Fourth 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

Statement by the Delegation of Japan

Border Control

Mr. Chairman,

On behalf of the Government of Japan, I would like to congratulate you, Ambassador Macedo, on your appointment as Chair of this Forth Biennial Meeting. I would also like to thank you for your thorough and energetic preparations for this meeting. I assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation.

Mr. Chairman,

Japan attaches great importance to the issue of small arms and light weapons (SALW). It has presented the draft resolution to the UNGA since 1995, and from 2001 together with Colombia and South Africa. Japan has also hosted and supported a number of related conferences and workshops and has a long track record of providing assistance to numerous SALW-related projects in supporting the implementation of the PoA.

Mr. Chairman,

On the subject of border control, I would like to thank you for providing us with this opportunity to conduct focused debate on this issue. I would also like to thank the Friend of Chair of this topic, the distinguished delegate of Uruguay, Mr. Perazza, for preparing the working paper we have before us.

The paper makes specific references to border control contained in various regional and sub-regional instruments. It also gives some useful suggestions on possible actions for this BMS to consider, specifically the reinforcement of the legislative/regulatory regimes; enhancement of practical cooperation
among the relevant institutions; holding enforcement authorities meetings; strengthening border control mechanisms by the international community; and the establishment of a National Focal Point — all of which my delegation considers as important elements in addressing the cross-border illicit trade in SALW.

Mr. Chairman,

In my intervention, I would like to give you a glimpse of Japan's experience on this issue.

In Japan, the possession of guns is strictly controlled by the law and handguns may only be carried by the police or other public officers who require them for official duties. These strict regulations contribute to a very low rate of gun-related crimes. However, guns that have been smuggled into the country represent a large portion of the illegal firearms in Japan and further exacerbate organized crime. In our endeavor to reduce the number of gun victims, border control for gun smuggling remains a challenge to my country.

The Japanese Government has taken major steps to fight gun smuggling and illegal firearms, such as setting up an inter-ministerial body to promote handgun control and setting out a series of actions to pursue powerful control measures for firearms. Given the multiplicity of national bodies responsible for border control, close cooperation and coordination among the relevant Ministries and the law enforcement authorities is the key to effective gun control and strengthening the system. The law enforcement authorities conduct frequent and timely exchanges of information, consultations, joint exercises and training, and personnel exchanges.

In Japan, which is an island country, vigorous measures have been taken to promote coastal operations, including thorough investigation and detection of smuggled guns, strict inspection and licensing, requests for cooperation from relevant local authorities and trade associations, and strengthening of the international postal inspection system.
Mr. Chairman,

International cooperation is essential to ensure effective border control. The Japanese Government has initiated various activities in this area — for instance, promoting cooperation between customs authorities, holding working-level meetings regularly, establishing and utilizing international and regional networks for information exchanges, sending customs officers to those countries from which illegal guns have been shipped to Japan to collect relevant information, and providing financial and technical resources to foreign governments to support various projects for the enhancement of capacity-building of customs and police.

Mr. Chairman,

Different regions and countries must grapple with their own unique situations and difficulties. This focused debate gives us an excellent opportunity to take stock of our national experiences — both challenges and successes — and also to identify the areas where assistance and cooperation are required. We hope that this debate will highlight the practical aspects of the issue and produce action-oriented recommendations.

I thank you.