile management, including marking and record keeping. The EU reiterates its strong support for the UN Register on Conventional Arms. The EU also supports the elaboration of innovative tools and practices to prevent the illicit trade of SALW, in particular via air.

5. We continue to consider the UN Programme of Action the most relevant international instrument in the field of SALW. The EU remains committed to the full implementation of the UN PoA. It is the general platform on which new common strategies and tools should be developed in order to address evolving challenges. In this regard, the EU actively contributed to the Fourth Biennial Meeting of States on the UN PoA in June 2010 and looks forward to the next step. In the framework of the follow-up mechanism of the UN PoA, the EU underlines the importance of agreeing on precise and operational recommendations to ensure the full implementation of the UN Programme of Action and its capacity to address the specific challenges posed by the trafficking and excessive accumulation of SALW.

6. In this context, it is crucial to maintain and improve useful and effective tools to better match needs with available resources, such as the Programme of Action Implementation Support System, and to identify additional mechanisms to make this process more effective. We highly appreciate the supportive role which the group of interested States in New York is playing in this regard. The EU believes that the Open-ended Meeting of Governmental Experts to be held in May 2011 could be the next occasion to apply such a pragmatic and results-driven approach. In the view of the EU, the 2012 Review Conference should provide the occasion for UN Member States to assess thoroughly the level of implementation of the UN PoA, eleven years after its adoption, to consider its adequacy to respond to SALW-related threats and to take the right decisions to further improve the UN PoA and speed up its implementation.

Mr Chairman,

7. The EU is strongly convinced that focusing our efforts to address only the illicit trade of arms is not enough. It is by regulating the legal trade in conventional weapons that we can more successfully address the challenges posed by unregulated trade in conventional arms and their diversion to the illicit market. It is on the basis of this conviction that the EU firmly supports the negotiation of an Arms Trade Treaty, a legally binding international instrument establishing the highest common international standards for the import, export and transfer of conventional weapons.

8. The EU welcomes the first positive results of the sessions of the Preparatory Committee held in New York in July 2010. These results show that UN Member States are now constructively engaged in the process. The EU would also like to express its gratitude and appreciation to Ambassador Garcia Moritán of Argentina who so skillfully chairs the Preparatory Committee. The EU will work towards reaching agreement in the Preparatory Committee on concrete and comprehensive recommendations on the structure and specific content of a future Treaty to be submitted for consideration by the 2012 UN Conference.

9. It is our view that the Arms Trade Treaty should be as universal as possible and thus have a real impact on the conventional arms trade. A strong and robust Arms Trade Treaty would prevent conventional weapons from being used to threaten security, destabilise regions and States, violate international human rights law or international humanitarian law, undermine economic and social development or exacerbate conflict. The ATT should also prevent the diversion of conventional weapons to the illicit market. To this effect, the scope of the Treaty, in terms of types of arms and activities covered, should be as wide as possible. The ATT should require all States Parties to assess applications for arms trade against the highest possible standards and parameters, as required by the Treaty, including the respect for human rights and international humanitarian law, and a thorough analysis of the risk of diversion to unintended users. The Arms Trade Treaty should include transparency, monitoring and assistance provisions.

10. The EU strongly believes in the need to ensure the widest participation in the ATT negotiating process, in order to ensure the universalisation of the treaty, maximum ownership of this instrument, and engagement of all parties involved in its negotiation. To this end, the EU has redoubled its efforts to promote participation in the process. After the successful completion of a first series of outreach seminars in 2009, the EU has just launched another ambitious project, comprising seven new regional events. This new series of seminars will be organized in cooperation with UNIDIR and will aim at promoting the ATT process among UN Member States, civil society and industry, while supporting third countries in their efforts to establish, improve and implement, as appropriate, effective arms transfer controls.

Mr Chairman,

11. The European Union welcomes the substantial progress achieved in the universalisation and implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction. The Review Conference in Cartagena gave renewed impetus to our common efforts to reach all the objectives of the Convention, including a world free from anti-personnel mines. The European Union is fully

committed to implementing the Cartagena Action Plan. It would be remiss for the European Union not to take this opportunity to warmly thank Ambassador Eckey of Norway for the very able chairing of the Cartagena Review Conference and His Royal Highness Prince Mired Raad Al-Hussein of Jordan for his tireless universalisation efforts.

12. Significant progress has been achieved in the implementation of the Convention, but much remains to be done. The financial and political support provided by the EU and its Member States to mine action has been substantial. It clearly illustrates our commitment towards the goal of a world free of anti-personnel mines. Our support has focused on the promotion of the universalisation of the Convention, assistance to State Parties in complying with their obligations, including stockpile destruction, clearing mined areas, risk education and assisting victims.

13. Universalisation of the Convention remains one of the highest priorities. Currently there are 156 States Parties. The EU appeals to all States outside the Convention, especially those which still retain large quantities of anti-personnel mines, to accede to the Convention as soon as possible.

Mr Chairman,

14. The right of parties to an armed conflict to choose methods or means of warfare is not unlimited. This fundamental rule of international humanitarian law has guided the international community when adopting, implementing and further developing the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, (CCW) and its Protocols. By weapon-specific prohibitions and restrictions the CCW regime strengthens several rules regulating the conduct of hostilities, such as the requirement that a distinction be made at all times between civilians and combatants, and the prohibition of the use of weapons that inflict excessive injury or unnecessary suffering on combatants. The EU welcomes the recent ratifications of the Convention and/or its protocols by Antigua and Barbuda, Belgium, China, Cyprus, Dominican Republic, Honduras, Italy, Qatar, Saudi Arabia. We call on all States which have not yet done so to ratify or accede to the CCW and its Protocols. In particular, the EU welcomes continued developments in the implementation of CCW Protocol V on Explosive Remnants of War.

15. The EU remains firmly committed to responding to the humanitarian problems caused by cluster munitions. The EU considers it essential to make strong commitments in this area, which are likely to have concrete results on the ground vis-à-vis the victims of these weapons and thus to have a true humanitarian impact.

16. The EU welcomes the entry into force on the 1st of August 2010 of the Convention on Cluster Munitions. Furthermore, the EU welcomes the growing number of ratifications and looks forward to the first Meeting of the States Parties in Vientiane (Lao PDR) in November 2010.

17. As some States are not yet in a position to join the Convention on Cluster Munitions, the EU remains convinced that concluding in the framework of the CCW a complementary agreement, taking into account both humanitarian and military aspects, could significantly contribute to addressing the humanitarian impact of cluster munitions. The Group of Governmental Experts within the CCW dealing with cluster munitions has continued its work in 2010 and the EU would like to underline its appreciation of the strong commitment of its Chairman. In our view, a future legally binding instrument on cluster munitions within the CCW needs to be compatible with and complementary to the Convention on Cluster Munitions and should also include provisions on cooperation and assistance. We expect such an instrument to make a significant humanitarian contribution and to contain an immediate prohibition, whether on the use, production or transfer of cluster munitions.

Mr Chairman,

18. The exchange of information on national legislation, regulations and procedures on the transfer of arms, military equipment, dual use goods and technology contributes to mutual understanding and confidence among States. Such transparency is also beneficial to States that are in the process of developing legislation on these transfers. The EU encourages Member States to provide the relevant information to the Secretary General for inclusion in the electronic database. Similarly, the EU calls on all member states to submit annually a report on their conventional arms transfers to the UN Register on Conventional Arms Transfers.

19 The EU reiterates its strong support for the UN Register of Conventional Arms. We commend the members of the Group of Governmental Experts for their efforts to make the Register more relevant to a larger number of countries by including a separate category on small arms and light weapons, and express our disappointment that the GGE could not reach consensus on recommendations to that effect. The inclusion of SALW as a separate category remains a priority for the EU, in view of the next GGE in 2012.

20. Transparency in the field of military expenditure is another key element in building trust between States and preventing conflict. The increase in global military expenditure in the last decade emphasizes the need for an effective UN mechanism for reporting such expenditure. This is why the EU looks forward to the work of the Group of Governmental

Experts established by the General Assembly and mandated to review in November 2010 the continuing operation and further development of the standard instrument to account for military expenditure.

21. We promote the further mobilisation of resources to assist countries affected by armed violence and the irresponsible spread of small arms and light weapons. We continue to support the "Geneva Declaration on armed violence and development" given the close link between security and development. The EU welcomes the Oslo Commitments on armed violence and will work with all States, international organizations and civil society to achieve measurable reductions in armed violence and to fulfil the Millennium Development Goals by 2015.

Thank you.