Practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons

Working paper submitted by Ireland on behalf of the European Union

There are several types of practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons. In this regard, the European Union would like to highlight the following.

Objective of confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons

The goal of confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms is to strengthen international peace and security, improve relations among States and contribute to the prevention of war.

Cooperative approaches to arms control often start with confidence-building measures. They create the climate of transparency, dialogue and cooperation conducive to arms control and disarmament agreements between the parties to a conflict and are often a precondition for conflict prevention.

Principles of confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons

1. Confidence-building measures have to be developed and agreed upon voluntarily. They are to be understood on the basis of the principle of cooperative security.

2. The confidence-building process is facilitated by good governance and the rule of law.

3. Confidence-building measures should be in full accord with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international humanitarian law.

4. It is important that all States in all regions feel that their participation in transparency- and confidence-building measures serves their security interests and builds security with neighbours.
Practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons

1. Exchanges of information on national legislation, regulations and procedures on the transfer of arms, military equipment, dual-use goods and technology contribute to mutual understanding and confidence among States. Member States should therefore provide the relevant information to the Secretary-General for inclusion in the Register of Conventional Arms and submit annually a report on conventional arms transfers for the Register.

2. Small arms and light weapons should constitute a separate category in the Register of Conventional Arms. Member States should also voluntarily include information on small arms and light weapons in their contributions for the Register. A separate category on small arms and light weapons would make the Register more relevant to a larger number of countries.

3. Transparency in the field of military expenditure is another key element in building trust between States and preventing conflict. The increase in global military expenditure during the past decade emphasizes the need for an effective United Nations mechanism for reporting such expenditure. In this regard, the endorsement by the General Assembly of the recommendations of the Group of Governmental Experts on the Operation and Further Development of the United Nations Report on Military Expenditures (see resolution 66/20) and regular reporting are important; Member States should participate in this transparency- and confidence-building effort.

4. Confidence-building measures should be encouraged also at the subregional and regional levels. Conflicts in various regions where confidence-building measures have not been initiated at an early stage have shown the need for worldwide awareness of the potential of such measures to contribute to peace and stability. This implies, inter alia, the need for verification regimes that ensure the reliability of the information provided. Confidence-building measures taken not only at the bilateral level but also at the subregional and regional levels have produced encouraging results worldwide in terms of supporting peace and stability. We need more and enhanced dialogue on confidence-building measures in order to defuse tensions in regional conflicts. A further security benefit of such measures between States is that they build networks of Government experts who are better able to tackle transnational threats posed by non-State actors.

5. In view of the full and effective implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, States should, inter alia, develop and implement confidence-building programmes on the problems and consequences of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. As security is a function of the level of confidence within society, these programmes may address an internal audience as well as external partners and could include the public destruction of surplus weapons and the voluntary surrender of small arms and light weapons. Civil society and non-governmental organizations should, to the extent possible, be included in these activities. As agreed at the Second United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, held in New York from 27 August to 7 September 2012, States should increase their efforts to submit voluntarily, on a biennial basis, national reports on the implementation of the Programme of Action, using, where appropriate, the reporting
template provided by the Secretariat. Moreover, the full implementation of the International Tracing Instrument also leads to transparency and thus contributes to building confidence.

6. States parties should fulfil their reporting obligations under legally binding treaties and in accordance with United Nations transparency instruments endorsed by the General Assembly, as a significant transparency- and confidence-building measure.