



# SRI LANKA

**STATEMENT BY**

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**Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka**

**To the United Nations**

**At**

**The Second Biennial Meeting of States to Consider  
Implementation of the UN 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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*(Please check against delivery)*

**Mr. Chairman,**

Allow me at the outset, to congratulate you on your election as the Chair of this meeting. We are confident that you will guide this meeting towards a successful outcome.

**Mr. Chairman,**

The accumulation and proliferation of illicit small arms and light weapons continues to be a serious threat to peace, stability, well being and sustainable development of all countries in the world, particularly developing countries. Sri Lanka therefore, attaches great importance to the prevention, combating and eradication of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. Our active participation in the 2002 Conference was a manifestation of this resolve. The outcome of the 2001 Conference, including its Programme of Action has been instrumental in promoting awareness on the issue among the Government Agencies and the Civil Society in my country. As a result we have taken a series of measures at national level to address this issue, during the last four years.

**Mr. Chairman,**

In October, 2004, the President of Sri Lanka formally established the "**National Commission to Deal with the Proliferation of Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons in Sri Lanka**" under the Chairmanship of the Secretary to the Ministry of Public Security, Law and Order. Senior Officials of the Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Public Administration and Home Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Prime Minister's Office, Department of Police, Attorney-General's Department, Department of Customs together with three representatives from the Civil Society, were appointed as members of the National Commission. An additional three representatives from the Civil Society will also be appointed shortly. A permanent office for the National Commission has also been set-up with a full-time Coordinator.

The establishment of the National Commission was a landmark event in Sri Lanka in relation to the national implementation of the UN Programme of Action adopted in 2001. The Terms of Reference of the National Commission includes, among others, formulation of a Plan of Action to collect illicit small arms and light weapons, examination the adequacy of the punitive measures currently in force to combat the problem and to propose amendments where necessary,

identification of sources of supply of illicit arms and light weapons and suggest ways of effectively curbing such trafficking.

As one of the initial undertakings of the National Commission, a National Survey on illicit Small Arms in Sri Lanka will be conducted this year. It is expected that this National Survey will contribute to the formulation of a comprehensive National Plan of Action to deal with all aspects of the issue.

Action will also be taken by the National Commission to fully implement the provisions of the Firearms Ordinance in Sri Lanka, in order to ensure that legal provisions are fully in force to control firearms. With the amendments introduced to the Firearms Ordinance in 1996, Sri Lanka has a strongly established set of legal provisions for the control of firearms.

**Mr. Chairman,**

With regard to the collection of illicit small arms and light weapons, we have achieved mixed results during the last two years. In 2004, the police conducted a number of well-coordinated campaigns to confiscate weapons held by criminal elements. This campaign yielded satisfactory results. Authorities in Sri Lanka made further two attempts to collect illicit weapons during the last two years. In February 2004, an amnesty was declared for a period of two months permitting those who retain weapons illegally to come forward and license their weapons. Under the second two-month amnesty declared in October 2004 and subsequently extended up to the end of January 2005, the Government offered a lump sum payment to those who hand-over the weapons held illegally. Despite the island-wide publicity, both these efforts failed to yield expected results. However, under the leadership and the renewed commitment of the National Commission, we hope that we will soon succeed in this endeavour.

**Mr. Chairman,**

The Sri Lanka National Commission provides a vivid example as to how both the government and Civil Society could work in tandem. At present, the National Commission consists of three representatives from the Civil Society. They on behalf of the Commission liaise with other Civil Society organizations for the successful implementation of the activities of the National Commission.

In October 2004, a Civil Society-Government interface meeting was held where all stakeholders shared their views on Civil Society involvement in the National Commission. Subsequently, a nation-wide Civil Society consultation process was also conducted mainly to communicate findings of the Civil Society consultation process to the National Commission to nominate an additional three

Civil Society representatives to the National Commission and to form a Civil Society Action Committee to coordinate support from Civil Society to the National Commission.

**Mr. Chairman,**

Just last Friday, manifesting the close cooperation on this issue between the Government and the Civil Society, for the first time in Sri Lanka, a public weapons destruction event was organised to mark the International Weapons Destruction Day. More than 35,000 small arms were destroyed at this public event held at the Independent Square in Colombo in the presence of the Minister of Public Security, Law and order and the Deputy Minister of Defence. Members of the media and general public were also present. The event, created a great deal of public awareness on the issue and it was also seen as a public confidence building measure for taking steps to effectively address the proliferation of illicit small arms and light weapons in Sri Lanka.

The Government of Sri Lanka wishes to express its appreciation to the UN Department of Disarmament Affairs, UN Department for Economic and Social Affairs and the UNDP for providing financial and technical assistance for the setting-up of the National Commission and to ensure its effective functioning. We also thank the Non-Governmental organization, The Saferworld, for their contribution in creating awareness among the Civil Society in Sri Lanka on this issue and facilitating greater dialogue and cooperation between the government and the Civil Society.

**Mr. Chairman,**

Finally, I wish to inform you that Sri Lanka has just submitted its second report on the implementation of the UN Programme of Action. This is a follow-up to the first report Sri Lanka submitted during the First Biennial meeting held in 2003, and is a manifestation of our commitment to eradicate the scourge of illegal weapons.

Thank you.