

STATEMENT BY MR. SATPAL SINGH RAWAT, MEMBER OF PARILAIMENT, ON THEMATIC DEBATE ON CONVENTIONAL WEAPONS AT THE FIRST COMMITTEE OF THE 66TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON OCTOBER 19, 2011

Mr. Chairman,

India believes that global measures on conventional arms control contribute significantly to international peace, security and development as well as to the goal of general and complete disarmament. As a State Party to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) and all its five protocols, including the Amended Protocol-II on anti-personnel landmines, India attaches particular importance to carrying forward the CCW process, which offers a unique forum for progressive controls over certain categories of weapons through international consensus building and cooperation. The CCW has proved to be a dynamic instrument of international humanitarian law. We hope we can further strengthen it at the forthcoming Review Conference in November, including through the successful conclusion of the negotiations on a draft protocol on cluster munitions.

2. India has always exercised the highest degree of responsibility in conventional arms transfers. We have contributed regularly to the UN Register of Conventional Arms transfers since its inception in 1994 and have participated actively in deliberations in the UN Disarmament Commission and elsewhere on conventional arms transfers. India also contributed to the recent work of the GGE on reporting of military expenditure.

3. India's security interests have been affected by illicit and irresponsible transfers, especially of small arms, light weapons and explosives. Illicit trade in conventional arms is a major factor in armed violence by organized criminals and by terrorists. We believe that priority must be given to combating and eliminating the illicit trade in such arms. This implies full and effective implementation of existing obligations of Member States, in particular those flowing from the UN Programme of Action (UN PoA) on Small Arms and Light Weapons on strict national control over production, adequate marking, international cooperation in tracing of illicit arms, effective management of stockpiles, exports controls and their strict enforcement. We hope that the Conference in 2012 to review the implementation of the UN PoA can uphold the commitments undertaken by member states in the PoA and give further momentum to their full implementation.

4. India has participated actively in discussions in the Group of Governmental Experts (GGE), the Open Ended Working Group and the three Preparatory Committee meetings on the proposed Arms Trade Treaty. We believe that a legally binding instrument establishing international standards for the import, export and transfer of conventional arms should contribute tangibly to preventing, combating and eliminating the illicit trade in conventional arms. The provisions under the UN Charter for self-defence imply that states enjoy the right to engage in trade of arms, including export to another country, in accordance with relevant international obligations. In India's view, establishing and exercising control over trade in conventional arms is a matter of national responsibility which states should discharge on the

basis of their obligations under both national and international law and in the light of their legitimate security and foreign policy concerns.

5. We thank Ambassador Moritan, who has led the ATT PrepComs with great skill, for his briefing to the Committee. The discussions in the PrepComs have demonstrated the continuing technical and political difficulties involved in seeking to construct a single unified instrument to govern all conventional arms transfers. We continue to believe that a step by step, pragmatic, realistic and consensus driven approach would enhance the prospects of an instrument of universal acceptance.

6. India supports the vision of a world free of the threat of landmines where individuals and communities can live in a safe environment conducive to development and where mine survivors are fully integrated into their societies. Since 1997, India has discontinued the production of non-detectable anti-personal landmines and observed a moratorium on their transfer. We are contributing to international de-mining and rehabilitation efforts. We support the approach enshrined in Amended Protocol II of the CCW which addresses the legitimate defence requirements of states with long borders. However, we are fully committed to the eventual elimination of anti-personnel landmines. The availability of militarily effective alternative technologies that can perform cost effectively the defensive function of Anti-Personal Landmines will facilitate the achievement of this goal. India has been participating as an Observer in the meetings of the Ottawa Convention since the Review Conference held in November 2004 in Nairobi. We would be doing so again at the forthcoming meeting of the State Parties in Phnom Penh.

7. India also shares the international community's concerns about the humanitarian impact of the irresponsible use of cluster munitions. We believe that the use of cluster munitions is legitimate if it is in accordance with international humanitarian law. Accordingly we support the negotiation of an instrument in the CCW that strikes a balance between military and humanitarian concerns. We welcome the progress that has been made by the GGE under the Chairmanship of Minister Gary Domingo of the Philippines on negotiating a draft text and look forward to concluding these negotiations at the 4th Review Conference so that we can add another edifice to the CCW framework.

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