PREPARATORY COMMITTEE FOR THE
UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE TO REVIEW 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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STATEMENT BY
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Madame Chair:

It is now more than a decade since the adoption of the UN Programme of Action (POA). Much has been achieved in terms of national POA implementation and of regional and international cooperation in support of this. Elements of the POA have also been substantially elaborated, and the process itself has further developed and evolved.

But the POA has also faced setbacks, both in its diplomatic process and on the ground. Accurate information on implementation remains incomplete; and what information we do have suggests that efforts have been variable at best. Moreover, where POA-related measures have been implemented, we have little understanding of their impact or effectiveness.

Most fundamentally, the impact of illicit small arms and light weapons (SALW) and the problems of chronic conflict, instability and organised crime to which they contribute have not abated since 2001; indeed, in many parts of the world they have become more acute. Global victims of lethal violence are estimated to total well over half a million people annually; in addition to the devastating impact these weapons continue to have on the social, political and economic fabric of many countries. These figures considerably understate the tragedy unfolding in the most affected countries, where annual rates of violent death are running as high as 60 per 100,000 of population.

All of which makes the POA as relevant and important today as when it was agreed in 2001; and places a heavy responsibility on all of us to make this year's 2nd POA Review Conference a success. To be judged as such, the Review Conference will need to do the following:

a) Reaffirm the strong commitment of Member States to implement the POA, and consolidate developments and agreements within the process since 2001;

b) Consider the implications of other developments since the POA's adoption for its effective implementation, for example, major trends in small arms challenges on the ground, progress in related policy debates, and relevant technological advances;

c) Assess implementation of the POA to date, consider priorities for enhanced attention over the coming review cycle, and set out a clear programme of work to advance these; and

d) Consider ways to encourage and support enhanced implementation, including providing states with effective tools to assess needs, set priorities and seek appropriate assistance.
Madame Chair, with regard to implementation of POA commitments at the national, regional and global levels:

Many states have made good progress since 2001 in implementing measures to combat the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. But there are also clearly areas where further attention and assistance is required. The Review Conference provides a timely opportunity for states to provide frank and rigorous assessments of the extent to which their implementation of the POA has been sufficient; and to which measures have been effective where implemented.

During New Zealand's role as Chair of last year's Open-Ended Meeting of Governmental Experts (MGE) we consulted widely amongst regional groups regarding their priority areas for attention within the POA. It was clear from these discussions that there was strong interest in further work in the following areas:

a) Supporting the development and implementation of relevant national SALW legislation, regulations and procedures;

b) Enhancing management of government SALW stockpiles, including to strengthen safety, security, inventory management and surplus disposal;

c) Strengthening national and regional capacities for weapons collection, storage and disposal;

d) Enhancing national frameworks systems for addressing illicit brokering;

e) Strengthening the capacity and effectiveness of customs and law enforcement agencies in addressing illicit SALW flows, and promoting enhanced cooperation and information-sharing between such agencies domestically and regionally.

f) Deepening discussions on the design and implementation of national action plans and on the roles and functioning of national coordinating bodies and national POA points of contact, with a view to enhancing their utility and effectiveness.

One of the most important developments since 2001 has been the contribution made by regional and sub-regional initiatives, instruments and institutions towards POA implementation. In this regard, we hope the Review Conference will be able to:

a) Acknowledge and affirm the importance of these regional and sub-regional initiatives and instruments, and consider what further steps could be taken to support them; and
b) Consider the roles being played by regional and sub-regional organisations in support of POA implementation, and how these might be further strengthened.

It will also be important to acknowledge the complementary activities being undertaken by relevant international expert bodies (notably INTERPOL and the World Customs Organisation) and processes (including UNODC’s work to implement the Firearms Protocol to the UN Convention to Combat Transnational Organised Crime); and to reaffirm the importance of cooperation and coordination with these bodies to capture potential synergies and avoid duplication of effort.

Civil society played a vital role in the emergence of the POA; and since 2001 has played an equally important role in supporting its implementation in many countries. We hope the Review Conference can acknowledge this contribution, affirm its importance, and consider ways in which the partnership within the POA between civil society and Member States can be maintained and strengthened. New Zealand would also support consideration of the extent to which enhanced engagement with the private sector might further strengthen POA implementation.

The Review Conference will also need to reaffirm POA commitments relating to the effective implementation of UN arms embargoes and peacekeeping DDR programmes; and consider what further steps might be taken to help Member States fulfil these commitments.

Finally, it will be important to acknowledge the impact of SALW on civilians, including women and children, and the important role women play in supporting POA implementation.

Madame Chair, with regard to Implementation, International Cooperation and Assistance:

Ensuring relevant national institutions have sufficient capacity in terms of expertise, equipment and resources is a key challenge for many states in achieving effective implementation of the POA. While POA implementation is ultimately a national responsibility, international cooperation and assistance has a critical role to play in helping states strengthen such capacities.

Specific priorities for assistance will differ by country and region; and there is a limit to the extent to which the Review Conference can address each in detail. But we hope the Review Conference will be able to do the following:

a) Acknowledge and affirm the value of the various tools (guidelines, standards, model legislation, and other references and resources) developed at the regional and global levels to support POA
implementation, including the International Small Arms Control Standards (ISACS) under development by UN CASA, which have the potential to provide a valuable new tool for Member States, and consider ways to facilitate their uptake and effective utilisation.

b) Consider the development of others tools and resources that might be of use to Member States. In this regard, we would welcome consideration of the establishment of lists of relevant expertise in different areas of POA implementation which Member States could draw upon as required.

c) Discuss the role and effectiveness of existing mechanisms for matching needs with donor resources, and consider ways in which these could most effectively be utilised to strengthen donor coordination and ensure assistance is driven by the needs and priorities of recipient states.

d) Consider ways to encourage and facilitate enhanced international assistance, including South-South cooperation; as well as to ensure assistance provided is effective. In this regard, New Zealand echoes the call this morning by Indonesia on behalf of the NAM for the development of indicators to measure the effectiveness of POA-related programmes and assistance.

e) Discuss mechanisms to assist states with needs assessments and the setting of national priorities for POA implementation; including options such as strengthening national coordinating bodies, developing self-assessment tools, or even offering external reviews, at the invitation of national governments, to assist with needs assessment and priority setting.

Should there be sufficient interest, New Zealand is also considering hosting another "working reception" at the Review Conference, similar to the one held at last year's MGE, to facilitate informal dialogue between donor and recipient states on potential areas of cooperation.

Madame Chair, with regard to POA Follow-up Mechanisms:

A key area in which the POA process was insufficiently defined at the time of its adoption was that of having clear, structured, and effective follow-up mechanisms.

Incremental progress has been made since in developing and defining a more systematic POA process, most significantly through the steps agreed at BMS4. A key goal for the Review Conference must be to consolidate these agreements, and translate them into a clear plan for the process over the next review cycle.

At the Review Conference, we hope it will be possible to:
a) Agree on a clear programme of work for the next review cycle, including an approximate schedule of meetings and ideally also indicative topics for each, in order to provide the process with a more coherent, longer-term perspective. We welcome the ideas put forward by Japan in this regard, and look forward to discussing these further.

b) Agree to a continuation of the MGE format in the coming review cycle. My delegation believes further MGEs have the potential to play an important role in deepening dialogue and strengthening the exchange of information and experience on practical implementation.

c) Define further the respective mandates and roles of the various POA meeting formats - GGEs, OEMGEs, BMSs, RevCons - that have emerged.

The quality and frequency of national reporting on POA and ITI implementation continues to be irregular at best. Recent biennialisation of reporting and the rationalisation and simplification of reporting templates have been welcome; but scope remains for more to be done. In particular, we would welcome consideration of measures, including providing for a more active role by regional organisations in supporting member states, to further reduce reporting burdens while facilitating more regular and meaningful reporting.

Madame Chair, with regard to implementation of the International Tracing Instrument (ITI):

It is now almost seven years since the ITI was adopted. Considerable attention has been devoted to its implementation, at national and regional levels and through the further elaboration of its provisions at BMS3 and BMS4. In addition, last year’s MGE produced a wealth of information and ideas drawn from our collective implementation experiences. Copies of the MGE Chair’s Summary are available at the back of this room; and we welcome also the recent Small Arms Survey Issues Brief on key issues and ideas raised at the meeting.

Effective marking, record-keeping and tracing remains of considerable importance for identifying points of diversion of SALW to the illicit market and for enabling successful prosecutions for SALW offences. Several ideas raised at the MGE that warrant further discussion at the Review Conference, include:

a) Establishing a technical committee to assess the implications of recent trends and developments in SALW technology and design for effective marking and tracing. There may be value in considering a similar exercise in relation to the POA process more broadly.

b) Considering ways to facilitate enhanced information-sharing on national marking practices.
c) Considering measures to strengthen national capacities to enable the accurate identification of weapons and markings and to ensure their accurate and sufficient entry into national registers – all of which were emphasised as vital in order to enable successful tracing.

d) Identifying ways to support the uptake and effective utilisation of available tools and technologies for marking, record-keeping and tracing, including electronic record systems, laser marking, and INTERPOL tracing and firearms reference tools.

e) Reaffirming the value of import marking for many states, especially in regions with a prevalence of older weapons with long ownership chains, and in settings where record-keeping systems have been insufficient.

f) Assessing key capacity shortfalls identified at the MGE and identifying priorities for future assistance.

It would also be timely to consider more fully the role that tracing operations can and should play in the context of UN peace operations and arms embargoes.

In Conclusion, Madame Chair:

We do not expect outcomes of this kind to be easy. The time available to us is short, and we will need to focus our efforts on goals that are both achievable and of practical use to Member States. We will also need to be disciplined in our use of time, and approach those sensitive issues that will inevitably arise in a spirit of patience, flexibility and mutual respect.

New Zealand has full confidence in your stewardship, and is committed to working with you, and with all other delegations, to make this meeting a success.