

*Statement by Norway's Minister of International Development, Mr. Heikki Holmås, at the UN Conference on the Arms Trade Treaty, 3 July 2012*

Mr Chair,

The General Assembly has recognized that the absence of commonly agreed international standards for the transfer of conventional arms contributes to conflict, displacement, crime and terrorism, thereby also undermining peace, reconciliation, safety and stability. As a Minister of International Development, I have also seen the destructive force of weapons gone astray and how much they can disrupt vulnerable states. One example is what we see in Mali right now. This creates ripples leading to increased arms spending in neighbouring states like Niger that should instead invest money on irrigation and education. I have also seen excessive military spending in authoritarian regimes which use the weapons to repress their own people instead of investing in the same peoples future. This forms the backdrop for our negotiations here these weeks.

The General Assembly resolution mandating the ATT process is why we are gathered here in New York to negotiate an Arms Trade Treaty. It also reflects the grave problems generated by armed violence in the world today. Armed violence kills approximately two thousand people on a daily basis globally. I would like to thank the Secretary General Ban Ki-moon for emphasising the 800 humanitarian workers killed by armed violence. One of our Norwegian organisations, the NRC, just suffered such losses this very weekend.

The negative humanitarian consequences of unregulated arms transfers are severe. Hence these negotiations should have a humanitarian objective. In Norway's opinion, the overall goal of the ATT should be to prevent illicit or irresponsible arms trade that causes human suffering and armed violence, through responsible regulation of all international arms trade. This should be a guiding principle in our negotiations on the Arms Trade Treaty in the coming weeks. Having said this, we are well aware that in addition to the humanitarian perspective the ATT also has important security and development aspects.

Mr Chair,

Our mandate is to negotiate a strong and robust treaty. We have a common responsibility to do our utmost to fulfil this objective, and Norway takes this responsibility seriously. We must negotiate a meaningful treaty, a treaty that makes a difference and gives added value internationally. As we have stated before, Norway believes that the Chair's draft paper of 14 July 2011 is a good basis for these negotiations.

Although all parts of the treaty will be important, I will now focus on two elements that Norway considers to be at the core of the ATT, namely *scope* and *criteria*. If we get these elements right, we will have come a long way.

Regarding scope, we consider it vital to include *all* conventional arms, regardless of whether they are labelled military or non-military. I would like to underline the importance of

including small arms and light weapons. I would also like to underline the importance of including ammunition. Some states have expressed doubts as to whether ammunition should be included in the scope. We believe that it must. An ATT that does not cover ammunition will not be the strong and robust treaty that the General Assembly resolution has mandated us to negotiate. We need to include small arms and light weapons as well as ammunition if we are to achieve the goals and objectives set out in that resolution.

Concerning criteria, it is important that the treaty clearly states that states parties shall not authorise transfers of conventional arms or ammunition if there is a substantial risk that those arms would be used to undermine peace or stability or violate international law, such as international humanitarian law or human rights law. I would like to emphasize SC resolution 1325, and the use of armed violence against women. As a former elected spokesman in the Norwegian Armed Forces, I remember rallying in solidarity with women being systematically raped during the wars on Balkan. Here too, we consider the chair's draft paper and its language to be a good basis for the discussions. This gender perspective should be reflected in the text.

It is important that the Arms Trade Treaty contains strong and binding language that will bring about significant reductions of arms transfers that cause armed violence and human suffering.

Mr Chair,

A number of other elements also need to be addressed and incorporated in the Arms Trade Treaty. Over the coming weeks, Norway will take an active part in the negotiations on all aspects of the treaty, including implementation issues, such as reporting and marking, and the inclusion of end user certificates. We will also focus on practical measures and on the provisions on international cooperation and assistance, including such important issues as the victims' perspective.

Mr Chair,

Norway looks forward to participating in the negotiations and to contributing to ensure that a strong and robust ATT is negotiated in the weeks ahead.

And I wish you luck Mr Chair in the process of negotiating a strong treaty. This we owe the UN GA and all those facing the consequences of weapons being in the wrong hands every day.

Thank you.

