



Statement by Ambassador Jayant Prasad, Permanent Representative of India to the Conference on Disarmament at the Second Biennial Meeting of States on Implementation of the UN Programme of Action on Preventing, Combating and Eradicating Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons on July 11, 2005

Mr. Chairman,

1. If we placed the spectrum of available weapons in a three-tiered pyramid, its top will have nuclear weapons, the middle ground will be taken up by chemical and biological weapons, and the broadest part of the pyramid will be constituted by conventional weapons and small arms and light weapons. While it is vital to address the apex of the pyramid, the base constitutes a larger, contingent concern, given the persistent prevalence of intra-state conflicts and terrorism in different parts of the world, and is consequently receiving the priority attention of States.
2. As we begin to consider and to take stock of national implementation of the UN Programme of Action on Preventing, Combating and Eradicating Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons (UNPOA), it is well worth reminding ourselves of the devastating impact of the proliferation of illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. It gravely endangers the security of States, disrupts their social harmony and political stability, and hampers growth and development. The ready availability of illicit weapons fosters organized crime, drug trafficking, and illegal exploitation of natural resources and promotes sectarian violence, insurgency, and terrorism.
3. India, therefore, remains committed to the full and effective implementation of the Programme of Action and its essential objective of preventing, combating and eradicating illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. India's legal and administrative mechanisms for effective control and regulation of such weapons cover all aspects of their lawful possession, manufacture, sale, transport, transfer, export and import of arms and ammunitions and stockpile management. All small arms and light weapons manufactured in India are uniquely marked and a comprehensive record kept enabling their tracing. India also follows strict policy guidelines with regard to export of small arms and light weapons.
4. Indian security forces have seized tens of thousands of these weapons, whose markings clearly point to their external provenance. India believes that efforts to combat and eradicate illicit trade in small arms and light weapons will contribute to the global efforts to

combat terrorism and other organized crime. We believe that State responsibility is critical in ensuring this, primarily through their efforts, and also through cooperation with other States at the regional and global levels. India's National Report on UNPOA's implementation details the steps taken by India in this direction.

Mr. Chairman,

5. UNPOA reflects the explicitly expressed political commitment of States to address the issue of illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects and to implement a key set of agreed principles and programmes. We would have, ideally, liked UNPOA to include additional provisions to increase its efficacy, such as prohibition of transfer of weapons to non-State actors. We are aware that the purpose of this meeting is to consider the implementation of the Programme of Action and, at the upcoming Review Conference next year, we shall assess and review the Programme of Action in its entirety and identify further steps that may be required to achieve its central objective.

6. For now, we shall, therefore, remain focused on UNPOA's national implementation. For this, it is a good augury that we succeeded in reaching consensus on a draft international instrument to enable States to identify and trace, in a timely and reliable manner, illicit small arms and light weapons. Even though it will not be a legally binding instrument, we joined the consensus, since the instrument contains vital commitments by States to mark all small arms and light weapons according to universal standards and cooperate with other States in tracing illicit ones. This significant achievement reflects our common commitment to achieve the objectives enshrined in the Programme of Action. Indeed, agreement on the instrument sends out an important message concerning a reinforcing of the multilateral ethic, so much absent in the international discourse of today.

7. We are happy that Department of Disarmament Affairs has, meanwhile, carried out extensive, broad-based consultations on further steps to enhance international cooperation in addressing illicit brokering in small arms and light weapons. The General Assembly Resolution 59/86 outlines the parameters of further action on the subject. We expect that consultations and deliberations during the 2006 Review Conference will provide the required guidance to the Group of Governmental Experts, which the Secretary General has been mandated to appoint, no later than 2007, to consider further steps to enhance international cooperation on illicit brokering.

8. We would like to commend your initiatives in undertaking consultations with Member States prior to this meeting and for having identified key questions for the thematic debate. Our debate is likely to provide clarity as well as catalyse fresh ideas on how to implement UNPOA more effectively.

9. In this connection, the Indian delegation would like to express appreciation for the important contribution that international organizations and institutions such as UNDP and UNIDIR, as well as NGOs and civil society organizations like the Geneva Process, Small Arms Survey and IANSA. They have enhanced our understanding of the concerned issues and highlighted the need for more purposive efforts to deal with them.

10. The international community has taken modest, yet significant steps in addressing the question of preventing, combating and eradicating illicit small arms and light weapons. States, by consensus, have first identified the issues and then embraced a collective approach to resolve them. We need to carefully nurture the coherence, cooperative atmosphere and commitment that have emerged as the key characteristics of the Programme of Action. A steady, flexible and progressive approach will help consolidate our gains. India, Mr. Chairman, remains committed to this approach.

I thank you for your attention.

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