SOUTH AFRICA

STATEMENT DURING THE THEMATIC DEBATE ON CONVENTIONAL WEAPONS

22 October 2014

Chairperson,

In view of time constraints, I will limit my remarks during this thematic discussion on conventional weapons to only a few issues.

South Africa believes that the ATT fills a glaring gap in the global conventional arms control system. Central to the effective implementation of the ATT is the requirement that States Parties should establish, where they do not already exist, effective national conventional arms transfer control legislation, dedicated and functioning arms control systems, as well as official national administrative guidelines, national inspectorates and practical enforcement measures, including punitive measures for transgressions. We look forward to the full implementation of the ATT. Africa has a special interest in the effective implementation of this Treaty. In this regard, it is our hope that the structures to be created in support of the implementation of this Treaty would take this into consideration, including through the appointment of suitable African experts.

South Africa has on many occasions expressed its concern about the humanitarian impact of cluster munitions. As a Signatory to the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM), South Africa is fully committed to the implementation of all its provisions. With regard to ratification, we are pleased to announce that the CCM has been sent to Parliament for ratification. South Africa’s Cabinet also supported the destruction of cluster munitions stocks in compliance with the Convention. We call upon all States to condemn any use of cluster munitions as this has negative effects on the livelihoods of the people particularly those who live in affected areas, even long after the cessation of conflict.

Chairperson,

South Africa continues to believe that the UNPoA represents the central, universally agreed set of undertakings to prevent, combat and eradicate the
illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and that its full implementation remains as relevant today as when it was adopted in 2001. The success of this year’s BMS and the last Review Conference on the implementation of the UNPoA bears testimony to this.

As far as the full and effective implementation of the UNPoA is concerned, a number of implementation challenges still remain. In many States some of the very basic elements of national stockpile management-related measures still need to be implemented. The lack of adequate national controls poses a serious risk as a potential source of diversion into the illicit trade. We should continue to guard against assuming that these basic elements have already been implemented by the vast majority of States.

Apart from national UNPoA implementation efforts, my delegation wishes to emphasise the full implementation of the entire UNPoA, including that pertaining to international cooperation and assistance. Without international assistance, many of the issues raised by States, such as the displacement of civilians and the threats posed to sustainable development and poverty eradication, will never be adequately addressed. The task relating to the successful and full implementation of the UNPoA at all levels rests on all our shoulders. It is a task that none of us are able to do alone.

The pace of scientific and technological progress in recent years has resulted in new means and methods of warfare. The issue of new and emerging technologies is one that is filled with questions and significant uncertainty as some of the technology has yet to mature. One of the key questions in this regard that should be of concern to all of us is whether these new technologies of warfare would be compliant with the rules of International Humanitarian Law, including those of distinction, proportionality and military necessity, as well as their potential impact on human rights. These questions will grow in relevance and urgency, as fast as these technologies continue to advance and develop. My delegation remains supportive of continued discussion in the CCW on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems.

I thank you, Chairperson.