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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

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

STATEMENT BY MR. GEORG SPARBER, DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE

Mr. President,

Liechtenstein congratulates you and the other members of the bureau upon your election and ensures you of its full support to make this Third Review Conference a success. The Conference meets under critical circumstances. Despite our past efforts and commitments small arms and light weapons are fueling conflict and violence across the globe at unprecedented levels. The unmeasurable harm these weapons inflict on civilian life, be it in conflict or non-conflict situations, represents an enormous responsibility for the international community. More decisive action is needed against the pervasive availability of small arms and light weapons. The draft outcome document provides important elements to strengthen prevention and mitigate their negative impact on human security, fundamental rights and freedoms and sustainable development and we hope for an ambitious outcome of this Review Conference.
Mr. President

The unrestricted flow of arms continues to be a main driver of conflict and contributes to the worrying trend of ever more protracted conflicts, largely at the expense of civilian life. States’ obligations under international humanitarian law to protect civilian populations in conflict are clear, yet respect of these obligations is eroding. Small arms and light weapons are the number one killer of civilians in conflict and the urbanization of conflict further increases the threat posed to civilians by these weapons. The Review Conference provides us with an opportunity to send a clear signal that the international community is willing to act in light of these concerning developments. More needs to be done to curb the illicit trade of small arms and light weapons, in particular into conflict areas. The Programme of Action has an important role in this respect and should complement and further build on legal obligations that States have under the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), the Firearms Protocol of the Palermo Convention and other relevant instruments. It should also contribute to the universality of these instruments. In this regard, it is important to recall that the ATT provides a minimum standard for legal arms trade, in particular also its landmark provision on export assessment criteria. In addition, the Review Conference provides a platform to issue a clear call for accountability of violations of international law. Strengthening the rule of law and its institutions should be at the core of the international community’s response to the eroding effect of the unrestricted flow of weapons on both of them.

Mr. President,

The 2030 Agenda for sustainable development has brought a political consensus that the illicit trade of small arms and light weapons has broad negative consequences on sustainable development, the social fabric and the rule of law. Achieving our targets with respect to small arms and light weapons will have a positive contribution across our collective sustainable development goals, with particularly positive synergies in the area of gender equality. Women
and girls are known to be disproportionately at risk to become victims of violence by small arms and light weapons as they are several times more likely to become victims than perpetrators. We applaud the Secretary-General’s clear commitment to address the gender dimension in his new disarmament agenda, including with respect to small arms and light weapons. The intergovernmental processes should align with this approach and adopt a consistent development and human rights perspective in its disarmament discussions. The regular meetings we have to assess and review progress on the Programme of Action provide ample opportunities in this regard. In addition, Liechtenstein supports outreach efforts of the First Committee of the General Assembly to maximize synergies of its disarmament discussions for the broader UN agendas in the area of sustainable development, human rights and peace and security.

I thank you.