

Statement by H.E. Mr. Hamid Ali Rao, Ambassador & Permanent Representative of India to the Conference on Disarmament, at the Thematic Debate on Conventional Weapons at the First Committee of the 64th UN General Assembly, New York, October 20, 2009

Mr. Chairman,

India attaches importance to addressing the challenges posed by conventional weapons in the field of international security. While weapons of mass destruction are rightly accorded priority in the area of disarmament and arms control, conventional weapons and small arms and light weapons constitute an important concern. We associate ourselves with the statement made by Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

India is deeply concerned that conventional weapons, including small arms and light weapons, continue to pose a grave danger to the security of States. Their indiscriminate and irresponsible use, including by non-State actors, has caused enormous humanitarian concern. Such weapons disrupt political stability and social harmony, derail pluralism and democracy and hamper growth and development. They fuel international terrorism and internal conflicts thus posing a major threat to the security of states.

The United Nations has had a measure of success in dealing with the threat posed by illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. The Programme of Action adopted in July 2001 outlines a realistic, achievable and comprehensive approach to address the problem at national, regional and global levels. The integrity of the POA consensus nature must be preserved and strengthened. India will contribute constructively to the Fourth Biennial Meeting of States and the Review Conference on the POA to be held no later than 2012. We believe that national Governments bear the primary responsibility for preventing, combating, and eradicating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects. There should be a ban on transfers to non-state actors and terrorists groups.

India will also continue to pursue the objective of a non-discriminatory, universal and global ban on anti-personnel mines in a manner that addresses the legitimate defence requirements of States. Landmines continue to play an important role in the defence of States that have long land borders with difficult and inhospitable terrains. The process of complete elimination of anti-personnel mines will be facilitated by the availability of military effective, non-lethal and cost-effective alternative technologies.

The CCW Convention remains the only forum of a universal character that brings together all the main users and producers of major conventional weapons, thus ensuring that the instruments that emerge have greater prospects of making a meaningful impact on the ground. India is privileged to be part of the small group of countries that has ratified all the instruments of the CCW package and will have the honour of chairing the Third Annual Meeting of States parties to Protocol V. India has also proposed a broad based dialogue to consider a new and strengthened format of the CCW Convention

that would by common agreement, reaffirm and strengthen the application of international law in regulating and protecting the victims of warfare.

We share the international community's concerns about the humanitarian impact of the irresponsible use of cluster munitions. India has contributed actively to ongoing discussions to negotiate an instrument in the CCW consistent with the mandate of the GCE adopted in November 2007 that strikes a balance between military and humanitarian concerns. We look forward to further discussions in the CCW Meeting in Geneva in next month.

India has provided regularly its national submissions to the UN Register of Conventional Weapons, which is an important instrument of confidence building. India participated actively in the GGE on continuing operation of the UN Register on Conventional Arms. Careful consideration should be given in future work of the GGE to new class of equipment that are now being used in combat operations before they are included in the Register. India also attaches importance to further consideration of providing transparency in military expenditures, which is the hall mark of democratic states.

India participated actively in the Open ended working group on the ATT. We note that that the Group acknowledged that respective responsibilities exist for both exporters and importers to address the current situation, based on the principles established in the United Nations Charter, in a non-discriminatory manner. The Open-ended Working Group also recognized the need to address the problems relating to unregulated trade in conventional weapons and their diversion to the illicit market. Considering that such risks can fuel instability, international terrorism, and transnational organized crime, the Group supported that international action should be taken to address the problem.

We hope that future consideration of the ATT in the UN should be undertaken based on a step by step process, in an open and transparent manner with no artificial deadlines while recognizing that prospects of an instrument of universal acceptance would be enhanced through a consensus driven decision making process and outcome. It is vitally important that any such instrument should be consistent with the right of self-defence of states and their right to protect their legitimate foreign policy and national security interests.