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**Supporting the Arms Trade Treaty Negotiations
through Regional Discussions and Expertise Sharing**

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OPENING REMARKS DELIVERED BY

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Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very pleased to be here today to mark the opening of this regional seminar. Today's event is organized as part of **a series of outreach regional seminars jointly undertaken by the EU and UNIDIR** (United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research) to promote the ATT process among UN Member States and relevant stakeholders. First of all, I would like to **thank the Government of Uruguay** and UNIDIR for the outstanding support provided for the organization of this event. I would also like to thank you, all the participants, for your presence today.

The unregulated and uncontrolled spread of conventional arms continues to pose a **serious threat** to peace and security in many parts of the world. Most international, regional, and national efforts in recent years have targeted the illicit trade in weapons as one of the most daunting challenges to our security at all levels. However, thorough analysis of global trends in the arms trade show that **a significant part of weapons that are smuggled in the black market have entered the global trade through legal channels only to be illegally diverted** at a later stage to unintended or unauthorised users. Against this consolidating tendency, it becomes increasingly evident that **international action is needed to regulate the legal trade in weapons** in order to make it more responsible and minimize the risk of diversion of arms to unintended users or for unintended and illegal purposes.

But why do we need an international initiative for this purpose?

Despite the large number of existing regional, national and international export control agreements and regimes, **controls over the global arms trade remain incomplete**. Instruments that are limited in their geographical scope cannot address a phenomenon, the arms trade, which is global. In the absence of a comprehensive and global instrument, gaps and weaknesses remain, allowing significant amounts of conventional weapons to be traded on the black market and supplied to countries and non-state actors in areas where they will contribute to instability and conflicts.

Confronted with these challenges the **need to start negotiating a legally binding Arms Trade Treaty is compelling**. A global and comprehensive ATT would establish common international standards for the imports, exports and transfers of conventional arms, consistent with existing responsibilities of States under relevant international law. In the view of the EU, the negotiation and adoption of such an instrument will provide a major contribution to tackling the undesirable and irresponsible proliferation of conventional arms undermining peace and security.

Only **an ATT that is negotiated and developed through a genuine participatory process** can meet the expectations and the ambitious objectives of the international community. During the first sessions of the Preparatory Committee on the Arms Trade Treaty, a significant amount of convergence among different national positions has emerged, showing us that the opportunity to agree on a meaningful international instrument is within our reach.

But make no mistake. Recent consultations within the UN framework have also shown that there are still significant issues to be tackled and to be discussed. There is evidently **a growing agreement** on what should constitute the **scope of a future ATT**, in terms of activities and armaments to be controlled. A clearer idea of what kind of **parameters** should be included in an Arms Trade Treaty is also emerging. But many of the **most complex issues**, such as the application of these same parameters and the definition of the controls that should be effected on transfers, **remain open** to discussion. While some of us might diverge on these questions, we should rather **engage in an open and solution-driven debate** aiming at identifying constructive and viable compromises. Finding common ground on all these outstanding issues should remain our ultimate goal to which appropriate technical and political resources should be devoted.

Over the next three days there will certainly be opportunities to further elaborate on the specifics of the EU positions on the most salient issues that the negotiations of an ATT will address. So let me now just say why the EU

and UNIDIR are organizing today's and other regional discussions on an Arms Trade Treaty.

The EU is a firm believer in the ATT initiative but we are also increasingly aware that the **negotiating process leading to the agreement of this instrument should be truly participatory**. We are seriously determined to continue to support discussions among UN Member States and other stakeholders on the ATT, discussions that should feed into the work of the Preparatory Committee, and ultimately, the 2012 UN Conference.

In the aftermath of the successful implementation of a first 2009 EU-UNIDIR project in support of the ATT process, EU Member States decided to develop a new project supporting the ATT initiative. **In June 2010** the Ministers of the 27 Member States of the European Union adopted a **new Council Decision, providing for the organization of a new series of regional events**. Today's seminar is the third of a series of seven workshops that will be held between 2010 and 2012. Compared to the previous project, the new one will focus not only on the political aspects of the ATT process, but also on the technicalities of conventional weapons export control systems. This new "module" aims at fostering national capacities related to the control of arms transfers, capacities that will be most needed when an ATT enters into force. Bringing into the international debate relevant national expertise should also help ensure that the ATT we negotiate can be implemented by those who are in charge of the daily work of controlling arms transfers.

The EU's contribution to the ATT process will not end here. We look forward to engaging in substantial negotiations at the next session of the Preparatory Committee in July. In particular, we are genuinely ready to engage in discussions with those UN Member States who continue to express legitimate concerns and doubts about specific aspects of an ATT.

Let me conclude by wishing you a very successful workshop and by again thanking our Uruguayan hosts.

Thank you.