

Mr Chairman,

Taking into account the statistics provided by the United Nations, almost seven thousand people will die victims to acts of violence related to the illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons throughout the duration of this meeting; that is, during only five days. Every minute there is a victim to this illicit trafficking and the sub region I have the honor to represent with this statement is not alien to this scourge. Therefore, the Member States of Mercosur -Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay- and its Associated States Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela, wish to take this opportunity for the exchange of information on experiences, to reaffirm once again the principles and purposes which encourage them to act collectively.

Without prejudice of the interventions that some Member States of Mercosur or its Associated States may make on a national basis, this collective intervention is destined to point out that the problem of the illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons, as with the illicit drug trade, organized crime or terrorism, related with each other and in a strong way, weakens the national borders, making it virtually impossible for any State to solve it individually. To believe that such a thing is possible, not only delays any useful undertaking, but inhibit the reduction of the speed with which such problem spreads. The impact with which this scourge attacks some sectors of our sub region compels our States to act in a coordinated way; coordination which starts at the border level, continues at the sub regional and regional levels and finally reaches the global one.

Such coordination of sub regional activities has been destined to complement on one side every national activity, and on the other, regional and global activities. With regards to the regional ones, our countries have acted in a concerted and pioneering way within the frame of the Organization of American States, through the adoption of the Inter American Convention on Firearms, Ammunitions, Explosives and related materials. Such instrument, no only contains a demonstration of political will, but also binds our States and compels them to fulfill those obligations considered essential when searching for actual solutions to the problem posed by the illicit trafficking of such arms.

This same determination to look into ways within the international law was evidenced a few weeks ago, during the meeting of the Working Group negotiating an instrument on marking and tracing. On such occasion, Mercosur and its Associated States insisted on the need of counting with a binding instrument in the belief that it is necessary to adopt efficient instruments which complement it and ensure its effective implementation. However, we are disappointed by the results of such meeting and we consider that Member States of the United Nations have lost a great opportunity to show their determination in advancing towards fighting against this threat to peace and international security.

We cannot avoid realizing that since the creation of this Organization and although small arms and light weapons have been one of the most lethal weapons, producing one the largest amount of victims, the international community has not achieved the establishment of international regimes for their regulation, similar to those adopted within the field of nuclear, biological or chemical weapons. Although we do not deny the merits of the Plan of Action adopted in 2001, its political and non-binding nature does not provide for verification and sanctions mechanisms, and places us far from definitive solutions. Such mechanisms, turned into binding instruments, would be the right vehicle to achieve the objectives of the Plan of Action in a real way. This has been the position of Mercosur and its Associated States and we will support all initiative towards achieving future formal commitments in this area.

At the same time, we expect that the current meeting will offer a space to identify elements with enough consensus to be dealt with during the Revision Conference in 2006. Mercosur and its Associated States consider that it will be necessary to strengthen mechanisms regarding transfer control, for which and as an example, can be mentioned the establishment of minimum common standards to authorize the export, or the prohibition of transfer to non state actors not authorized by Governments. It would be also necessary to consider the establishment of a mechanism for assistance and cooperation with a larger degree of institutionalization within the frame of the Program of Action. In this regard, Mercosur and Associated States will favor initiatives presented in this direction.

Mr Chairman,

The practical expression of the principle of concerted action within Mercosur and its Associated States has been the establishment –a few years ago- of a Working Group on Firearms and Ammunitions, which holds two annual meetings and of which its functions include –among others- the evaluation of cooperation, harmonization of legislation, the identification of areas subject to collective action, the detection of sub regional vulnerabilities and their possible solutions, as well as legal aspects on customs, border controls, common registries, the establishment of focal points for the exchange of information, and regulations on such exchange on manufacture, export, import and other legal aspects related to firearms, ammunitions and explosives.

Likewise, there have been institutional approaches to the Regional Center for Disarmament, which has its headquarters in Lima, as well as with the United Nations Development Program, destined to find areas for cooperation in the field of information, celebration of seminars and workshops, courses and others. Similar approaches have taken place with.

It is important to point out that there is a degree of convergence in our national policies and legislations, and such convergence enables our countries to enhance the sub regional undertakings, allowing at the same time the identification of new possibilities. Other initiatives can be added to these, and they are the ones arising from some non-governmental organizations, some of which have become important and useful allies when elaborating awareness campaigns. Such campaigns cover a broad range of activities that go from the perception of violence and ways to correct the existing distorted vision, to the links between the drug trafficking or terrorism to small arms and light weapons, to the legitimacy in obtaining and using a small arm.

Mercosur and its Associated States wish to reaffirm once again their collective view of this problem, for which they are open to explore new ways of action with other regions with similar views, because as we stated at the beginning of this intervention, without the coordination of global activities, or doing so in a punctual or partial way, there is no possibility to reduce the number of victims, which ultimately, is the clear example of the huge task we have ahead of us.

Finally, we wish to congratulate you on your appointment as Chairman; we are confident that your personal and professional qualities will guarantee a fruitful and successful meeting.

Thank you