Second Open-ended Meeting of Governmental Experts on 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

Opening Remarks

By

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Ambassador Lupan, Chair of the meeting,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,

We are gathered here in New York for a very important task: to undertake in-depth, expert-level consideration of the full and effective Programme of Action.

The Programme of Action - together with its concomitant International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons or International Tracing Instrument - are strong political commitments. They were agreed to by the full body of Member States within the United Nations. They thus form a global framework at the international community’s disposal. They help effectively address the perennial issue of illicit trade of small arms and light weapons, at all levels, global, regional and national.

Over the last decade, the world has been afflicted by over 250 conflicts. While no two are the same, the widespread availability of small arms and light weapons, and their ammunition, is common to all. More than 50,000 men, women and children have been killed each year as a direct consequence. The number of those displaced, now over 50 million, has reached levels not seen since the Second World War. Civilians – including children – continue to suffer the most. Ruthless, targeted attacks against civilians continue – against all basic principles of international law.

In the past years there have been major achievements in the fight against the illicit small arms trade. But Member States still continue to face daunting challenges.
Lives and livelihoods across the globe are destroyed by guns and light weapons that ended up in the wrong hands. The UN and other humanitarian organizations are severely hampered in their assistance to those needing it most. The significant negative impact of armed violence on socio-economic development and human well-being is increasingly being recognized as a central issue. It is essential for all parts of the world that we retain, in the draft post-2015 agenda, a target to significantly reduce the trafficking of arms.

The welcomed recent adoption of Security Council resolution 2220 on small arms and light weapons provides further concrete measures for operationalizing the work of the UN in this area. International and regional organizations, and industry experts remain important partners in the ongoing global efforts to tackle the issue. The continued participation of civil society representatives in meetings under the Programme of Action is also key: it helps raise awareness on the issue of small arms and presses decision-makers, including parliamentarians, to find the appropriate solutions.

Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,

Turning to the meeting ahead, the substantive items on the provisional agenda of MGE2 provide a forward-thinking framework for discussion. It would help the international community to take the next key steps. I am confident that the careful examination and discussion of these topics during MGE2 will enable you to identify further practical implementation measures. In this regard, the 2014 Secretary-General’s
report on recent developments in small arms and light weapons technology provides an overview of the trends, challenges and positive developments of such technological developments. I trust that it will be a useful resource for your discussions.

**More is possible.** It is important to make sure this meeting will not be a stand-alone event, but well-connected to the Programme of Action process. It is my hope that the good practices identified at MGE2 find their way towards consideration at future Programme of Action meetings. The valuable expertise present in this room today should continue to feed into the UN small arms process. It will also help the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument remain vital and up-to-date. This includes the opportunity to make good progress on assistance, transfer of technology, and capacity-building. This would also pave the way for a more robust framework for international assistance, as part of an agreed outcome at the upcoming Third Review Conference in 2018.

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

Next year - two years before the Review Conference - will see the Sixth Biennial Meeting of States under the Programme of Action.

In accordance with the agreed Outcome Documents under the Programme of Action process, the early designation of a Chair for future meetings is encouraged. I would also recommend to Member States an early discussion of provisional agenda items for the Sixth Biennial Meeting of States. Efficient management and timely, solid
preparation of meetings are absolutely vital.

Allow me now to conclude by wishing Ambassador Lupan of the Republic of Moldova all the best for his Chairmanship. I commend Ambassador Lupan for working with Member States in such a transparent and constructive manner and so skilfully steering the preparatory process for this meeting. I am confident that under his guidance, the discussions at MGE2 will be rich and productive.

I wish all of you a successful meeting ahead.