Statement by Finland at the
Third Review Conference of the
UN Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons

Statement by

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Mr President,

I would like to begin by thanking you for the transparent and comprehensive manner in which you have steered the preparations for this conference. The draft outcome document is for us a very good basis and you have our full support in your demanding task. In addition to the statement by the European Union I would like to emphasise some key issues from a national point of view.

Mr President, dear colleagues,

Many things have changed in the 17 years since the PoA's inception. In the next two weeks our task is to ensure the continued relevance of the PoA, updating it as necessary to meet the challenges of today. At the same time, continued implementation of the commitments we have all undertaken is crucial. Words must be turned into deeds. After all, the instrument before us is called the Programme of Action – not the Programme of Inaction.

The relationship between small arms control and sustainable development is clear and needs to be thoroughly reflected in the outcome document. SDG target 16.4 is a good place to start, but we need to reflect more broadly on the various goals of Agenda 2030. SALW control should not be treated in a silo anymore.

Instruments such as the PoA and the Arms Trade Treaty should be seen as mutually reinforcing and directly improving States' ability to implement their obligations under Agenda 2030. Here, we would like to thank Secretary General Guterres for his Agenda for Disarmament, which makes clear the many links between SALW control and our broader efforts at promoting security and development, peace and prosperity.

One important aspect to consider is Goal 5, gender equality. Recognising the equal role of women and men in small arms control is a much needed addition to the outcome document, and an important element as we work towards a smart, cost-effective and truly inclusive approach. By better including women in policymaking, planning and implementation of the PoA we all win, and no one loses.

Preventing small arms and light weapons from diverting to illicit users is the core business of the PoA, and rightly so. However, even the most powerful weapons are useless without their ammunition. Finland strongly supports the inclusion of ammunition into the scope of the PoA. As with the weapons the PoA covers, so too would the inclusion of ammunition only cover their illicit transfers and uncontrolled circulation. Inclusion into the PoA would assist in keeping ammunition away from organised crime groups and terrorist organisations but would not create obstacles to legal trade. I hope this is a goal we can all work towards.

Controlling the illicit flows of SALW and their ammunition is achieved through a combination of political will and hands-on action. By implementing the International Small Arms Control Standards and the International Ammunition Technical Guidelines States can go a long way in improving their national practices and preventing the diversion of SALW to unintended users.
The International Tracing Instrument needs to be updated to meet new challenges such as those stemming from 3D-printing and the use of polymer materials. As the Secretary General has emphasized, new weapons technologies increase the risk of attacks by terrorists and non-state actors. International cooperation among States in detecting and tracing illicit small arms would be made easier by using microchips and micro-marking, and by dedicated training programmes. Therefore we support the inclusion of these items into the outcome document.

Mr President,

Finland has been a steadfast supporter of the valuable work of NGOs, civil society and think-tanks on SALW, including by funding the UN Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation, UNSCAR. One area of our support will be discussed at more length at a side-event organised jointly by Finland, UNIDIR and the Federal Republic of Somalia, on Weapons and Ammunition Management in Somalia. An invitation has been provided to all participants. Please join us next Wednesday, 27 June, for an interesting debate and a light lunch.

Mr President, Finland looks forward to a close cooperation with you and your team, the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs and all Member States to make this Third Review Conference a success.

Thank you.

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