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First Committee
Thematic discussions on conventional weapons

Speaking notes
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Mr. Chairman, distinguished delegates,

The UN Secretary-General in his April report entitled “Small Arms” observed that small arms and light weapons are the instruments of choice in crime and conflict. The Geneva Declaration latest report “Global Burden of Armed Violence” estimates that more than 740,000 people are killed each year, both directly and indirectly, with approximately two-thirds of these deaths occurring outside war zones. Some regions suffering much more than others, every country is affected to some degree.

Another diplomatic stalemate was no longer affordable. The Third Biennial Meeting, held on 14-18 July this year, has put the UN small arms process back on track. It’s modest and unequivocal success came in a form of rich, in-depth, and focused discussions and almost a universal agreement on the way forward, the first such agreement in 7 years. The BMS3 did not amend the PoA and ITI, but provided the means to spur implementations of these two instruments on national, global and, most importantly, regional levels.

I will spare you with the account of the BMS or the way that led to the outcome document. Many my colleagues, whom I recognize in this room, had their hand in writing, negotiating and putting together the substantive outcome, as contained in document A/CONF.192/BMS/2008/3. I also refer you to my article “Tackling the illicit small arms trade”, published this month as a featured article in Arms Control Today journal (www.armcontrol.org). The article sheds light on the preparatory process, method of work, factors that pulled towards the success, and next steps.

Shortly the First Committee will adopt an omnibus small arms resolution sponsored by Japan, South Africa and Colombia. The resolution will provide the framework for our future work. Hence, commending the sponsors I will focus today on the future of the small arms process - the way forward.
• Giving immediate effect to concepts and agreements contained at the BMS3 outcome document. Most importantly, the states at BMS3 agreed on the importance of regional approaches to the implementation of the PoA. Regional efforts play a central and essential role in connecting global commitments with national actions. Regional meetings, in this regard, will play an important role. Regional and sub-regional organisations and frameworks, however, will have to step up, in particular in building national capacities, increasing co-operation and assistance, and building support for action on BMS3 outcome recommendations.

• Establishment of UNODA's Programme of Action Implementation Support System and UNIDIR's database for matching needs and resources. States shall use these two instruments, in particular enhancing the exchange of information and building national capacity. Greater familiarization with the tools among recipient and donor communities will be required, if we are to follow up on a commitment agreed at the BMS – translate assistance needs into concrete projects with measurable goals.

• National reporting. The BMS stressed the importance of national reporting to Program implementation. Now less frequent but more comprehensive reports are expected. To increase comparability further developing of reporting templates will be needed. Templates may usefully reflect concrete assistance or capacity needs, available resources, assistance guidelines, contact points for projects, etc. National reporting has to be tuned up to concrete implementation steps and challenges. The more systematic analysis of reports will guide on where resources and diplomatic action are required most.

• Although UN PoA meetings are invariably held in New York, much of the expertise on small arms lies with the national missions—and intergovernmental and civil society organizations—in Geneva. The Geneva Process held the first meeting last week in New York, debating on ways to bridge the New York and Geneva disarmament communities, civil society, UN implementation agencies and partners. Developing an informal forum in New York, a kind of counterpart to the Geneva Process, is worth pursuing.

• Making better use of civil society expertise. Civil society had an important contribution to the success of BMS3. NGOs make a salient contribution in the field, building national capacities in many states and acting as implementing partners of many projects. The BMS3 has taken a first modest step, one hopes, towards a more interactive and productive relationship with civil society at future UN small arms meetings. Their
active involvement, in New York and in many regions, in a preparatory process for a next biennial meeting will be essential.

So far I have elaborated on the way forward process-wise. The process, frameworks, meetings are mere tools and means to tackle real issues. It is much more important to follow up on ideas of substance developed over the previous years or debated at the BMS.

- **On illicit brokering**, states agreed to take further steps to implement the recommendations of the Group of Government Experts. Regional and national efforts must be intensified in this regard. States also agreed to use international cooperation and end-user certification/verification to address this problem. Consideration of possible negotiation of a legally binding instrument is another important step.

- **On stockpile management and surplus disposal** states emphasized the link between effective stockpile management and surplus identification and their responsible disposal. Regional and national efforts shall now endeavour to focusing on enhanced cooperation, information exchange, capacity building, technical assistance, financial support where needed, regular and full review of management, safety and security measures, review of national stocks. States agreed this July to compile lessons learnt in stockpile management and develop practical guidelines. The Secretary-General of the United Nations may play a significant role in developing such guidelines.

- **The outcome on the implementation of the International Tracing Instrument** stressed the mutually reinforcing nature of weapons marking, record-keeping and tracing. The next steps for the ITI are relatively clear: training of national personnel; bringing national laws, regulations in line with the ITI; assistance to non-manufacturing states for import marking; further development of Interpol weapons Electronic Tracing System; more comprehensive reporting on ITI implementation.

- The outcome document lists the issues that various States—not necessarily the UN membership as a whole—consider important to Program implementation. These are, in essence, placeholders for future topics, subject to further discussion and negotiation.

- Among those, one topic commands a great deal of consensus now and is worth vigorously pursuing. Verifying the identity of the end-users of weapons shipments is an important means of preventing their diversion to the illicit market and enforcing arms embargoes. Without a standard format for authenticated end-use certificates, governments in transit states...
have little means of establishing their veracity. Some regional instruments address end-user certification and verification, but no global instrument on end-use verification exists. The Secretary-General of the United Nations in his 2008 report on Small Arms recommended developing an international framework for authentication, reconciliation and standardization of end-user certificates. In the outcome document of BMS3, states stressed the importance of end-user verification, including certification and standardization. The omnibus small arms resolution this year shall prod us to commence working on this practical issue.

Summing up, I wish to observe that BMS3, although quite successful, is only one additional step on the road. Long-term success in meeting the small arms challenge will require the sustained commitment of UN Member States to effective action in collaboration with our partners in international organizations and civil society.