

2 April 2013

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Vuk Jeremić,
President of the 67th Session of the General Assembly,
on the Report of the Final UN Conference on the Arms Trade Treaty**

Mr. Secretary-General,
Mr. President,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

In Resolution 67/234 of 24 December 2012, the General Assembly decided to remain seized of the matter of the Arms Trade Treaty during the sixty-seventh session. Last week, the Final United Nations Conference on the Arms Trade Treaty came within reach of a consensual text, but regrettably was not able to finalize an agreement.

Today, we meet in this hall to take action on Resolution A/67/L.58 entitled The Arms Trade Treaty, under Agenda Item 94, general and complete disarmament. The historic dimension of this day is reflected by the fact that a General Assembly resolution with an attached treaty text regulating the international trade in conventional arms is, for the first time, the subject of action in this chamber.

I would like to thank H.E. Ambassador Peter Woolcott of Australia, the President of the Final United Nations Conference on the Arms Trade Treaty, for getting us so close to the finish line.

I would also like to express my appreciation to his predecessor, H.E. Ambassador Roberto García Moritán of Argentina, for his tireless efforts in this process.

Last, but certainly not least, I would like to recognize the key role that Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has played in ensuring this crucial issue remained at the top of the agenda of what he has aptly called our “over-armed world.”

Excellencies,

In 2006, Member States pledged in this very chamber to engage in a multilateral effort to produce a legally binding instrument establishing common standards for the import, export and transfer of conventional arms including warships and battle tanks, combat aircraft and attack helicopters, as well as small arms and light weapons.

I personally believe that the final text of this conference meets those commitments to a great extent.

I also believe that the lack of a regulatory framework on the import, export and transfer of conventional arms has made a daunting contribution to ongoing conflicts, regional instabilities, displacement of peoples, terrorism, and transnational organized crime. The final text underscores this point.

It also draws a link between the presence of weapons across the developing world, especially in conflict-affected areas, and the challenge of sustainable development and safeguarding human rights.

Excellencies,

The final text is, in my view, robust and actionable. It is also in many ways groundbreaking.

It indicates that arms exporting countries would be legally bound to report arms sales and transfers. They would also be obliged to make an assessment as to whether the weapons they sell could be used to facilitate human rights abuses and violations of humanitarian law.

This would be an important step towards enhancing transparency and strengthening accountability mechanisms of the legitimate trade in arms, which this text explicitly reaffirms is within the sovereign rights of all Member States.

The final text also respects and protects the right of its signatories to regulate the buying and selling of conventional armaments, both domestically and internationally, as well as the primacy of national legislation in defining the conditions under which their citizens may own and operate arms.

Excellencies,

While the text of an Arms Trade Treaty represents an important step forward, much work remains to be done in other areas, especially on arms control and international disarmament.

For the UN to continue to play a key role in assisting countries in establishing or improving their respective arms control systems, additional efforts will need to be made in pushing forward progress in for a such as the Conference on Disarmament, which has not produced significant progress for more than a decade.

Whatever the outcome of today's meeting, for a treaty to be effective, we will need to keep working together to fulfill its goals. As President of the General Assembly, I sincerely hope that we will all continue with our efforts to bring an Arms Trade Treaty into being.

Thank you for your attention.