Third United Nations 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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Statement by
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Thank you, Mr. President,

At the outset, please allow me to congratulate you on your appointment as President of the Review Conference as well as the members of the Bureau. Hungary welcomes the transparent and inclusive way you have steered the preparations for this meeting, including the formal consultations and the early circulations of the Chair’s drafts. We believe that these drafts serve as an excellent basis for the work that needs to be done during the next two weeks. I would like to assure you of Hungary’s dedication and support for your efforts reaching a consensus based outcome that is not just acceptable to everyone, but one that is also satisfying to all State Parties.

Hungary fully aligns itself with the statement of the European Union, delivered earlier; therefore, I would only like to make the following remarks in our national capacity.

First, Hungary fully shares the concerns of the international community that illicit trade, spread and misuse of small arms and light weapons (and their ammunition) still cause a terribly high number of deaths and injuries and continue to pose a serious threat to international peace and security, as well as, stability and sustainable development. We believe that the UN Programme of Action is one of the most important and universal tools in global efforts to combat these threats. However, it is not the only tool. In this regard, synergies with other international instruments like the Arms Trade Treaty, the Firearms Protocol, and regional organisations, such as the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), are vital. The ATT is a comprehensive instrument for establishing common standards in this field that complements the PoA as it includes SALW in its scope. It also goes a step further: it contains provisions on ammunition. Also, the adoption of the Best Practice Guide on Deactivation of Small Arms and Light Weapons by the OSCE, as well as the review of the EU SALW strategy are steps that were dearly needed.

Second, Hungary attaches great importance to ensuring effective export control procedures that meet all existing international requirements. Just last week, Hungary held a seminar in Serbia on export control issues of which the risk of diversion of SALW was an important part. As Participating States of the Wassenaar Arrangement, Hungary, Croatia and Germany are the co-rapporteurs of Bosnia-Herzegovina’s accession to the Arrangement. In order to accelerate this process, in April, we organized an export control seminar in Sarajevo that also addressed SALW.
In the OSCE framework, we support the Regional Programme on Liquid Rocket Components Disposal in Belarus, the Capacity Development Programme for Demilitarization and Safe Storage of SALW in Montenegro, the Conventional Ammunition Stockpile Management in Serbia and the Reduction of the Risk for Proliferation of Weapons and Ammunition in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. For years now, Hungary provides the coordinator for the OSCE Forum for Security Cooperation SALW and Stockpiles of Conventional Ammunition projects. We support the initiative of France and Germany to create an action group on illicit firearms trafficking in the Western Balkans. Besides sharing our experience and knowledge, as members and participating states of the export control regimes, we fully abide by our international obligations and submit our national reports annually for the relevant international organisations – the UN ROCA, OSCE, Wassenaar Arrangement, and the ATT, just to name a few.

Third, it has been six years since the last Review Conference in 2012. A lot of work has been done, new initiatives have been set up, more and more members of the international community implement the PoA. During the biannual meetings of State Parties between 2012 and now, we reflected developments in the PoA field and the efforts that UN Member States were undertaking. Also during the last six years, it became visible that the UN PoA is not without fault and despite of our best efforts the illicit trade in SALW has not yet stopped.

Mr. President, without ink, a pen will not write, without supplies of ammunition, weapons cannot kill. We consider the question of adding the prevention, combatting and eradicating the illicit trade in ammunition to the scope of the PoA as timely and highly relevant. Every State aims to regulate trade in SALW ammunition and UN arms embargoes of SALW usually entail prohibitions on ammunition. We need to take the hint and at least discuss bringing ammunition into the scope of the UN POA.

Last but not least, Mr. President, there is a clear nexus between the spread of small arms and light weapons and the heinous terrorist attacks committed all around the world. Hungary therefore welcomes the key objective of the PoA in the area of limiting the acquisition of SALW for use for terrorist purposes. We support the implementation of the Firearm Directive of the European Union, and the European Commission’s recommendation of April, 2018, for its full implementation, as well as the SALW goals of the EU’s Western Balkans Strategy, and all
similar international and regional binding and non-binding legal instruments in relation to other regions of the world.

Mr. President, today’s modern wars are not fought by nuclear weapons, but to a large extent by small arms and light weapons. It is our belief that the ability of all member States to reach consensus on the final document of this meeting will show our common dedication to combat illicit proliferation of SALW and, respectively, encourage States to further promote implementation of the Program of Action in the future.

I thank you for your attention.