**Agenda Item 5 (General Debate)**

**Partners for Transparency’ Statement**

**Mr. President,**

Partners for Transparency emphasizes that discussing corruption in the defense sector is no longer an internal matter for states, but rather a fundamental pillar for ensuring the success of the Arms Trade Treaty and achieving its universality. Corruption is not limited to an administrative or financial deviation; it is a major conduit leading to the transfer of weapons to illicit parties and fueling protracted conflicts in various regions of the world.

Experiences in recent years have shown that corruption permeates all stages of the arms cycle, from procurement contracts through transportation to storage and distribution. This pervasiveness facilitates the diversion of weapons from legitimate users to armed groups and terrorist organizations, as is the case in some African countries, where corrupt practices have contributed to the continued flow of weapons to conflict zones in Libya, Sudan, and the Sahel region. In the absence of effective transparency and oversight mechanisms, the treaty's reports become a formal tool, unable to monitor or mitigate real risks.

From this perspective, linking the fight against corruption to efforts to strengthen the treaty's universality represents a practical and necessary step. More states will not join unless serious efforts are made to ensure the integrity of the defense sector and arms deals. States are reluctant to join when they see that corrupt practices continue unchecked and when they realize that weapons can easily be diverted to illicit parties. Conversely, incorporating clear standards of integrity and transparency into the assessment of arms transfers would enhance mutual trust and make joining the treaty a better option.

The situation in Libya clearly demonstrates how a lack of transparency and rampant corruption have transformed an entire country into a major transit point for illicit weapons. Over the past few years, Libya has become a major source of arms flows to armed groups within the country, as well as to other conflict zones, particularly Sudan, where weapons reach the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and terrorist groups operating in the region. The continuation of this situation exacerbates the suffering of civilians and undermines regional and international security.

Partners for Transparency believes it is essential to raise awareness among government officials and parliamentarians, engage civil society in oversight of the defense sector, and mobilize public opinion to push for accession. Libya's inclusion in the treaty framework would not only be a national achievement but also a fundamental step toward curbing illicit arms flows across the entire region.

In West Africa and the Sahel, the illicit arms trade has contributed to the escalation of armed violence and the spread of extremist groups, including Boko Haram and ISIS. Small arms and light weapons have proliferated through black and grey markets, including weapons stolen from national stockpiles in Niger, Mali, Nigeria, and Burkina Faso.

These challenges are exacerbated by weak border controls, weak weapons registration and accounting systems, and the role of some security officials in facilitating the diversion or sale of weapons to local or extremist groups, as observed in northern Nigeria, where poorly paid security forces encourage participation in the illicit arms trade. Scarce resources and capacity have also prevented the destruction or tracing of confiscated weapons, allowing their continued proliferation.

**Mr. President,**

Linking the fight against corruption to the process of strengthening the treaty's universality and addressing key hotspots such as Libya, Sudan, and the Sahel represents the best way to make the treaty more effective in reducing conflict and protecting civilians. The call remains for all states and concerned parties to work together to ensure that the Arms Trade Treaty becomes a true instrument of transparency and accountability.

**Thank you!**