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

PHILIPPINE STATEMENT
By Special Envoy Mr. Bruce Concepcion
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Thank you, Mr. President. The Philippine delegation wishes you well and thanks you for your dedicated leadership as President of this Review Conference.

Mr. President,

In the two-year war against illegal drugs 8,439 firearms were captured in police operations. Eighty-seven policemen were killed, while 227 were wounded. In the far longer anti-insurgency war, thousands of firearms have been captured, more surrendered. In the 70s and 80s, Philippine security forces fought far better armed secessionists, with weapons coming from governments friendly to the insurgents. But with what we had, Philippine security forces beat insurgents consistently—most recently in the textbook perfect retaking of the city of Marawi from ISIS-led terrorists which included foreign fighters and large amounts of illegal weapons of foreign origin. Always outgunned but never outfought is how we’ve had to do things; but we do get them done.

From time to time, it becomes difficult for the Philippine state to obtain weaponry from foreign sources to fight these wars because of disagreements with the governments of foreign suppliers about how the Philippines fights wars. But it is our exclusive sovereign prerogative to address the roots, or to fight the flower of conflict and criminality. Our choice. We wish to know why criminals and terrorists have an easier time getting more and better weapons than the one truly democratic republic in our part of the world.

The Philippines is one of the fastest growing economies in the world, and well-armed lawlessness and drug dealing will not derail our progress. Despite one convention after another, the problems remain. But we will fight with what means we have, and prevail as we have always done. We would appreciate more help disarming illegally-armed elements and better arming our security forces, and no interference with how we handle conflicts.
The Philippines has completed the draft of the Philippine National Action Plan on Small Arms and Light Weapons. The draft features a whole-of-government approach to enhance our capabilities to combat the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

We are working to address the gaps we keep discovering. We have stricter protocols on gun licenses and permits and far less red tape. Government is rolling out a nationwide firearms amnesty program to increase the documentation of firearms. Of the 1.7 million registered firearms, 489 thousand were registered and renewed; the rest expired because of the stringency of the laws. Now we have confined registration exclusively to a one-stop shop, put it online and without punitive features to remove fixers, and thereby achieve our primary aim: the registration of all firearms.

Of all firearms recovered in police and military ops, about 1% were ever registered, leaving some 99% unregistered. This shows the porousness of our border control. Therefore, the Philippines seeks the fullest cooperation with international partners.

Under its commitment to the United Nations Programme of Action, the Philippines submits timely reports to UNODA.

Mr. President, my delegation would like to highlight the following points:

1. The Philippines recognizes the importance of international cooperation and assistance for building capabilities. That assistance cannot be attached to political conditions and subjected to foreign second-guessing on what security operations we choose to conduct.

2. Addressing the diversion of small arms and light weapons that eventually end up in terrorist hands must be a top priority.

3. We support a standard template for End User Certificates (EUCs) and End User Statements (EUs) from private entities in the importing State.

4. Discussion on weaponry must include ammunition. The disconnect is not sound; it means that once weapons are successfully smuggled, the supply of the corresponding ammo is free, clear and limitless. The Philippines, on its part, has included this already in its new firearms law.

5. Philippine efforts to implement the UN PoA must be complemented by the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), which will soon be ratified by the Philippine Senate.

6. The Philippines believes in the inclusion of gender aspects of SALW issue.

Thank you, Mr. President.

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