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STATEMENT BY

the Kingdom of the Netherlands

at the

Second Review Conference of the United Nations 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

NEW YORK, 28 August 2012
Thank you Madam President,

Allow me first of all, Madam President, to congratulate you on your election as Chair of this Second Review Conference, and to thank you for your constructive efforts to prepare this important meeting. I would like to assure you of my delegation’s full support and take the opportunity to express the Netherlands alignment with the statement made by the European Union (and the EU working paper d.d. 24 July 2012).

This Review Conference gives us a possibility to reaffirm our political commitment and look at what we have achieved a decade after the adoption of the UN Programme of Action (to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects (PoA). Moreover, we should look at ways to strengthen the implementation of the PoA and the International Tracing Instrument (ITI) at national, regional and an international level.

Fundamentally, the availability and uncontrolled spread of SALW feeds political instability and conflicts, and threatens the conditions for social, economic and human development which is underlined by the World Development Report 2011. The presence of large quantities of SALW in societies, especially in fragile states and ‘under- governed’ areas, may cause social tensions and fuel violence. Marginalized groups find it easier to arm themselves for armed conflict and the black market is more likely to grow under these circumstances, further empowering criminal elements in society.

Therefore, full implementation of the Programme of Action remains key today. In tackling the negative spiral described above, the following elements should be taken into account:

Firstly, the illicit trade in SALW should be approached in an integrated manner, addressing good governance, security- and justice reform and providing alternative livelihoods initiatives. The Netherlands remains committed to the implementation of the Programme of Action, and continues to support SALW programmes as part of the Netherlands Security and Rule of Law policy. Our SALW activities and programs focus on stockpile management and destruction, capacity building of relevant organizations, and improving laws and regulations on arms trafficking. We aim at an integrated approach addressing SALW within broader Security Sector Reform (SSR) and Demilitarization Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) programs.

Secondly, the integration of gender perspectives into the implementation of the PoA is regarded as a priority by the Netherlands. This is in line with our National Action Plan (NAP) regarding resolution 1325 (2012-2015). This is illustrated by the Netherlands support to the Security and Sector Development program in Burundi. In this program gender perspectives are part of every activity and next to this, improvement of gender balance in security providing institutions is high on the agenda.

Thirdly, I wish to stress the important role of organisations and civil society for successful implementation of the PoA and follow-up process. In this regard there is an increased role for regional and sub-regional organisations.

Fourthly, The Netherlands encourages the support of international initiatives and mechanisms, such as the Group of Interested States, the PoA-Implementation Support System (ISS) and the ITI itself. They make the PoA implementation and follow-up process more structured and transparent.
As mentioned, the illicit trade in SALW, and the violence resulting from it, has a devastating effect on development. Realising that this is not solely the responsibility of affected countries, The Netherlands supports initiatives like the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development. Affected countries and donor countries join hands to deal with what is, in essence, a cross-border problem and therefore our common responsibility.

Madam President,

This Review Conference provides us with the opportunity to address the impact of illicit trade in SALW in a collective manner. I would like to express my delegation’s support in making the upcoming two weeks as constructive as possible. It is important to look into ways to strengthen and further improve implementation of the PoA and to estimate a precise follow-up mechanism which ensures an effective structure for the next review cycle.

The “Draft Outcome Document” that you and your team prepared for us, provides an excellent basis to do so. Let me again mention that my delegation is looking forward working together with you in bringing this conference to a successful outcome.

Thank you Madam President.