Statement by H.E. Mr. Kazuo Kodama
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At the Second 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

27 August 2012

Madam President,

At the outset, I would like to express my delegation’s sincerest congratulations to you on your assumption of the presidency of the conference. It has been extremely fortunate and helpful for us that you have presided over both the Preparatory Committee and the Review Conference. With your guidance, we were able to kick off our work smoothly and we believe that your continued leadership will steer us to a productive outcome. To this end, I would like to assure you of my delegation’s full support and cooperation in your endeavours. We support the “Zero Drafts” presented by you as the basis for the discussion during the Review Conference which will eventually be developed into the outcome document.

Madame President,

Japan has long been engaged in the issue of small arms and light weapons. Almost every year since 1995 Japan has been a lead sponsor of the UN General Assembly’s resolution on small arms and light weapons, and since 2001 we have been joined in this effort by Colombia and South Africa. During this Review Conference as well, we, as a Vice Chair and a facilitator, are very keen to contribute to the success of the Conference.

Madame President,

Member States of the United Nations started addressing the issues of small arms and light weapons by adopting the UN Programme of Action. We need to assess the outcome of our collective efforts, and identify the area of the PoA in which further efforts are needed, based on the experiences and lessons learned over the past decade, with a view to deepening the
implementation of the PoA in a comprehensive manner.

To this end, I would like to highlight Japan’s priorities in two areas related to promoting the implementation of the UN Programme of Action.

First, I would like to touch upon the subject of “International Cooperation and Assistance.” It has been repeatedly said that approximately 500,000 people are killed by small arms and light weapons each year. As more than ten years have elapsed since the adoption of the PoA, it is now high time for us to focus on implementing the Programme on the ground, including concrete ways of facilitating international cooperation and assistance. This Review Conference provides a good opportunity to focus on these matters.

Japan has been extending assistance through projects such as stockpile management and destruction, as well as capacity building in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. In our view, there are a number of important lessons that can be learned from the successful implementation of the PoA in Asian countries. Measures for implementing the PoA at the national level must be comprehensive, simultaneous, and inclusive. Such measures should include (i) collecting and taking measures against illicit arms possessed by civilians, (ii) putting in place appropriate stockpile management for arms possessed by security agencies, and (iii) destroying collected illicit and surplus arms. Such a holistic approach will have a synergistic effect. It is also important to enhance the capacity of law enforcement agencies. This point is especially relevant in order to build confidence between civilians and law enforcement agencies and to mitigate the sense of insecurity among elements of the civilian population which may tend to rely on small arms.

Furthermore, projects for implementing the PoA should be developed with due consideration to the specific situation and needs of the recipient countries and regions. It is worth noting the various existing methods for collecting arms, such as goods in exchange for weapons programs, education campaigns, and increasing law enforcement capacity. In order to achieve these objectives, the knowledge and expertise of peace-building experts should be utilized. The expertise of regional institutions should also serve as a platform in promoting intra-regional cooperation. In this regard, Japan attaches importance to the UN Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in the Asia-Pacific Region and intends to continue to support it. We believe that UN Regional Centers in other areas could also play an important role in exchanging good practices and extending assistance to regional states based on their particular needs.
Second, I would like to express our view on the need to follow-up the outcome of the Second Review Conference. It is our strong belief that it is essential at this Review Conference, for us to agree on a programme for the next intersessional period leading up to the 2018 Review Conference, including deciding on the specific priority areas to be discussed.

Therefore, we propose that meetings such as the Meeting of Governmental Experts be used to strengthen the implementation of the PoA through technical discussions. Also, as we introduced at the PrepCom, in light of a number of incidents involving stockpile explosions in the African region and elsewhere and the high possibility of the diversion of small arms to illicit markets, Japan proposes “stockpile management and destruction” be labeled as a priority issue and tackled in the next six-year cycle.

Including the issues I mentioned above, Japan is prepared to discuss with other delegations an efficient ways to follow-up the issues identified at the Review Conference so as to make the following six-year cycle more meaningful.

Madame President,

I would finally like to restate my delegation’s strong support for your presidency and for the success of this Conference. Japan is ready to contribute in various ways in order to ensure the adoption of an outcome document that not only reviews the progress made in the implementation of the PoA, but also draws a map to direct us forward.

I thank you Madame President.