

**Statement by Ambassador Sujata Mehta Permanent Representative
to the Conference on Disarmament, Geneva at the Plenary of the
Diplomatic Conference on the Arms Trade Treaty in New York on
July 10, 2012**

Allow me to join other delegations in congratulating you on your appointment as Chairman of this important Conference. My delegation also felicitates other members of the Bureau on their election. We assure you of our full cooperation in the conduct of your work.

2. Mr. Chairman, India has engaged constructively in the preparatory process leading up to this Conference on the Arms Trade Treaty. As an active and responsible member of the international community and as a significant importer and exporter of conventional arms, India is ready to work with other Member States for a viable and effective instrument on trade in conventional arms. We believe that the main objective of this instrument should be to prevent the illicit trade in conventional arms including their diversion to illegal and criminal use particularly by terrorists. The ATT should make a substantial contribution to international efforts in combating terrorism by making it obligatory for states not to authorize transfer of conventional arms to terrorists or non-state armed groups. While the ATT should look at prevention of unregulated trade in conventional weapons, the pursuit of this objective cannot restrict and should not prejudice the legitimate right of states to engage in arms trade for self-defence and in pursuit of their foreign policy and national security interests. It is important that the proposed Treaty strike a balance in the obligations of exporters and importers, without unduly hampering legitimate trade in conventional arms.

3. Mr. Chairman, the very useful discussions we have had in the run up to this Conference under your able leadership have demonstrated to us all the incredible complexity of the issues at stake and the wide gaps that still remain to be bridged on key issues related to the ATT. Apart from national security and foreign policy concerns there are legitimate humanitarian concerns. We are fully aware of the tremendous human cost of conflict, crime and terrorism fuelled by illicit arms. Nor can we ignore the existence of legitimate commercial interests and a variety of national regulatory systems and approaches to trade controls. The proposed Treaty should respect differing constitutional, legal and regulatory systems in various countries and should avoid being intrusive or prescriptive with respect to national policies and procedures. Above all, the time available to us in this Diplomatic Conference is limited. Conscious of the opportunity that this Conference presents but also mindful of all these constraints India is willing to work for a realistic, balanced and implementable instrument through a process and an outcome based on consensus. It is important to bring all stakeholders on board, exporters and importers, to gain universal acceptance. On an issue as important as the ATT, rushing the process or imposing artificial timelines may be counter-productive.

4. Mr. Chairman, we are fortunate in not having to start from a clean slate. Over the last two decades, the international community has come up with a substantial corpus of agreements and instruments on conventional arms, including the UN Register on Conventional Arms, the Programme of Action on Small Arms & Light Weapons, the International Tracing Instrument and the Fire Arms Protocol, all taken forward through painstaking efforts and consensus building. We can build on them by agreeing at this Conference a common, agreed framework that reflects in a balanced manner the concerns of all States engaged in the trade of conventional arms and that allows for a step by step implementation process to unfold. National implementation informed by international responsibility can be the bedrock of this process. For our part, my delegation will work actively and constructively for such an outcome.

Thank you.

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