IRELAND

Statement by

Mr. Jim Kelly
Deputy Permanent Representative

at the

2012 UN 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

General Exchange of Views

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Madame President,

At the outset, I would like to congratulate you on your election, and offer my delegation’s full support to you as President of the Second Review Conference. Ireland is committed to the full implementation of the Programme of Action and stands ready to provide you with any assistance you might require over the coming days. I would like to associate my delegation with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union.

Madame President,

The UN Programme of Action was drafted more than a decade ago to tackle the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, which continues to cause the majority of conflict deaths. The appalling humanitarian and socio-economic consequences of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons should be at the forefront of our minds as we undertake our responsibility at this Review Conference to agree on ways to strengthen the implementation and the impact of the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument. Importantly, our work should take full account of the evolution of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in the years since 2001.

Madame President, your early circulation of draft outcome documents establishes a good basis for our work at this Conference – our goal must be to agree an ambitious set of outcomes which can fulfil our shared commitment.

As we review developments over the last decade, we can point to certain areas of tangible progress. These include:

- the successful development of a standardised reporting format and the submission to date of more than 600 national reports, as well as the important work carried out in matching up the information in these reports to specific requirements for assistance;
- the agreement of the International Tracing Instrument;
- the work undertaken at the regional level to enhance information exchange, cooperation and the regulation of the arms trade; and
- concerted efforts to develop the International Small Arms Controls Standards, a major element of which will be launched this week; Ireland is proud to have offered significant support to the development of these standards.

However, Madame President, we should also acknowledge the shortcomings in implementation of certain parts of the Programme of Action. The sharing of information between States and within the UN system represents a key element of the Programme, both to enable States to meet minimum and best standards and to tackle the illicit trade of arms. Efforts to broaden and deepen this information exchange must be maintained, while the full implementation of other instruments, including the UN Firearms Protocol and the
International Instrument on Marking and Tracing, is critical to the fight against the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

We must also remain conscious of the connection between the various strands of work on global arms control and the fight against the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. In this context, Ireland believes that a strong, robust and transparent Arms Trade Treaty would make a vital contribution to efforts to eliminate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. While the recent negotiating conference did not result in a final agreement, Ireland considers that very substantial progress was made. We will continue to work with determination, along with the many other committed States from all regions, towards the early adoption of this treaty.

Madame President,

Ireland believes that the sharing of expertise and the provision of assistance is indispensable to the successful implementation of the Programme of Action. Since the Programme was established, Ireland has provided over €2 million in direct assistance to projects aimed at combating the illicit trade of small arms and light weapons. Members of our police and defence forces have participated in numerous missions abroad, working to mitigate the effects of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and assisting with the demobilisation, disarming and rehabilitation of former combatants to conflicts across Europe and Africa. Ireland remains strongly committed to fulfilling its obligations to assist others in implementing the Programme of Action, and we look forward to further, enhanced collaboration with partner States to this end.

As a member State of the European Union, Ireland contributes to and implements the EU Strategy on Small Arms and Light Weapons. We welcome the development of initiatives in other regional fora aimed at tackling the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, and offer our full support to such mechanisms.

In closing, Madame President, let me thank you again for the wisdom and leadership you have shown to date. We know that you share our collective wish for a positive, ambitious outcome to this process, and we offer our full support to you as you lead our important work over the coming fortnight.

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