Statement by the Representative of Portugal

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

New York
August 27, 2012
Madame President,

Portugal joins others in congratulating you on your appointment as Chairperson of this Review Conference of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. My country fully aligns with the statement of the European Union delivered this morning.

I am confident that your leadership and your perseverance that contributed to a productive intercessional period, will continue to guide us into a successful review of the progress achieved thus far, while furthering the goals of this unanimously adopted PoA. The early circulation of your “zero draft papers”, which have helped to inform this discussion, was especially welcomed.

Madam President,

The Programme of Action remains the key instrument of international acceptance and collaboration in this field. It is only appropriate that we do our utmost to strengthen its provisions, building on what consensus has already provided. I will try to outline some of the pressing issues regarding the implementation of the Programme of Action and the International Tracing and Marking Instrument (ITI), as well as my Country’s greater concerns over the widespread and ready availability of small arms and light weapons, and respective munitions.

Portugal remains a staunch defender of transparency in this field, as a confidence-building measure. My delegation hopes that this Conference can tackle the issue of reporting in regional contexts, encouraging States to recognize transparency as a key element for their security needs and to combat the destabilizing effects of the illicit trade of small arms, light weapons and its munitions.

In furthering these goals, Portugal strongly believes in the significant role that regional organizations can play. The implementation of the Programme of Action, the ITI or the United Nations Firearms Protocol could benefit from an enhanced regional approach, when coupled with the existing know-how of international organizations and agencies, such as the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs and the INTERPOL. Furthermore, regional organizations can make crucial tasks related to curbing the illicit trade less cumbersome and more effective, such as the tracing of arms, or bringing about a more complex and efficient system of arms control.

I would like to highlight, in this respect, the role of the African Union, the Regional Economic Communities and other regional bodies in the African
continent in fostering regional approaches to implement the UN Programme of Action. We encourage other regional organizations to likewise develop strategies to support the capacity building efforts of States in the fight against the proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

In addition, Madam Chairwoman, Portugal attaches great importance to the issues of stockpile management and stockpile security. These aspects are central to the eradication of the illicit traffic of small arms and light weapons and are a fundamental responsibility that all States should accept and embrace. They are also essential to more immediate aspects of human security and the economic and social development of communities.

Finally, Madam Chairwoman, I would like to highlight the subject of gender-equality in the field of security, where a great amount of work remains to be done. The international community should work tirelessly to encourage increased representation of women in institutions dealing with small arms and light weapons. Indeed, there is growing evidence of the link between such underrepresentation and the occurrence of gender-based violence and violence against children. We should seize the weeks ahead to consider ways and means to address the pervasive and painful consequences of discrimination.

I thank you, Madam President