

Lebanon :

Thank you Mr. Chairman,

As this is Lebanon's first intervention at this Meeting, allow me to congratulate you on your assumption of the role of chairmanship of the Fourth Biennial Meeting of States. Allow me also to congratulate the members of the bureau on their election.

Mr Chairman,

The proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons is fast becoming the number one challenge in the area of global arms control. Studies show that these weapons kill between 300 and 500 thousand people each year and cause 90% of civilian casualties in armed conflicts. SALWs are also the weapons of choice of terrorists given their portability and relative low cost. My country has a long and painful first-hand experience with terrorism, in all its forms. It is with this experience in mind and rooted in its concerted efforts to better secure its borders that Lebanon ratified the United Nations Convention against Transnational Crime and its Protocols.

Lebanon ascribes to the idea expressed in section III of the Programme of Action that states that the "primary responsibility for solving the problems associated with the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects falls on all States." To that end Lebanon continues to develop cooperation with the Syrian Arab Republic through the work of the Joint Border Committee. In this respect, Lebanon also benefits from UNIFIL and its maritime component's assistance.

As to allegations regarding the smuggling of arms into Lebanon and more specifically into the UNIFIL's area of operation suffice it here to recall that the Secretary General stated in paragraph 24 of his latest report on the implementation of resolution 1701: "to date, UNIFIL has neither been provided with, nor found, evidence of the smuggling of arms into its area of operations".

While Lebanon regards border control and the combating of illicit trade in small arms and light weapons as a matter of utmost national security, it also recognizes as stated in paragraph 21 of the Discussion Paper on International Cooperation and Assistance "in tackling the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects, the Programme of Action stresses the need to promote dialogue and a culture of peace, prevent crime and conflict, and pursue negotiated solutions to conflicts, including by addressing their root causes." Without a just and lasting peace in the Middle East, efforts to curb illicit trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons will continue to fall short.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.