

Statement by Belgium at the BMS4 on the UN Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in all its Aspects under agenda item 7 on the consideration of the implementation of the International Tracing Instrument, New York, 17 June 2010.

Mr. Chairman,

Belgium congratulates you and your team for your skilful and constructive chairmanship. Belgium fully associates itself with the statement by Spain on behalf of the European Union. We congratulate Mr. William Kullman for preparing this concrete and useful discussion paper on the International Tracing Instrument.

Let me begin by confirming that in the Belgian experience the UN Programme of Action, the related reporting and the preparation of the biannual meetings prove very helpful in stimulating cooperation between the different national agencies involved.

I am pleased to inform you that Belgium is taking up its responsibility with regard to the marking, record-keeping and tracing of SALW, consistent with our commitments under the International Tracing Instrument. In 2009, the department on illegal arms of the Belgian Federal Police processed 160 tracing requests involving around 800 individual weapons. Those requests from third countries reached Belgium via Interpol and Europol.

The discussion paper mentions the importance of bilateral arrangements when it comes to tracing. We are pleased to announce that in March of this year the Belgian Federal Police signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the US Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) regarding the access and use of eTrace. This electronic system facilitates firearms tracing and assists efforts to combat trafficking.

The discussion paper mentions the importance of assistance on tracing and the role of NGO's. In this light allow me to mention that Belgium supports an NGO-project that involves the analysis of illicit SALW seized from the arsenals of armed non-state actors in third countries. The project's report contains recommendations in order to reduce the risk of diversion. This brings me to the next point.

Belgium would like to elaborate on the sharing of information on traced illicit arms. As was mentioned in the EU statement, we believe that the improved availability of information on traced illicit arms at regional and even global level can significantly contribute to prevent SALW from being

diverted. We would like to see this reflected in the outcome document of this years meeting.

As the discussion paper rightly points out, tracing offers an effective means to identify potential illegal firearms traffickers and routes. In addition to this, Belgium believes that tracing-information can also be a powerful tool for reducing the risk of diversion in the decision-making process on arms transfer licenses.

Mr. Chairman,

Reducing the risk of diversion is an objective generally accepted criterion in arms export regulations around the world. Tracing information can reveal that certain buyers represent an increased risk of diversion, and therefore deserve special attention in case of future transfer license requests. However, information on tracked illegal SALW is currently very fragmented and often difficult to access for arms transfer licensing authorities. Putting the pieces of the puzzle together by sharing this tracing-information on a bilateral, regional and even a global level would improve the ability to asses the risk of diversion and increase accountability. The operationalization of this approach could necessitate the inclusion in the end-user certificate of the commitment by the state of destination to promptly notify the state of origin in case of theft or loss of the SALW concerned.

Next month we will gather for the first preparatory commission for a future Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). Belgium is a strong supporter for a robust and effective ATT. Such a treaty could also make a major contribution to combating the illicit trade in SALW, provided it would contain a criterion on the risk of diversion. Belgium strongly believes that the inclusion of such a criterion in an ATT combined with the improved exchange of information on tracked illicit SALW would be an important step ahead in our common goal of preventing the illicit trade in SALW.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.
