Statement on behalf of the European Union

by

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at the

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International Assistance and Capacity-Building

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- CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY -
Mr. Chairman,

At the outset, and since we are taking the floor for the first time, please allow me to join the other delegates to congratulate you on your assumption to the Chair and commend you for the practical, inclusive, open and transparent way in which you have conducted the preparations for this meeting as well as our deliberations.

The EU is a convinced supporter of the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons (ITI). We consider it one of the most important practical achievements of the UN Programme of Action on SALW. In adopting the instrument, the UN Member States have committed themselves to taking a number of steps to ensure that SALW are suitably identified and recorded and to stepping-up cooperation in tracing illicitly manufactured and traded SALW. The provisions of the International Instrument, are precise and detailed, and call for a technical investment going beyond mere declarations of principle.

In our view, alignment between national and regional efforts is key to making concrete and sustainable progress in the marking and tracing of arms, given the levels of illicit trade across borders and even across continents.

The EU has been at the forefront of the promotion of the implementation of the ITI, and in particular the promotion of regional cooperation, through different initiatives. The objective is to support states in fulfilling their obligations deriving from the ITI at the national level and also to ensure a maximum degree of harmonization and exchange of information at the regional level about adequate tools and practices.

Mr. Chairman,

Assistance and cooperation hold a key role in the objectives and activities identified by the EU Strategy to combat illicit accumulation and trafficking of SALW and their ammunition, adopted in December 2005. Allow me Mr. Chairman, to mention here five of our projects in this regard as examples of the EU’s continued support to the ITI.

- First, in 2008, the EU implemented a tailored Joint Action, consisting of three regional workshops, presenting the main aspects and implication of the International Instrument to States in West Africa, Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean.

- Second, also at the regional level, in September 2010, we organized, in cooperation with UNDP, a similar event for the countries of the Western Balkans. The seminar was part of an EU project, providing support to countries in the Western Balkans to fully implement their obligations deriving from the UN Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument, including through the support to national demilitarization efforts in the region, improvement of weapons registration process, and of the management and security of unsafe and unstable stockpiles of weapons and ammunition.

- Third, in the framework of another project to be soon finalized and to be implemented by UN ODA, the EU will support the organization of regional training-of-trainers courses in West Africa. The courses will focus on essential aspects of the International Tracing Instrument, the provision of marking facilities and expertise in countries of the region lacking
such equipment, including through the acquisition of marking machines, and the establishment of record-keeping facilities, and training of law enforcement officials in marking and tracing.

- Fourth, in addition to long-standing support to strengthen capacities of several Regional Economic Communities in Africa in the field of SALW, the EU launched in March 2010 an ambitious project to support the fight against the illicit accumulation and trafficking of firearms in Africa, via the Regional Centre on Small Arms and Light Weapons (RECSA). This project inter alia aims at raising the awareness and knowledge of relevant institutional and civil society actors on legislative and institutional aspects and at strengthening the African Regional Police Chiefs Organisations (RPCOs) and the capacity of law enforcement agencies to fight cross-border trafficking, including training on marking and tracing techniques.

- Lastly, the EU has provided financial assistance to Interpol for the development of a database to collect data on lost/stolen arms. The database would provide a centralized tool for tracing and tracking of illegally possessed firearms and their flows. The main expected results of the project are:

- Establishment of an international system to report lost and stolen firearms available for Interpol Member States;
- Stemming the flow of illicit firearms to criminals and to regions where firearms contribute to destabilization;
- Identification of illegal arms flows;
- Identification of firearms traffickers;
- Provision of direct international assistance for police in investigating crimes involving firearms.

These are only a few examples of the assistance that the EU can provide in the field of SALW.

Finally, Mr Chairman, the EU would like to stress the importance of reporting on the implementation of the ITI, a commitment that UN Member States have undertaken to fulfil every two years. National reports on the ITI represent an exceptional tool to assess the needs and gaps that still exist to ensure the full implementation of the instrument. We consider it essential to improve the capacity of recipient countries and the coordination of donors to identify specific assistance needs and offers and to this end recognize the important facilitating role of the Implementation Support System of the Programme of Action. We call on all States to continue to submit their national reports to the UN Secretary General, including relevant information on the implementation of the ITI.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman