Fourth Biennial Meeting of States on the United Nations 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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Other issues, and the identification of priority issues or topics of relevance in the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects and of their implementation challenges and opportunities

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(Check against delivery)

Thank you Mr Chair.

Australia supports the promotion of a culture of peace based on the principles established in the Charter of the United Nations and on respect for human rights, democracy and tolerance, the promotion of development, education for peace, the free flow of information and the wider participation of women as an integral approach to preventing violence and conflicts, and efforts aimed at the creation of conditions for peace and its consolidation.

Mr Chair
Thank you also for this opportunity to raise issues that do not fit under the three other specific thematic areas addressed at this meeting, but that are, none-the-less, vitally important.

At BMS3, there were a number of issues raised, and listed in the outcome document that we consider to be of value, and that would be worthy of further discussion. We will focus on several of these in our statement today: the practical implementation of the Programme of Action, measurement and assessment of this implementation, contribution of international development programs and victim assistance. These could be areas of discussion at future meetings.

Mr Chair

Australia has been heartened by the many examples of progress that we have heard since this meeting began. We consider that it is crucial to continue to move further forward in the practical implementation of the Programme of Action. Without these practical steps, we cannot succeed in our endeavours against the illicit trade of small arms and light weapons.

The ability to measure and assess the action taken by states to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons will contribute greatly to the success of implementation of the Programme of Action and will help identify gaps in implementation. Information sharing and transparency assists in building confidence between states, particularly neighbouring states, and contributes to informed and evidence-based policy discussions. It also provides information to support implementation, including of the International Tracing Instrument and border controls. We encourage states to provide information on their implementation of the Programme of Action.

Mr Chair

Further to our intervention this morning on international cooperation and assistance, Australia would like to draw states’ attention to the valuable contribution played by international development programs to the prevention, combating and eradication of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. The intrinsic link between peace building, development and a secure enabling environment is a key contribution to the effectiveness of development cooperation.

Australia’s work with regional partners and civil society to reduce the supply of weapons into and within fragile societies is complemented by the broader objectives of our aid program - poverty reduction and sustainable development - that contribute to reducing the demand for weapons in these societies.
Assistance for the victims of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons is of crucial importance. Small arms and light weapons are used to fuel and exacerbate violence and conflict, destroying lives and livelihoods and resulting in considerable harm including injury, maiming and loss of life. Those affected are often civilians not involved in conflict, and include women and children. These munitions are also used prevent the provision of humanitarian assistance.

In the implementation of the Mine Ban Convention, Australia has learnt the value of integrating victim assistance into broader development assistance programmes. Integrated mine action is an approach to improving the social and economic well-being of mine-affected communities that involves undertaking complementary programming across all areas of mine action and incorporating mine action activities into development programs. We suggest that a similarly integrated approach could increase the effectiveness of assistance to those affected by small arms and light weapons.

Mr Chair

There are a number of other issues that have been raised at this meeting that merit further discussion. These include the linkages between security, armed violence, development and human rights; the linkages between terrorism, organised crime, trafficking in drugs and precious minerals and the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons; and illicit air transport of small arms and light weapons.

Finally Mr Chair, the illicit manufacture, transfer and circulation of small arms and light weapons pose a serious threat to peace, security, development and human rights at the individual, local, national, regional and international levels. Australia strongly supports the ongoing attention that the United Nations Secretariat and the Security Council continue to give the protection of civilians to ensure that they are protected in situations of armed conflict.

Thank you Mr Chair.