



ARMENIA

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SECOND BIENNIAL MEETING OF STATES TO CONSIDER THE IMPLEMENTATION
OF THE UN PROGRAM OF ACTION TO PREVENT, COMBAT AND ERADICATE THE ILLICIT
TRADE IN SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS IN ALL ITS ASPECTS

**Statement by Ms. Dziunik AGHAJANIAN, Deputy Permanent Representative of the
Republic of Armenia to the United Nations**

Mr. Chairman,

Allow me first to congratulate you on your election as Chairman of the UN Second Biennial Meeting and assure you of my delegation's full cooperation for its successful outcome.

In 2001 we adopted the Program of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons, thus acknowledging the threat they pose to international peace and security and making the initial steps towards concerted efforts to stop this scourge. It was not surprising given the eventual recognition of the fact that the proliferation of those weapons had become a fueling agent in many conflicts throughout the world. Three weeks ago, we successfully concluded the negotiations over another instrument to trace the illicit SALW, which should become the next critical step in combating the illicit proliferation of those weapons.

Since the adoption of the Program of Action, Armenia has, for two consecutive periods, submitted its national reports on the implementation of its provisions. At this meeting, which aims to review the process and assess its progress before the Review Conference in 2006, I would like to highlight some of the steps taken by the Government towards the implementation of the Program of Action.

Combating all types of illicit trafficking, including SALW, remains a priority for the Government of Armenia. To this end steps have been undertaken to improve the national legislation. The Government Decision on the "Rules and Procedures of the Licensing of the Production of Arms in the Republic of Armenia," which entered into force in July 2003, complemented the existing body of laws and regulations allowing for a more complete and stricter oversight in this field.

The new Criminal Code, which entered into force in August 2003, expanded the scope of the existing legislation by directly addressing the criminal offenses on illegal manufacture, possession, stockpiling, acquisition, sales, transportation and theft of arms and ammunition or explosives, and defining offences on inaccurate stockpiling of arms or negligence thereof.

The Government exercises stringent control over the possession, manufacturing and trading of SALW on the territory of the Republic. It keeps accurate records of the numbers of combat, civilian and service arms and weapons. The Law on Arms of the Republic of Armenia has a section dealing with information on civil and service arms and their bullets, which must be recorded with the State Cadastre.

The circulation of unmarked SALW in the Republic of Armenia is strictly forbidden by legislation. Any uncovered such weapon is subject to destruction, and the existing legislation provides a range of measures to that end.

Mr. Chairman,

The Armenian Government declared combating small arms proliferation a priority for its national security from the very first years of its regained independence, at a time when a large number of spontaneously formed paramilitary groups existed in the country. The effective disarmament of these groups and integration of ex-paramilitaries either in the newly formed regular army or in the civil society attests to the Republic of Armenia's success in establishing strict state control over small arms and light weapons on its territory.

My country attaches great importance to public education and awareness raising as one of the most productive tools in combating illicit circulation of small arms. Aside from publishing all respective laws governing exports, imports, marking, tracing and stockpiling of SALW, the Government informs the public through an official TV program on all cases of illicit trafficking of SALW or their possession, as well as refers to the relevant laws and legislative acts.

Mr. Chairman,

Armenia does not encounter significant illegal transfers across its borders, but is ready to cooperate with all its neighbors to ensure effective combating against all types of illicit trafficking. We successfully cooperate in this field with regional organizations, and the OSCE in particular.

However, further steps could be taken to enhance the cooperation by establishing a full-scale cross-border and regional cooperation to increase the effectiveness of a regional fight against illicit trafficking. It would also be useful to have a regional mechanism of dialogue and consultation between law enforcement agencies of the region on matters related to SALW. Furthermore, the establishment of a regional register of small arms and light weapons, as well as other cooperation mechanisms, such as specific sub-regional transparency and confidence-building measures with a view to combating illicit trade in SALW could prove to be fruitful. Harmonization of national export control laws and regulations, as well as exchange of national lists of registered brokers can be carried out within sub-regional or regional frameworks. Such initiatives for regions, such as the South Caucasus may contribute to the conflict resolution efforts by preventing further arms race in the region and serving as an important confidence-building measure.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.