Statement on behalf of the European Union

by

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at the
Preparatory Committee of the Review Conference on the
UN Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in
Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects

on
Agenda Item 7.a.i.:
Preventing, combating and eradicating the illicit trade in SALW in all its aspects at the national, regional and global level

New York
19 March 2012
Madam Chair,

1. I have the honour to take the floor on behalf of the European Union.

2. The European Union warmly congratulates you, Madam Chair, on your appointment as Chair of the PrepCom as well as the members of the bureau. We are looking forward to continuing working closely with you and your team, the UN Secretariat and all delegations to agree on an appropriate draft agenda, draft rules of procedure and draft final documents for a successful Review Conference.

3. Ever since the adoption of the UN Programme of Action in 2001, the European Union has been working with great energy in international fora, at regional and sub-regional levels, and with individual third countries to fully implement the various provisions of the UN Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in SALW at the national, regional and global level.

4. Since 2001, we already had the opportunity to review all our efforts to implement the PoA on various occasions. We commend the progress that has been made. However, the illicit trade in SALW in all its aspects has not yet stopped. The illicit spread and misuse of these arms and their ammunition still cause a terrible number of deaths and injuries and continue to pose a serious threat to peace and security, stability and sustainable development.

5. The Second Review Conference provides the opportunity to not only assess progress made in the implementation of the PoA, but also to explore ways to strengthen its implementation, to focus on those areas where significant concerted efforts are further needed and to revitalize the PoA.

6. Madam Chair, the European Union wishes to warmly thank you for the preparation of the six indicative non-papers. They provide a helpful outline for the next days and plenty of ideas for possible areas of discussion. We fully rely on your guidance in steering our deliberations on the substantive elements that should be reflected in the PrepCom Outcome Document in an efficient way.

7. Following your suggestion, the European Union and its Member States wish to highlight the following substantive elements with regard to the implementation of the PoA at the national level which, in our view, deserve our increased special attention and intensified concerted efforts to overcome the obstacles which still persist in the implementation of the PoA. At the same time, we would like to stress that some of these issues are not only relevant at the national level, but also at regional and global levels.

These issues are

– enhanced transfer controls on SALW and ammunition in relation to the transfer provisions as contained in the PoA;

– improved national coordination mechanisms among all relevant national authorities in the implementation of the PoA, including the establishment or strengthening of National Coordination Bodies, lessons learned on the operation of such bodies and, in particular, enhanced cooperation and coordination among customs, border control, police, judicial authorities and arms transfer licensing authorities;
the responsibility of each State to take all necessary steps to prevent the illicit proliferation of MANPADS and their components;

– the establishment of adequate stockpile management and stockpile security;

– the effective implementation of the UN Firearms Protocol;

– the effective implementation of the International Instrument on Marking and Tracing, on which we will have a separate agenda item;

– the need to better address the devastating consequences of the illicit trade and misuse of SALW on children;

– the importance of ensuring increased representation of women at all decision-making levels in security sector institutions dealing with SALW-related issues and the specific link between the PoA and Security Council Resolution 1325.

8. With regard to the implementation of the PoA at the regional level, the European Union would like to see, among others, the following substantive elements to be reflected in the outcome document:

– We should acknowledge the contribution made by all relevant legally and politically binding instruments that have been adopted at regional and sub-regional levels, by the relevant regional and sub-regional organizations, to assist States on various aspects of the implementation of the PoA, such as the OSCE document on SALW and the 2008 EU Common Position on common rules governing exports of military technology and equipment, including SALW;

– Complementing increased efforts at national level, States should be encouraged to reinforce inter-agency cooperation among customs, border control, police and judicial authorities at regional level to prevent the illicit trade in SALW across borders;

– We should encourage all efforts made by regional and sub-regional organizations to adjust their reporting requirements to those of the PoA.

9. Finally, with respect to the implementation of the UN PoA at the global level, we believe that the following issues deserve our particular attention:

– The consideration of possible synergies between the ATT process and the PoA, including, for instance, the development of further mechanisms at the national, regional and international levels to assess the risk of diversion in the context of transfer authorizations of SALW to ensure, for example, the effective implementation of arms embargoes decided by the UN Security Council;

– We believe that we should consider and suggest concrete measures to enable peace-keeping and peace-support operations to contribute effectively to the safe storage, disposal and tracing of illicit SALW, including specific mandates, the establishment of a pool of civilian and military experts and possible changes to mission structures;

– We also agree with the suggestion put forward in indicative non-paper 3 to consider concrete ways of enhancing cooperation between panels of experts and peacekeeping missions to facilitate information sharing and synergy of efforts;
Moreover, we need to take full advantage of the benefits that can be offered by the World Customs Organization and INTERPOL, including, for instance, the use of INTERPOL’s illicit arms records and tracing management system (iARMS), which aims to assist its Member Countries to report, search and trace stolen and lost firearms;

- We also support the formal inclusion of SALW as a category of the UN Register of Conventional Arms.

- Finally, States that have not yet done so should be encouraged to ratify or accede to the UN Firearms Protocol to effectively complement the PoA.

10. We also wish to acknowledge the work of civil society at all levels of implementation in preventing, combating and eradicating the illicit trade in SALW.

11. We are looking forward to elaborate further on these, and some other, individual topics in due course and in writing to contribute to a results-oriented discussion.

12. The European Union remains committed to fighting the spread and misuse of SALW around the world. It has provided assistance to States, sub-regional, regional and international organizations to better implement various provisions of the PoA and wishes to reiterate its readiness to continue providing financial and technical assistance to enhance the capacity of States, sub-regional, regional and international organizations to control SALW and reduce armed violence.

13. In conclusion, the European Union wishes that this PrepCom successfully establishes the necessary administrative foundations and, as far as possible, also the substantive foundations to equip us well for the Review Conference in the summer. You can rely on the full support of the European Union in this endeavour and we are looking forward to preparing this Conference well.

Thank you.