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Statement

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**at the 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, 28 June

Mr. President,

Let me at first of all congratulate you on behalf of the Delegation of the Republic of Macedonia on the election as President of the Review Conference. I am confident that under your guidance our work will produce substantial results. Rest assured of our full support.

The Delegation of the Republic of Macedonia aligned with the Statement of the European Union, however we wish to present a number of comments in our national capacity.

Mr. President,

Since the adoption of the Program of Action five years ago much progress has been achieved on national, regional and global levels. Yet much remains to be done. The Review Conference is an important opportunity to assess the progress achieved, to identify obstacles to full implementation, and to agree on the best and most efficient ways of addressing them.

Our goal of eradicating illicit trade in SALW may only be accomplished through transparent and effective trade. Therefore we must commit ourselves to elaboration of international standards on all transfers to provide states with rules to regulate transfers of SALW, nationally and regionally. This is the only way to bring the illicit trade under control and prevent SALW from being used by criminal groups to fuel conflicts, impede peace, undermine human rights and hold back development efforts.

Recognizing the leading role of the UN on the SALW issue we strongly support the deepening of SALW dialogue and cooperation with regional organisations, such as NATO, the European Union and OSCE, and with sub-regional initiatives. In this context, I would like to underline that our regional efforts have been greatly supported by SEESAC. Although certain overlap has persisted over the years due to the specificity of the issue, we are of the opinion that still efforts and resources were rationally used and deployed.

The Republic of Macedonia firmly believes that more must be done to stop armed violence and intimidation. In this context, Macedonia strongly supports the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development. We consider the Geneva Summit as an important step to develop measures that reduce the negative impact of armed violence in the world for the benefit of sustainable development.

Mr. President,

What has the Republic of Macedonia done in this area?

As you may know the Republic of Macedonia does not produce SALW. Our main objective continues to be the enhanced personal security undermined by SALW, by controlling legal weapon possession, and fighting illicit trade, with targeted interventions carried out by the national and local authorities in partnership with the civil society. Grass-root support is a prerequisite for SALW control.

The major driving force behind the large number of actions is the National Strategy on SALW adopted by the Government in 2005. It provides for the establishment of the National Commission to overview activities in the following functional areas: cross border control, legislative and regulatory framework; management information and surveys; public awareness and communications strategy; SALW collection; SALW destruction; stockpile management and security sector reform.

There have been a number of improvements in the sphere of the legislation too. For instance, the amended Criminal Code foresees more severe sanction for illegal manufacture, possession and trade in weapons of at least 5 years of imprisonment. Under the amended Law on Weapons of 2005, carrying of weapons in public places is forbidden. The new Law on

Weapons has been adopted in Parliament and will be implemented since January 2007. At present, secondary legislation is being drafted.

Currently we are also working on a new weapons registration and management system which has two components: registration of civilian owned weapons and stockpiles management. This will contribute to better control over civilian owned weapons, expedite resolution of criminal cases, enhance export-import control and ensure implementation of the UN Firearms protocol.

The fight against illicit trade has been improved by a number of activities: 1. security sector reform - establishment of a department for organized crime including a sector against illicit trade in weapons; 2. incorporation of the issue of SALW in the integrated border management strategy, adopted in October 2005 and 3. increased networking with SECI Center in Bucharest and Interpol.

Intelligence led operations have also contributed to finding and confiscating illegal stockpiles in the country. We have achieved much success over the last two years.

Mr. President,

Macedonia destroys all confiscated and found weapons on a yearly basis. Preparation for this year's destruction of 1500 weapons to take on 7 July 2006 is ongoing. This will bring the total number of destroyed weapons in the last 5 years to over 15.000.

Macedonia is implementing initiatives to reduce the demand for weapons at local level through nation wide public awareness campaigns and a safer community component. Municipalities in close cooperation with the local police design safer community plans to address the root causes for the use and demand for weapons. The approach has been successful, since the pilot communities where the projects were implemented showed 70 % crime rate reduction.

The Government of the Republic of Macedonia on 1 November 2004 adopted the Decision on Unilateral Acceptance of the European Code of Conduct on Arms Exports.

Detailed information of our performance in the area for SALW is contained in our 2006 report.

Mr. President,

The Republic of Macedonia will continue working on the implementation of the Action Plan by improving its stockpile management, regulations on marking and tracing and brokering, and will make further efforts to reduce the number of illegal weapons in the country. We will continue to enhance regional cooperation which is of pivotal importance to fighting arms trafficking.

As far as the Review Conference is concerned I trust that we will reach the necessary compromise and adopt a forward looking and substantial outcome document.

Thank you.