



Statement by Katy Donnelly

**Deputy Permanent Representative to
the Conference on Disarmament**

**UNGA73: First Committee
Conventional Weapons**

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Mr Chair,

Once again, the conventional weapons debate provides us with an opportunity to celebrate some very positive developments, but also to recognise just how far we have to go, particularly in our efforts to strengthen compliance with international humanitarian law and to improve the protection of civilians caught in conflict.

On the positive side of the ledger is the considerable progress being made in the Arms Trade Treaty. The “race to 100” has been a competitive one, with Suriname and Guinea-Bissau bringing the ATT family to a membership of 99 in recent days. New Zealand continues to advocate for universalisation of this important Treaty, in particular in our region of the Pacific. Earlier this year, with our close partner Australia, we were very pleased to host a Conference for Pacific Island countries to promote uptake and implementation of conventional weapons treaties, in particular the ATT. We will continue to follow up with our Pacific partners and look forward to our region being much better represented in the Treaty.

As we all know, Mr Chair, the success of a treaty cannot be measured simply by the extent of its membership but rather in its progress towards the realisation of its object and purpose. Through the intersessional efforts of the ATT Working Groups, considerable effort has been directed at attainment of the Treaty’s dual objectives of establishing the highest

possible common standards for regulating the international trade in conventional arms, and preventing and eradicating their illicit trade. In our engagement in this work, New Zealand has sought to retain a focus also on the bigger picture underlying our Treaty and the ambitions we all hold for its outcomes 'on the ground'.

Technical discussions on national legislation, policy and infrastructure must not be ends in themselves – they must be motivated by our wish that all arms transfer decisions are able to contribute to international and regional peace, security and stability; reduce human suffering; and promote responsible action in the international trade in conventional arms. Alongside eradication of the illicit trade and diversion of conventional arms it is these transfer decisions – and international confidence in these decisions – that will enable the ATT to meet the ambitious objectives we have all set for it.

Mr Chair,

New Zealand remains a strong supporter of the Convention on Cluster Munitions and we continue to serve in the role of coordinator on national implementation measures. We welcome the continued growth in CCM membership, with Sri Lanka and Namibia having brought the total to 104 States Parties. As we celebrate the 10th anniversary of this important instrument, however, it is clear we need to pick up the pace. We are of course relieved by the sharp decrease in cluster munition casualties between 2016 and 2017 but whilst this is a basis for celebration it must not result in our complacency. Our community is striving for a world where there are no casualties whatsoever, either from cluster munition attacks or cluster munition remnants, and we remain committed to achieving this important zero.

To this end, New Zealand continues to unreservedly condemn any and all instances of the use of cluster munitions, including in Syria and Yemen. New use compounds the suffering of those caught up in these seemingly intractable conflicts, and will continue to hamper recovery efforts and undermine confidence even when the worst is over. We welcome and support all efforts to uphold the obligation in the Convention and to strengthen the norm against cluster munitions and will certainly do our

part, including in raising awareness of the contribution that can be made by ending investments in the production of these inhumane weapons.

Mr Chair,

New Zealand is pleased to see the issue of explosive weapons in populated areas getting the attention it deserves and we align ourselves fully with the joint statement on this issue delivered by Ireland earlier in this debate. We remain committed to addressing the humanitarian harm caused by such weapons – recognising, too, that our efforts in this regard complement our long-standing support for many other related initiatives, including, for example, “Safe Schools” and “Healthcare under Attack”. We look forward to working with interested states, organisations and civil society partners across all relevant fora to make progress on this important issue.

Finally, Mr Chair, New Zealand has participated actively in the Group of Governmental Experts on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems and remains concerned about the challenges posed by such weapons to compliance with international law and to international humanitarian law in particular. As we elaborated during the GGE, New Zealand remains open to all options currently on the table and does not view them as mutually exclusive. We look forward to next year’s GGE providing for more focused discussions –and decisions – on these options.

Thank you.

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