FIFTY-SEVENTH SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

FIRST COMMITTEE

draft resolution L.33

"Illicit Trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects".

Support statement
By
H.E. Ambassador Erling Harild Nielsen
on behalf of the European Union

NEW YORK
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Mr. Chairman,

I have the honour on behalf of the European Union to speak on the draft resolution L.33 entitled "Illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects". The countries of Central and Eastern Europe associated with the European Union Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and the associated countries Cyprus, Malta and Turkey as well as the EFTA countries of the European Economic Area, Iceland and Norway align themselves with this statement.

The European Union played an active part in the 2001 United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects as well as in the elaboration of the UN Programme of Action, in the negotiations on the UN Firearms Protocol and in the adoption of the OSCE document on small arms and light weapons.

The European Union stresses the need for a prompt implementation of the UN Programme of Action to combat illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. The European Union had hoped for a stronger Programme of Action on certain points. Therefore, the European Union is committed to an effective, ambitious and continuous follow-up process leading through the 2003 and 2005 Conferences to the next Review Conference in 2006. The 2003 Conference will be the first occasion to take stock of the progress, or the lack thereof, in the implementation of the Programme of Action. However, taking stock must be a dynamic process in which there is room for making proposals for strengthening and developing the measures contained in the Programme of Action. Legally binding commitments on marking and tracing as well as brokering could be further pursued. Only by using the two biennial meetings in 2003 and 2005 and the time between them will we be able to prepare appropriately for a successful 2006 Review Conference.

The follow-up process to the Programme of Action is outlined in the draft resolution L.33. The authors of this resolution (Colombia, Japan and South Africa) can be assured of the Union's full support.

The problem of small arms and light weapons is multidimensional and should be addressed accordingly. Only by addressing this issue at different levels, globally, regionally and nationally, will it be possible to make progress.

At the global level we reiterate the importance that we attach to the establishment of an international instrument to better identify and trace small arms and light weapons. It is well-known that the majority of the illicit flow of small arms and light weapons, is fed by items which originally have been manufactured on a legal basis but which are deliberately deviated in order to supply parallel illicit markets. Improving tracing of small arms and light weapons and exchange of information among states would therefore constitute a concrete step to fight this problem.
The EU welcomes the convening of the group of Governmental Experts to examine the feasibility of developing an international instrument to enable states to identify and trace small arms and light weapons, in a timely and reliable manner, while at the same time stressing its support of the French-Swiss initiative.

The EU stands ready to assume responsibility in this process and supports efforts to combat the illicit trade in these weapons and their proliferation.

I thank you Mr. Chairman.