



REPUBLIC OF GUYANA

STATEMENT

by

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**to the First Committee of the
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General Debate

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Mr. Chairman,

Allow me at the outset to express sincere congratulations to you on your election as Chairman of this Committee, as well as all the members of the bureau. Your leadership thus far has confirmed that our confidence in your abilities is well placed. My delegation also takes this opportunity to welcome Mr. Nobuyasu Abe. We look forward to benefiting from his wisdom in the course of our deliberations.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of the Bahamas on behalf of the Caribbean Community. However, I wish to highlight a few points of particular interest to my delegation.

Mr. Chairman,

I wish to place on record Guyana's concern at the disastrous impact of the illicit trade of small arms and light weapons on the socio-economic fabric of our societies. Millions have lost their lives or have been maimed, particularly innocent civilians, overwhelmingly women and children. The large majority of cases of conflict are fuelled by small arms and light weapons. Serious human rights violations have ensued, including the tragic phenomenon of child soldiers. In many instances, an increase in violence is occurring in countries with limited capacity to deal effectively with this problem. Moreover, these arms and weapons have contributed to the creation of an environment hostile to trade and investment, much needed in our countries. The international community is now faced with the destabilising effect and security implications of the excessive accumulation and transfers of these arms and weapons.

Guyana has long had in place the basic legislative and administrative infrastructure for the control of arms, ammunition and explosives. These, however, are under consideration for review in light of the changing patterns in domestic criminality and the need to form international alliances in the fight against the illicit trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons. In this context, my country is working with CARICOM partners within the framework of the CARICOM Task Force on Crime and Security to tackle these and related problems. At the same time, the umbrella of collective security offered by the United Nations remains of paramount importance in safeguarding the welfare of states, particularly that of small states. If I may say so, Mr. Chairman, smallness must no longer be seen as an invitation to aggression, but rather as a virtue to be prized and protected. This will only be possible if, together, we strengthen the multilateral regime on which our collective security depends.

Mr. Chairman,

Against this background, we welcome the convening of the First Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the 2001 Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in all its aspects, held in New York from 7 to 11 July 2003. The Meeting has taken stock of progress since the Programme of Action was

adopted in 2001 and identified a number of issues where further progress needs to be made. This Committee now has the important task of building on the outcome of that Meeting, its efforts to address this issue as well as to act upon the recommendations made by the Group of Governmental Experts on the tracing of illicit small arms and light weapons. Given the destructive impact of this trade, serious consideration of this subject should remain a priority in the work of the First Committee.

Mr. Chairman,

Another scourge that needs to be eradicated is the presence of anti-personnel landmines, which kill and/or maim thousands of people every year. My Government is fully committed to this objective. In August of this year Guyana deposited its instrument of ratification of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines on Their Destruction. The Fifth Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention was held last month in Bangkok to advance the implementation of the Convention. We wish to register our profound appreciation to the Kingdom of Thailand for the excellent arrangements made and the warm hospitality accorded, which contributed to a worthy outcome.

We call upon all States to renew their efforts to support and advance the care, rehabilitation and social and economic reintegration of mine victims, mine-awareness programmes, and the removal of anti-personnel mines in the various regions of the world. To this end, we look forward to the outcome of the First Review Conference in 2004.

In closing, let me state that my delegation stands ready to work with you, Mr. Chairman, as well as with all delegations to advance the disarmament agenda. We would look constructively on any proposals made towards that end.

I thank you.