



BANGLADESH

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STATEMENT

BY

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Bangladesh Delegation to the

First Biennial meeting of States
on the Implementation of the Programme of Action
of the 2001 United Nations Conference on the Illicit
Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons
in All its Aspects

New York 08 July 2003

At the very outset allow me, **Madame Chairperson**, to join other delegations in congratulating you upon your election to our Chair. With your country's well-known contributions to the issue of small arms and your long-standing personal commitment to disarmament, we have full confidence in your deft stewardship in delivering the best from this biennial meeting. Your preparatory efforts to chalk out a very comprehensive agenda for this meeting and your encouragement towards member states as well as the civil society to engage in a free and frank exchange of views, have already laid the foundation for a successful outcome.

Madam Chairperson,

The colossal numbers of death and disability caused by over 600 million small arms and light weapons circulating around the world, need not be but reminded by my delegation. Annually this number is much higher than that caused by the so-called weapons of mass destruction. What is alarming since the adoption of the 2001 UN Programme of Action, is that the world continues to witness a widespread proliferation of these low-cost, easily available weapons fuelling an upsurge in intra-state conflicts and dastardly acts of terrorism. Equally alarming is the fact that the menace of illegal SALWs continues to remain a threat factor also in non-conflict situations destabilizing our societies and economies and our collective efforts for peace and development.

The above dismal scenario is in itself a reaffirmation of the critical importance of this biennial meeting and a strong and effective mechanism for periodic review of the status of implementation of the UN Programme of Action at the national, regional and international levels. It provides the first opportunity since 2001 for member states to take a stock of how far they have been able to achieve and what more needs to be done through sharing of experience and expertise, before we meet again in 2005. We must seize this opportunity to reach a common understanding for expediting the implementation of the POA taking on board, concerns of all stakeholders that are adversely affected by SALWs, particularly, conflict and post-conflict societies. Most importantly, we must do our best in this meeting to identify the loopholes and difficulties faced by many member states to implement the POA at the national and regional levels and recommend ways to foster international and regional cooperation to a better and quicker implementation of the POA.

May I reaffirm **Madame Chairperson**, Bangladesh's unwavering commitment to the full and effective implementation of the POA and to do our best in preventing SALWs from going into illegal hands including those of terrorists, non-state actors, individual and organized criminal groups. We consider the POA to be a valuable first step and the most comprehensive international framework so far providing clear guidelines to states, regions and the international community. What is pertinent, is that it takes into account the needs, priorities and capacities of developing countries in curbing illicit trade in SALWs.

Since going back from the 2001 Conference, the Government of Bangladesh has embarked upon a comprehensive national approach to implement the POA within its existing national resources and capacities. We have submitted our **national report** on the status of the implementation of the 2001 POA and would sustain our efforts to improve and update our report on a biennial basis. We consider a comprehensive report as a concrete first step to the implementation of the POA. Bangladesh already has in place, a number of **stringent statutory legislations** and executive orders that regulate and control lawful possession, manufacture, conversion, sales, export, import, transport, transit and license of SALWs and enforce penal provisions for their violation. These national laws and mechanisms also regulate, the civilian ownership, record-keeping, collection, destruction and disposal of SALWs under strict supervision of authorized national law enforcement authorities.

for a declaration on "**Child-soldier-free-zones**" in various regions of the world. We would encourage members States to consider this proposal before the 2006 Conference, as this we believe could complement our efforts to implement the POA.

Last but not the least, **Madame Chairperson**, focusing on alternate methods of prevention we cannot overemphasize the importance of promoting a culture of peace and non-violence, particularly in children and young people through education and advocacy, so that today's victims do not become tomorrow's illicit traders or brokers in SALWs.

I assure you of my delegation's fullest cooperation in ensuring a successful outcome to this biennial meeting, so that all of us can go back with a clear sense of direction for the best implementation of the POA before the 2006 Conference.

I thank you.