



STATEMENT BY MR. V.K. NAMBIAR, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE, ON SMALL ARMS AT THE SECURITY COUNCIL ON JANUARY 19, 2004

Mr. President,

I greet you on Chile's Presidency of the Security Council. We also congratulate Bulgaria for its capable steering of the Council in December. We welcome the presence of new members of the Security Council, Algeria, Benin, Brazil, Philippines and Romania and extend our good wishes to them. We thank you for convening this open debate of the Security Council on Small Arms. India attaches importance to the issue and is committed to the eradication of illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. In keeping with this commitment we have been closely following this issue in both the General Assembly and the Security Council, and have actively contributed to cooperative international efforts in addressing this multi-faceted issue.

India is particularly aware of the complexity and lethality of the problem of illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons. Since 1990, the Government of India has seized, in our states of the northeast, and just one of the North approximately 39,000 weapons of all types. Their markings clearly indicate that the source of these weapons lie outside India. Over the last two decades, thousands of innocent civilians in India have fallen victim to the acts of the terrorists who use such illicitly obtained weapons for their nefarious activities. We have paid a high developmental cost as a result.

India has, therefore, been actively associated with the various initiatives under UN aegis to address the problem of illicit trafficking in Small Arms and welcomed the adoption of the UN

Programme of Action (PoA) in July 2001. Since then, India has been engaged in comprehensive and effective implementation of the Programme of Action. We reiterate that commitment today.

Mr. President,

India welcomes the Report of the UN Secretary-General contained in S/2003/1217, on the ways and means by which the Security Council could contribute to this issue. Since almost all terrorist activities involve the use of illegal weapons, including small arms, this would also contribute to the larger goal of combating terrorism. There were a number of recommendations in the report of 2002, which could go a long way in combating this problem. India is particularly pleased to see that definite progress has been made in the implementation of some of these recommendations.

An important recommendation was with regard to the development of an international instrument to enable States to identify and trace, in a timely and reliable manner illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons. India had the honour of chairing the Group of Governmental Experts constituted by the Secretary General pursuant to United Nations General Assembly Resolution 56/24V of 2001 to study the feasibility of developing such an international instrument. The group recommended by consensus that it was both desirable and feasible to commence work on such an instrument under UN auspices - a recommendation which was endorsed by the General Assembly at its 58th session. India would continue to contribute in the efforts for an early finalisation of such an instrument. We believe that this would be a significant step in our efforts to combat and eradicate the illicit trade in SALW.

India was also associated with the Group of Governmental Experts constituted to study the continued operation of the UN Register of Conventional Arms and its further development. The group was able to adopt by consensus its report in which it agreed to the inclusion of Man Portable Air Defence Systems (MANPADS) within the scope of the Register. Further the group was also able to recommend that interested states may on a voluntary basis report on the transfers of SALW as well. As we are all aware these weapons have become instruments of choice by terrorists to execute their acts. We hope that these steps, which are in keeping with the recommendations of the UN Plan

of Action, would help in reinforcing our collective efforts to deal with this scourge.

Mr. President,

Illicit trade occurs because of illicit production or because licit production or licit stocks enter the gray and black markets, thus swelling the illicit weapons market. These weapons end up in the possession of criminals exacerbating problems for law enforcement agencies and, worse, get into the hands of unscrupulous arms brokers, ending up in areas of conflict and in the hands of extremists and terrorists. The Programme of Action recognises that measures are needed to ensure that there are effective controls over legal transfers of Small Arms and Light Weapons.

India follows a very strict policy with regard to export of Small Arms and Light Weapons that includes the requirement for end-user certificates on a government to government basis and a ban on exports to countries under UN embargo. It is our hope that all other states would also undertake an obligation not to supply such weapons to non-state actors and would insist on authenticated end-user certificates to ensure effective control over the export and transit of such weapons. The international community on its part must also ensure that the trade in arms flows only through channels authorized by both the exporting and the importing Governments.

Greater exchange of information between governments and collaboration between them would be essential to effectively address this problem. In this context we support the need to strengthen the effectiveness of Interpol's International Weapons and Explosive Tracking System (IWETS). We are happy to note that Interpol is presently undertaking technical evaluation to integrate International Weapons and Explosive Tracking System with its communications systems and hope that this would be completed soon. This would provide an additional tool to the member states to fight terrorism and other crimes associated with the illicit trafficking in Small Arms and Light Weapons.

Linkages among illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, illicit exploitation of natural and other resources as well as the trade in narcotic drugs are important in the context of Somalia and Liberia as brought out in the Secretary General's

report. We trust that careful consideration would be given by the Security Council to recommendations and findings of committees constituted to investigate such linkages. On its part international community must also extend all the assistance to help in the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration programmes in the relevant post conflict situations.

Mr. President,

Though the Programme of Action provides an adequate basis for further work at all levels - national, regional and global, and the primary responsibility rests with the Member States themselves to address this problem, we trust that the Security Council will take effective and practical steps, based on this report, in respect of those recommendations which are directly within its competence. Such steps would restrict the availability and use of illicit small arms and help further the implementation of the Programme of Action.

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