Statement by
H.E. Mrs. Darja Bavdaž Kuret
Permanent Representative of the Republic of Slovenia to the United Nations
on behalf of the Slovenian Chairmanship
of the OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation

at the 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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organizations

Mr Chairperson,
Distinguished Delegates,

The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) plays an
important role in ensuring politico-military security, conflict prevention and
resolution, terrorism and crime prevention, human rights, and sustainable socio­
economic development. Every effort at a regional level is a stepping stone towards
increased stability and an essential contribution to a safer and more secure world.

It is recognized that small arms and light weapons (SALW) cause the majority of
deaths and human rights abuses not only in conflicts, but also during peacetime.
Because of their compact size and ease of availability, these are often the weapons
of choice for rebels, armed groups, terrorists and criminal gangs. We witness how
the presence of illicit weapons prolongs existing conflicts, undermines weapon
destruction and disarmament and demobilization and reintegration processes, and
prevents the establishment of long­lasting peace in fragile security environments.

The OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation, a decision­making body dealing with
politico­military aspects of security, provides a platform for discussion on SALW and
conventional ammunition related issues. Since 2012 numerous Security Dialogues
were organized on SALW and stockpiles of conventional ammunition (SCA) related
issues. Just last month, at a Security Dialogue organised by the current Slovenian
Chairmanship of the Forum for Security Co-operation, the participating States
discussed the importance of SALW export controls and their deactivation, also in
light of this Review Conference. In other words, SALW normative aspects, best
practices, assistance projects are discussed on a regular basis among all 57
participating States to facilitate the implementation of the agreed commitments.
On assistance projects
In this regard, the safe and secure storage of SALW and conventional ammunition, in line with the international standards and commitments adopted at the OSCE, is vital to prevent the diversion of such weapons and ammunition to illicit markets. For more than 15 years already, participating States have had the opportunity to reach out to other States and the OSCE as an organization to obtain assistance with issues pertaining to small arms and light weapons, as well as to stockpiles of ammunition. During the last six years, a total of 30 projects have been implemented in four OSCE regions with donor assistance amounting to EUR 35 million.

An overarching project on strengthening OSCE action against the illicit proliferation of SALW and SCA has been launched to assist the participating States in being able to better plan, implement and if necessary strengthen their commitments in the area of combating the illicit proliferation of SALW/SCA.

The OSCE is focusing on a more flexible and all-inclusive approach to the assistance mechanism and funding, as well as on capacity-building and networking. Co-ordination of efforts is essential. We will keep reaching out and collaborating with other international organizations and non-governmental organizations to ensure co-ordination of efforts. With the accumulated expertise of participating States and the international network, the regional efforts of the OSCE are making a difference.

On normative aspects
As a reflection of the OSCE’s concept of comprehensive security and working in cooperation with other international forums, the OSCE participating States work in accordance with their developed norms, principles and measures covering all aspects of SALW control. In the OSCE Documents on Small Arms and Light Weapons and Stockpiles of Conventional Ammunition, they have agreed to regulate the production, transfer, storage, collection, and destruction of such weapons, and to control their export. These framework documents and the OSCE Handbook on Best Practices cover each stage of the life cycle of SALW and SCA, committing participating States to a number of standards which, if fully implemented, assist States in their efforts to implement the Programme of Action on SALW.

As part of its efforts aimed at facilitating a shared understanding of the key principles to counter the spread and accumulation of illicit SALW and at contributing to the global efforts to address threats posed by the illicit conversion, transformation or reactivation of weapons, the OSCE has developed and adopted the Best Practice Guide on Deactivation of SALW on 21 February 2018 in Vienna.

In preparation for the Review Conference, the OSCE’s Conflict Prevention Centre, jointly with Germany and France, organized a side event on 20 March 2018 in New York and presented the Guide to the UN Member States and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations.
Information exchange on SALW
According to the Programme of Action requirements, the OSCE not only provides the Point of Contact and information exchange regime regarding SALW, but also gives regular overviews of the information provided by participating States.

As part of efforts to contribute to transparency, predictability and stability and to facilitate synergies in reporting, the OSCE together with UNODA has developed and launched an online reporting tool on SALW in 2017, allowing participating States to simultaneously submit national SALW reports to both the OSCE and UNODA.

Gender aspects
Gender aspects have become an integral part of the assistance projects, with due consideration given to the impact on women and children of the uncontrolled spread of SALW.

The OSCE supports the implementation of UNSCR 1325 on women, peace and security and of UNSCR 2250 on youth, peace and security. Let me highlight that the OSCE and UNODA jointly organized a training programme on Conflict Prevention and Resolution through Arms Control, Disarmament and Non-Proliferation in the OSCE Area in February.

The training course aimed at empowering women and to improve the knowledge of and increase women's participation in policy-making, planning and implementation processes in the area of arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation.

Mr. Chairperson,

In conclusion, let me highlight that regional efforts are essential in order to establish and advance effective and well-co-ordinated SALW control mechanisms and conventional ammunition related issues. It aims to prevent illicit conversion, transformation or reactivation of weapons by encouraging the participating States to integrate the norms into their legislation, to promote the use of international standards and to seek to tailor and apply the best practices for use at regional level, also taking gender aspects into consideration, to contribute to a safer and more secure world.

Thank you for your attention.