EU Statement

by

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General Exchange of Views

Third UN Conference to Review Progress Made in 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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I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The Candidate Countries Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, Montenegro*, Serbia* and Albania*, the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

Allow me first to congratulate you on your appointment as President of the Third Review Conference of the UN Programme of Action. The EU commends you, your team and UNODA for the inclusive and transparent preparatory process carried out over the course of the past year. The EU welcomes your draft outcome document as good basis for negotiation. You can count on the EU’s support in your efforts towards a meaningful consensus outcome.

The EU notes that illicit small arms and light weapons continue to contribute to instability and armed violence, thwarting sustainable development and crisis management efforts, further destabilising entire regions, the States therein and their societies, fuelling armed violence and organised crime, and amplifying the impact of terrorist attacks. Therefore the EU is committed to prevent and curb the illicit trade in SALW and their ammunition and to promote accountability and responsibility with regard to their legal trade.

The EU considers the UN Programme of Action as the universal framework to counter the threat posed by illicit SALW and supports its full and effective implementation at national, regional, and global levels. The EU has consistently supported the implementation of the PoA with cooperation and assistance as reported by means of public progress reports. The EU has also supported the run up to this Conference by cooperating with UNODA and Small Arms Survey to set up a series of thematic symposia and regional conferences. I want to thank the President of the Conference for his availability to participate in many of these events, of which we hope that they have contributed to a better understanding of the issues at hand and a path towards common ground. The results of this support project will be presented at a side-event on Tuesday 19 June at lunch time.

The EU considers that this Review Conference should have the ambition to ensure the continued relevance and increase the effectiveness of the PoA and the International Tracing Instrument. The EU will therefore contribute constructively to a meaningful and concrete consensus outcome while pursuing that the following key objectives are reflected in the Conference's outcome document.

In our view the outcome document should:

i. Recognise that the implementation of the PoA is supported by synergies with international instruments with similar objectives such as the Arms Trade Treaty and the UN Firearms Protocol, inter alia on reporting obligations.

ii. Add the prevention, combatting and eradication of the illicit trade in ammunition to the scope of the PoA.

iii. Acknowledge that, in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, development cannot be realised without peace and security and that peace and security will be at risk without sustainable development and that curbing the illicit trade in SALW and ammunition is crucial in this regard.

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* The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.
iv. Recognise the differing impacts of armed violence on women, men, girls and boys, and promote the role of women in implementation of the PoA and gender awareness in SALW control actions as a condition for their effectiveness. Ensuring that data on SALW is gender-disaggregated could be a practical and effective measure to enhance such awareness, as was also agreed by Member States during the sixth Biennial Meeting of States of the Programme of Action.

v. Take action to preserve and increase the effectiveness of the Programme of Action and its International Tracing Instrument in light of developments in SALW technology, design, manufacture and trade. In relation to this, the EU is especially concerned that the growing trend of small arms with a modular design and the absence of a global standard on how and where to mark these weapons, risk gradually undermining the capacity to trace these weapons. In order to enable and preserve the capacity to trace modular SALW, it is necessary for the Review Conference to agree on a process with a view to reaching a consensus on the marking of modular SALW.

vi. Promote the systematic tracing of seized illicit SALW, the exchange of information between competent agencies on a national, regional and global level, in accordance with national legislation, and the use of this information to identify and stop diversion.

vii. Underline the role of responsible arms export control practices in preventing and combatting the illicit SALW trade, including by means of assessing the risk of diversion prior to granting export licences.

viii. Support SALW control activities in conflict affected areas including by, considering on a case-by-case basis, the inclusion of assistance for arms embargo monitoring and stockpile management when defining the mandate of UN and regional peace support operations.

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x. Highlight the role of the PoA in the fight against terrorism. The effective implementation of the PoA contributes to thwarting the acquisition of SALW by terrorists, thus reducing the potential impact of their attacks.

xi. Support for the important role played by regional organisations in implementing the PoA as well as for the involvement of researchers, civil society and industry in PoA related activities in general.

In addition to these ten key objectives the EU will put forward additional objectives during the debate on the outcome document. The EU's common position on the outcome document has also been submitted as a working document.

Thank you Mr President.