

**United Nations First Biennial Meeting of States to Consider 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**

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Opening Statement by the Chairperson

H.E. Kuniko Inoguchi, PhD
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Japan
to the Conference on Disarmament

Excellencies, Distinguished delegates, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

Allow me to express my most profound gratitude to you all for the trust you have placed in me by electing me Chairperson of the United Nations First Biennial Meeting of States to Consider 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, which was adopted at the July 2001 United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects.

It is with great pleasure and honour that I look forward to humbly serving you during the First Biennial Meeting of States, which constitutes an integral part of the follow-up to the Conference at which Member States recommended to the General Assembly, among other things, to convene a conference no later than 2006 to review progress made in the implementation of the Programme of Action, and to convene a meeting of states on a biennial basis to consider the national, regional and global implementation of the Programme of Action.

Subsequently, by operative paragraph 2 of resolution 56/24 V of 24 December 2001, the General Assembly decided to convene a

meeting of states on a biennial basis commencing in 2003. This decision was reaffirmed in operative paragraph 1 of resolution 57/72 of 22 December 2002, by which the General Assembly decided to convene in New York in July 2003, the First Biennial Meeting of States as stipulated in the Programme of Action.

This meeting, therefore, is being held pursuant to the Programme of Action and General Assembly resolutions. Its objective is to offer a valuable opportunity for all States to recount their experiences in coping with the problem of illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, to gather momentum to invigorate both political will and professional competence to combat the problem, and to chart a course to provide a better, safer, more peaceful and less tragic world for the generations to come.

Distinguished delegates,

This Meeting will provide us with an opportunity to identify appropriate strategies to address the obstacles that have confronted us over the last two years, thus enhancing our collective sense of ownership and responsibility for the process we initiated in July 2001. It will also serve as a forum to strengthen the partnerships for action we have established through a variety of international assistance and cooperation initiatives.

To achieve these objectives, we must have the generosity to candidly discuss both successes and difficulties, so as to deepen our shared understanding of how best to face the many and complex challenges ahead, and materialize the tremendous potential for effective results that the Programme of Action offers.

Distinguished delegates,

The Programme of Action outlines principles, strategies, and aims we all share. Its adoption in July 2001 represented a milestone, both in advancing the global disarmament agenda, and in promoting the security of the peoples of the United Nations. Its adoption by consensus, as you will all recall, was no easy task, and was due to the political will displayed by States to constructively negotiate issues of common concern.

At this stage, I would like to acknowledge the exceptional work of Ambassador Camilo Reyes of Colombia, President of the July 2001 UN Conference, whose tireless efforts and personal commitment, together with outstanding diplomatic skills, facilitated the adoption of the Programme of Action.

Distinguished delegates,

Let us maximize this opportunity to boost the momentum created in July 2001 and reinvigorate the translation of the wordings of the Programme of Action into concrete, effective and robust deeds in the field. In this manner, we will take full responsibility in curbing the suffering created by the uncontrolled proliferation of illicit small arms.

Reading the reports that more than 70 countries have submitted to the Secretary-General, as well as other information from international, regional and sub-regional organizations, civil society and non-governmental organizations, one gets a clear picture of the depth and extent of the commitment of the entire international community in responding to the call to combat, prevent and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects.

In his Report to the Security Council (S/2002/1053 of 20 September 2002), the Secretary-General stated that “the spread of illicit small arms and light weapons is a global threat to human security and human rights. At least 500,000 people die every year as a result of the use of small arms and light weapons. Of the estimated 4 million war-related deaths during the 1990’s, 90% of those killed were civilians, and 80% women and children, mostly victims of the misuse of small arms and light weapons. In addition, tens of millions more people have lost their livelihoods, homes and families because of the indiscriminate and pervasive use of these weapons”. It is estimated that the total value of small arms exports in the year 2000 was approximately US\$ 2.1 billion, of which the estimated value of the total legal international trade in small arms, light weapons and ammunition is considered to be about 50%.

The problem of illicit trade in small arms and light weapons is multidimensional and should be addressed accordingly. Only by

addressing this issue simultaneously at a global, regional and national level, and also by tackling the problem in a comprehensive and inclusive manner in all its thematic aspects, making sure that cross-cutting elements such as ownership, partnership, assistance and cooperation are penetrating every facet of our endeavors, will it be possible for us to make progress.

No State alone can prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. But no State is alone in this struggle, for the Programme of Action provides a framework for collective action by us all.

Indeed, in the Programme of Action states have undertaken to cooperate to ensure coordination, complementarity and synergy in their efforts to deal with the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects at global, regional, subregional and national levels. States further undertook to encourage the establishment and strengthening of cooperation and partnerships at all levels among international and intergovernmental organizations and civil society, including non-governmental organizations and international financial institutions (PoA section 3, para 2).

Distinguished delegates,

I have made every effort to ensure that we hold a Meeting that responds to the concerns and expectations of all States, a Meeting that evokes a real sense of ownership on the part of every State. Through the various informal, open-ended consultations I conducted, both in New York and in Geneva, as well as in the many bilateral contacts I held with States, I have tried to find a common ground and foster a robust multilateral UN process.

I am convinced that with the wealth of experiences and expertise each one of you will bring to our discussions, with our collective commitment to the task at hand, we will all emerge at the end of our Meeting, individually and collectively, with renewed hope and dedication to pursue innovative actions in order to reach a meaningful and tangible reduction of the circulation of illicit small arms and light weapons in all our countries, and all around the world.

With your wisdom, cooperation and support, let me assure you of my absolute determination to do my modest part in ensuring the success of the United Nations First Biennial Meeting of States to Consider 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.

Thank you very much.