



**BELGIUM**

**Thematic Discussion on Diversion**

**Arms Trade Treaty Fourth Conference of States Parties (Tokyo, 20-24 August 2018)**

Mr. President,

We would like to express our gratitude for organizing this thematic debate on an essential cross-cutting issue for the ATT. Diversion of weapons is a main source of illicit weapons. It therefore has a direct impact on the security situation in many countries and, consequently, on the development performance of the affected states.

If we want to counter diversion effectively, appropriate national legislation, effective international and regional cooperation and a sound understanding of the dynamics of diversion are needed. Both expert studies and the sharing of information among ATT States parties can help build a better knowledge of the patterns of diversion. Belgium therefore supports a more structured information exchange on diversion cases, which will help to craft measures and procedures to counter diversion. In that respect, in the previous session on treaty implementation, we already highlighted the importance of the work that is done within the implementation and the transparency and reporting working groups to facilitate States Parties fulfilling their information exchange duties under the Treaty, especially on diversion. We believe that the three-tier approach to exchanging information on diversion, both on the policy level and the operational level, has the potential to make a real difference in the day-to-day work of licensing and enforcement officers worldwide.

Mr. President,

By their nature, small arms and light weapons (SALW) are prone to diversion: their small size, ease of use and affordability facilitate trafficking. Consequently, the ATT and other international instruments dealing with SALW are mutually reinforcing and synergy between them should be fostered.

We welcome the progress made earlier this year at the Third Review Conference of the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons, notably on learning the lessons from conflict zones. Conflict arms tracing and monitoring can lead to a better insight into the modalities of weapons diversion and this can inspire counter measures such as improved stockpile protection or border control. Moreover, as is acknowledged in the final document of

the Third Review Conference, States should take account of the issue of illicit weapons trade in post-conflict reconstruction programmes, including by considering weapons tracing, surplus disposal and stockpile management.

As mentioned earlier, expert studies are also a useful tool to improve our knowledge of the actors, methods and patterns of diversion. Belgium is therefore happy to host a side event to present the main findings of recent studies, carried out by the Flemish Peace Institute and by Conflict Armament Research. Presentations will be given on firearms acquisition by terrorists, on end use control in Europe and on the recent diversion of weapons into the hands of Islamic State in Syria and Iraq. The side event will take place on Thursday at lunch time.