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BANGLADESH

STATEMENT

BY

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AMBASSADOR AND PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF BANGLADESH
TO THE UNITED NATIONS

AT

THE GENERAL DEBATE

IN

THE PREPARATORY COMMITTEE FOR THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE TO
REVIEW PROGRESS MADE IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME OF
ACTION TO PREVENT, COMBAT AND ERADICATE THE ILLICIT TRADE IN SMALL
ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS IN ALL ITS ASPECTS

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Mr. Chairman,

May I congratulate you on your election as Chairman of this meeting. I trust that our deliberations under your stewardship would lead to fruition.

The unanimous adoption of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (PoA) in 2001 represented a watershed in our efforts to curb illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. The Review Conference later this year will provide us with the first formal opportunity to assess the progress made in the implementation of the PoA.

We believe that there has indeed been some progress, but not sufficiently. There is no room for complacency. We continue to be scourged by the illegal use of small arms and light weapons in many parts of the world. Hundreds of thousands of civilians, including children and women, are being killed every year in conflict as well as in non-conflict situations. This is also true that the progress achieved has not been consistent and even for all. We ought to use this occasion to identify the obstacles, and find ways to assist nations who are willing to fight this menace.

Mr. Chairman,

Bangladesh is deeply concerned at the global proliferation of small arms and light weapons. Such illegal and uncontrolled circulation of small arms have extracted high human cost in terms of humanitarian and socio-economic consequences to many populations. These have threatened peace, safety, security and sustainable development of people across the globe. These have generated and exacerbated conflict, and displaced civilians particularly children and women. We must stop this menace. The PoA is an important instrument to achieve that through actions at national, regional and global levels.

Bangladesh is committed to the implementation of the PoA. She is also determined to alleviate the avoidable human sufferings of all peoples caused by illegitimate use of small arms and light weapons. As enunciated in preambular paragraph 4 of the PoA, Bangladesh has been modestly contributing to the promotion of a "culture of peace" in all spheres of our lives. We are grateful to the Membership for their continued and enthusiastic support in this regard. We are deeply convinced that promotion and realization of such a culture of peace is essential if we are to save our people from the scourge of illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. Bangladesh's commitment and contribution to UN peacekeeping also emanates from similar conviction of our people.

In compliance with the Programme of Action, Bangladesh has put in place tougher legislative norms and administrative procedures in order to regulate lawful possession, manufacture, conversion, sale, export, import and transport of small arms and light weapons. She has adopted 'destruction' as a major and most effective means of disposal of illegal small arms and light weapons. Under a national stockpile management programme, all confiscated illegal small arms and light weapons are destroyed. Some of those arms, however, if found usable, are allocated to government agencies for their legitimate uses after their proper entry into inventory.

Strict procedures are also in place to ensure appropriate storage facilities for stockpiles, their physical security, control of access to stocks, inventory management and accounting control, etc. as outlined in the PoA.

As part of public awareness programme to sensitise people about the human cost extracted by illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, Bangladesh observes 9th July every year as "Small Arms Destruction Day". As part of the campaign, confiscated illegal small arms are destroyed in public on that Day.

The small arms and light weapons held by our defence and security agencies are solely used for the purposes of national defence and security. Those are procured from legitimate sources – external and domestic. All such weapons are properly accounted for and their stocks are periodically reviewed under strict internal verification mechanism. Surplus and outlived weapons are destroyed or disposed of according to internationally accepted procedures.

Mr. Chairman,

Greater international assistance and cooperation is essential for effective implementation of the PoA. It would require significant capacity-building efforts in the form of technical, legal and financial assistance. Training of relevant officials, including customs, police, intelligence and arms control officials, must be undertaken. Transfer of relevant technologies should form a significant component of international cooperation framework in this regard.

Marking and tracing of small arms and light weapons form an important element in our efforts to prevent, combat and eradicate illicit trade in these arms. Although our preference has always been for a legally binding instrument, just like we have in other types of arms, we consider the consensus adoption of the political declaration on marking and tracing of small arms and light weapons a firm step in the right direction.

We believe that the issue of illicit trade in small arms and light weapons must be addressed together with DDR in post-conflict societies. DDR is closely linked with long-term peace, security and development in such situations. We, therefore, call for inclusion of provisions of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration in the mandates and budgets of all UN peacekeeping operations. Now that the UN has institutionalised peacebuilding, this role will have greater relevance.

There are huge demands for illegal small arms and light weapons around the world, particularly in the conflict and post-conflict zones. We should address this in a comprehensive way including through addressing the underlying causes. But it is equally important to tackle the supply side of the problem. During the last two decades, the number of companies and countries manufacturing and exporting small arms and light weapons has increased significantly, and they come not only from the developed countries but significantly also from developing countries.

We welcome the many regional initiatives to curb illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. These efforts, we believe, can be critical for success of national action plan. My country is a case in point. Several domestic measures to stop circulation of illegal arms among the criminals, who are responsible for deteriorating law and order situation in the country, have met with limited success. Unbridled flow of small arms across the borders is frustrating our efforts to curb crime. We call for enhanced cross-border cooperation in this regard. We also call for greater civil society involvement in the implementation of the PoA.

Mr. chairman,

Our endeavours for a world free from violence, poverty and hunger must be sustained. The conscience of humanity must be satisfied that in the vigorous pursuit of these noble goals, no stone has been left unturned.

I thank you Mr. Chairman.