

Opening remarks by Counsellor Kari Puurunen, Permanent Mission of Finland to the UN

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to start by thanking UNIDIR for giving the Permanent Mission of Finland the opportunity to host this important event. We are particularly honoured to have such a distinguished gathering in our mission, and we look forward to an extremely interesting discussion.

Sadly, it is almost a cliché that conventional arms are the true weapons of mass destruction. Every day, countless numbers of people, especially in developing countries, suffer from the indiscriminate use of conventional weapons. Many are killed, wounded, forced to flee from their homes or live under constant threat of weapons. In addition to the unimaginable human cost, the proliferation of weapons seriously undermines our common efforts to eradicate poverty and achieve the Millennium Development Goals. The unregulated global arms trade to a great extent fuels conflicts, human rights abuses and poverty.

Finland firmly supports the creation of a strong and effective Arms Trade Treaty. Indeed, we were among the seven countries that co-authored the original UN General Assembly resolution on the ATT in 2006. The aim for us has been from the beginning to achieve a legally binding and comprehensive instrument that would end the irresponsible transfer of arms.

We have been very pleased with the progress that has been achieved so far in the Preparatory Committees. There is clearly a positive momentum for us to move forward towards the ATT Conference in July. Ambassador Roberto García Moritán has been an extremely effective and capable chair. He has managed to steer the process with great skill and professionalism.

Nevertheless, there are still several issues to be discussed and agreed on before we can finalise the treaty negotiations. The ongoing preparatory committee will be vitally important for preparing the groundwork for the July conference. We need to give the ATT a high priority and try to convince any skeptical or uncommitted countries to fully endorse the treaty. Only a strong, universal treaty can make a real difference. For any future Arms Trade Treaty to be successfully implemented, we need the broadest possible participation from all stakeholders

With these words, I would like to once more thank you for your invaluable support and wish you a very fruitful discussion in our mission.