Statement

by

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Member of the Delegation of Thailand
to the First Committee

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Thematic Debate: Conventional Weapons

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Thailand associates itself with the statement made yesterday by the distinguished representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Mr. Chairman,

1. The illicit proliferation and misuse of small arms and light weapons (SALW) pose a serious threat to peace, security and development as it is inextricably linked to transnational crimes, drug trafficking, terrorism, human rights violation and has devastating consequences on humanitarian and social-economic issues. Illicit SALW is a real and constant threat in countries and communities that suffer from conditions of underdevelopment, as well as lack of rule of law. Their abundant availability, easy concealment, affordability and durability make them the weapons of choice for gangs, organized crime and armed groups that prey on impoverished communities.

2. The problems associated with the illicit proliferation of SALW transcend national borders and affects poor and rich countries alike. Illicit SALW proliferation is a global challenge which requires our collective efforts to tackle it in a comprehensive manner.

3. Thailand supports the UN Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in SALW (UN PoA). We see the PoA as the culmination of the international effort and political will to tackle the challenge of illicit SALW. The implementation of the PoA would help decrease human suffering from the misuse of these deadly weapons.

4. Additionally, Thailand is committed to the International Tracing Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons. The key international standard on marking SALW as well as the systematic record keeping of the marked weapons under the International Tracing Instrument are notable measures to identify the line of supply and improve traceability of illicit SALW. Thailand supports efforts at all levels to effectively implement the International Tracing Instrument in a concrete manner.

Mr. Chairman,

5. This year marks the Third Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the PoA. We welcome the fact that the Third Biennial Meeting has produced a substantive outcome document that lays the groundwork for the furtherance of important initiatives under the PoA. Thailand notes with appreciation this on-going follow up process of the UN PoA with regard to preventing and combating the illicit brokering of SALW. Furthermore, Thailand appreciates the role of UNODA and UNIDIR in
establishing the Programme of Action Implementation Support System (PoA-ISS), including a database for matching needs and resources, which contribute to enhance the effective communication between States that request and offer assistance to support the implementation of the PoA.

Mr. Chairman,

6. Like the illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons, landmines destroy lives and hinder development. The international community therefore had come together under the umbrella of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on their Destruction (Ottawa Convention) in 1997 with the goal of eliminating the scourge of landmines for once and for all.

7. Thailand attaches great importance to the principles of humanitarianism, which always has been at the core of Thailand’s foreign policy. Our attachment to humanitarianism was the inspiration for Thailand to sign the Ottawa Convention on the very first day it was open for signatures. Thailand is fully committed to the obligations under the Convention and has been playing an active role from the beginning, for example, by hosting the Fifth Meeting of States Parties to the Ottawa Mine Ban Convention in 2003.

8. Thailand welcomes the outcome of the Eighth Meeting of States Parties to the Convention held in Jordan last November. We also welcome the accession of Palau to the Convention which increased the number of States Parties to 156. Indeed, Thailand attaches great significance to achieving universal adherence to the Convention.

9. We look forward to the coming Ninth Meeting of States Parties to be held in Geneva, Switzerland next month, in which Thailand has the privilege to serve as co-rapporteur of the Victim Assistance Committee under the Convention. Because of our commitment to humanitarianism, victim assistance is an imperative issue for Thailand. We place great emphasis on Article 6 of the Convention, especially with regard to the rehabilitation process.

Mr. Chairman,

10. The obligation on the destruction of all anti-personnel mines, as mandated by Article 5 of the Convention, is a priority for the Royal Thai Government. At present, Thailand has cleared around 63 percent of the total mine-suspected areas. This year, the Government has set aside 1.4 billion baht (around 41 million USD) to complete the task of de-mining in Thailand’s territory.
11. Since becoming party to the Ottawa Convention, Thailand has never used anti-personnel mines for any purposes. Our mine action efforts have been very successful in preventing new landmine related deaths and injuries. This is why we view with shock and disbelief that, just two weeks ago, two Thai army rangers stepped on anti-personnel mines while conducting routine duty patrol along a trail in the area of Phu Ma Khua in Thailand’s territory near the border with a neighbouring country. Both men lost their legs upon impact. Thailand views this incident with grave concern because local inhabitants regularly walk along this particular path, which they have understood to be free of landmines.

12. The incident immediately raised suspicion among Thailand’s de-miners operating in the area. Upon further investigation, the Thailand Mine Action centre and the NGO Mekong Organization for Mankind discovered four more landmines on the trail. They concluded that these mines were recently laid, and intentionally placed to injure passer-bys. The mines – PMN2 models – were in almost perfect conditions. The ones that exploded carried a force more powerful than the usual old mines. Therefore, we could say with confidence that these were not the remnants of three decades of war in the area.

13. Thailand therefore has reasonable doubt that the mines come from a foreign source. We find it particularly regrettable that, in this day and age, these inhumane and devastating weapons are still being used. Furthermore, we are alarmed that this incident could constitute a violation of Article 1 of the Convention.

14. Thailand regards this incident as a matter that carries far reaching implications for the Ottawa Convention and hence is in the interest of all the States Parties. Thailand is currently seeking clarification on this issue vis-à-vis the appropriate channels as provided for under the Ottawa Convention.

15. Thailand wishes to reiterate that, as the president of the 5th Meeting of States Parties, we are a strong believer and advocate of the spirit and principles of the Ottawa Convention. As such, we are compelled to take steps to defend the integrity and sanctity of this important international instrument.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.