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

STATEMENT BY

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TO THE UNITED NATIONS

(NEW YORK, 27 AUGUST 2012)

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Madam President,

Allow me at the outset to follow previous speakers in congratulating you on your appointment as President of this Review Conference. As you already shown during the intersessional period and the PrepCom, your leadership and your ability to listen to different positions and contributions will certainly help this Conference to achieve the desired successful outcome we all wish.

My country fully subscribes to the statement previously pronounced by the European Union. Allow me in addition to present some remarks on a national basis.

Madam President,

Eleven years after its adoption, the Programme of Action (PoA) remains relevant. The illicit trade of Small Arms and Light Weapons was an issue of grave concern for the international community back in 2001. It remains very much so today, in 2012. The difference from eleven years ago, I would say, is in the level of awareness inside the international community that this issue needs to be addressed swiftly, decisively and effectively. SALW is the weapon of choice in many conflicts worldwide. The debate and the negotiations held at the ATT Conference last July gave us a clear indication of the importance that most countries attach to the issue of the illicit trade of SALW. Preventing their illicit trade and trafficking, by also improving the traceability of such weapons, is therefore necessary if we want to reduce human suffering and the negative consequences that conflicts have on the social and economic development of the countries and peoples concerned.

The draft Outcome Document that you circulated well in advance of the Conference is in our view a very good basis for the next review cycle. It does address the challenges ahead, it identifies the areas that remain of concern and it presents useful solutions. At the end of this Conference, the importance and relevance of the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument (ITI) will have to be confirmed and enhanced. This is our ambition and our aim and we intend to cooperate closely with you, Madam Chair, in achieving this result. The time allocated to this Conference is not too long, therefore we all need to have a focused, concrete and result-oriented approach.
The Italian delegation has already presented some specific comments during the meeting of Preparatory Committee last March. I do not intend to repeat them here verbatim. They are well known and on the record. Allow me however to identify once again a few points to which my Delegation attaches great importance.

First of all, we would like to recall the importance of the UN Firearms Protocol as a key component of the international efforts aimed at curbing the illicit trade of firearms and the role that such weapons play in transnational organized crime. Italy has been at the forefront of the international efforts to fight transnational organized crime, through the Palermo Convention, and we see very much the connection between the phenomena we combat through that legal instrument and the phenomena we try to curb through the Programme of Action. We are pleased to see that such connection is reflected in your draft Outcome Document.

Another aspect worth mentioning is transparency. Italy together with its EU partners supports the inclusion of SALW as a permanent category in the UN Register of Conventional Arms. We think it is important to ensure transparency in this field, since SALW, as I said before, are the weapons of choice in many conflicts around the world. We also favour the idea of synchronizing PoA and ITI national reports with the calendar of PoA meetings. This would provide substantive contributions to the meeting and also help reducing some “reporting fatigue”, by giving reporting an evident purpose.

Finally, we should decide at this Conference how to structure the next review cycle. As we said in March, these are times of financial constraints. We should therefore refrain from some kind of proliferation of meetings. We need instead a clearly structured programme of work for the years ahead. Meetings of States Parties every two years and a Review Conference every six remain in our opinion a good solution. However, should we decide to hold Meeting of Governmental Experts in addition to the MSP and the RevCon, they should have a clearly defined mandate, so that they could deliver concrete results and thus provide added value to the whole process.

In conclusion, we reserve our right to further intervene on specific issues during the proceedings of this Review Conference. Please rest assured the Italian Delegation’s full support to you during the Conference.

I thank you Madam President.