

Speech: “The Arms Trade Treaty will remain central to the United Kingdom’s approach to preventing irresponsible trafficking in arms”

Thank you Mr President.

And I would like to begin by expressing my thanks to Jieyi and his team for a very successful Presidency last month. And to welcome Vassily to the Security Council; our new Russian colleague. And I’d like to wish you, Amr, all the very best for the month ahead as President of the Council.

And you’ve certainly got us off to a flying start with the unanimous adoption of Resolution 2370 today which the United Kingdom is very pleased to support.

And I hope that you have started the month as you mean to go on, because there is a lot to do together and we need to maintain the unity and activism of this morning as we grapple the challenges of the month ahead. And there is no greater challenge, Mr President, than the unrelenting scourge of terrorism.

It is a threat that we all face; a threat that we must all unite to defeat. Through this text, we have committed to take practical steps to do just that, first by stopping terrorists’ deadly use of explosive devices, and second by stopping their illegal supply of small arms and light weapons.

We need only look to Mosul, Mr President, to its ruined buildings and ruined lives, to see that these weapons and explosives are crucial enablers of the brutality of groups like Daesh.

Over three years Daesh used small arms and light weapons and explosive devices to impose their sick ideology on the people of Mosul, systematically persecuting anyone who dared to stand in their way. Three years on, thanks to the bravery of the Iraqi Security Forces, Daesh have now been defeated in Mosul. But not content with years of brutality, Daesh have left behind a bitter, bloody legacy for those returning home; a city littered with booby traps and other improvised explosive devices.

Make no mistake the indiscriminate use of these devices goes against the basic tenets of International Humanitarian Law and the basic tenets of human decency.

And that’s why the United Kingdom is committed to developing practical approaches that reduce the use and availability of improvised explosive devices. It’s why we’ve committed to spend \$129 million over the next three years to tackle the problem of IEDs, explosive remnants of war, and landmines. And it’s why we’re committed to developing an effective and

informed network across the international community; one that helps track key components and prevents the manufacture of these devices.

In parallel, we need to do more to combat the illicit trafficking, and crucially, the diversion, of small arms and light weapons. It's not enough to just investigate and dispose of illicit weapons. We must also prevent the moment when a legal weapon becomes diverted for illegal use.

The Arms Trade Treaty remains the most important instrument at our disposal to do that. It's a robust, effective, legally-binding Treaty; one that took years to agree. We must utilise it to its fullest extent, drawing on its transparent and consistent standards to regulate the global arms trade.

So I strongly urge all States to join the Arms Trade Treaty. This Council has already made a call to the international community to consider signing and ratifying this vital instrument, captured in the most comprehensive resolution adopted on small arms and light weapons; 2220.

I deeply regret that we were unable today to repeat unanimously that call. But rest assured; the Arms Trade Treaty will remain central to the United Kingdom's approach to preventing irresponsible trafficking in arms.

Before I give up the floor, Mr President, I think it's important to recognise that the words in this resolution are only as good as their implementation outside this chamber.

As an example, it's simply not good enough to express our support for arms embargoes mandated by the Security Council in this resolution if we are unwilling to make them a reality in areas of genuine need around the world.

If you look at South Sudan, last year this Council had a real chance to take steps to lessen the carnage caused by the uncontrolled flow of weapons there. And yet, when we voted to impose an arms embargo, we failed. The United Kingdom maintains that it is long past time for us to return to that issue. And when we do, I hope that we will channel some of the fervour for arms embargoes that we've found in this resolution today.

Thank you.