



STATEMENT BY MR. ANIL BASU, MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT AND MEMBER
OF THE INDIAN DELEGATION, ON THE THEMATIC DEBATE ON
CONVENTIONAL WEAPONS, SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS AND
CCW AT THE 61ST SESSION OF THE FIRST COMMITTEE OF THE UN
GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON OCTOBER 17, 2006

Madam Chairperson

If the entire spectrum of weaponry that is the focus of disarmament and arms control measures was to be placed within a pyramid, it would have a three-tiered structure. Nuclear weapons, our foremost priority, will constitute the top of the pyramid, followed by chemical and biological weapons at the middle layer. But the broadest part of the pyramid will be made up by conventional weapons and small arms and light weapons. While it is vital to address the apex of the pyramid, its base constitutes a larger, more contingent concern, affecting directly a large mass of people afflicted by conventional conflict.

Unregulated and illicit trade in conventional weapons and small arms and light weapons are continuing to have devastating consequences. The direct costs include death, injury and trauma and the cost of caring for the wounded and disabled, not to speak of the destruction of the civilian infrastructure. The indirect costs include displacement, destitution and prolonged underdevelopment. The proliferation of illicit trade in small arms and light weapons gravely endangers the security of States, disrupts their social harmony and hampers growth and development. The ready availability of illicit weapons fosters organised crime, drug trafficking and illegal exploitation of natural resources. It promotes sectarian violence, insurgency and terrorism.

India is, therefore, strongly committed to the full and effective implementation of the UN Programme of Action on Preventing, Combating and Eradicating Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons. It is a good augury that we now have an international instrument containing vital commitment by UN Member States to mark all small arms and light weapons according to universal standards and cooperate with each other

in tracing illicit ones. We now hope for similar cooperative action in other related areas concerning small arms, including on brokering and the prohibition of transfer of weapons to non-State actors, including terrorists. We believe future biennial meetings of States would provide a welcome opportunity to take stock of national implementation of the UNPOA. The General Assembly could, thereafter, consider further practical steps required to strengthen and promote its implementation.

India's approach to disarmament and international security is guided by a strong commitment to international humanitarian law, of which the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons is one of the principal instruments. India is among those 20 States Parties that adhere to the entire CCW package – the Convention, Amended Article I, and all five Protocols, including AP II. We support the draft Plan of Action, to be adopted at the forthcoming Review Conference, stipulating seven action points for promoting the universality of the Convention. India also favours strengthening the Convention through a compliance mechanism. Besides, we support the creation of a sponsorship programme to facilitate enhanced participation from mine and ERW-affected States Parties in CCW-related meetings. This may also broaden awareness about the Convention and help in promoting its universalization.

The CCW Review Conference next month will be a significant event. We are happy that Protocol V on Explosive Remnants of War will enter into force on 12 November, coinciding with the Review Conference. The Protocol provides for post-conflict remedial measures of a generic nature in order to minimize the risks and effects of ERW. It includes generic preventive measures aimed at minimizing the occurrence of ERW. It is intended to eradicate the threat that unexploded ordnance and abandoned explosive ordnance pose to the civilian population. India is among those 23 countries that have already ratified the Protocol. India also steered the work of the Working Group on ERW for two years.

Our policy on land mines use is regulated by an abiding concern for protection of civilian life from the threats posed by irresponsible use of mines other than anti-personnel mines, including improvised explosive devices. During the last four years of work carried out by the Group of Government Experts. India has contributed constructively to the process of finding common grounds on the whole range of issues. These include the technically complex issues of detectability and active life of MOTAPM. We have a forward-looking approach. We believe that, even on the contentious issues, a balanced approach could accommodate national security imperatives, humanitarian requirements, financial costs and technological constraints. We also believe that a future instrument on

MOTAPM will supplement the existing instruments on anti-personnel mines in addressing humanitarian challenges in a more comprehensive manner.

India is conscious of the humanitarian risks resulting from the indiscriminate use and transfer of anti-personnel mines. We, therefore, support the humanitarian objectives of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention. At the same time, we recognize the limitations of this Convention in not addressing national security concerns of States with long land borders, where minefields at frontiers will continue to form an important component of defence in times of conflict. While our security requirements necessitate the use of anti-personnel mines, these are used in accordance with internationally acknowledged security norms and safety parameters. We are in favour of strengthened cooperation in mine clearance, including unrestricted transfer of mine clearance technology, equipment and training; risk education; rehabilitation; victim assistance and socio-economic betterment of mine-affected communities.

In the field of conventional disarmament, we believe that an enhanced level of transparency will contribute greatly to confidence building and security amongst States. It could also help in the detection of arms transferred illegally. India has supported the UN Register of Conventional Arms as an important confidence building measure and has submitted annual reports on the export and import of conventional arms. We note that the Register has evolved through the triennial reviews carried out by the Group of Governmental Experts. We are happy that at the latest review in July 2006, the Group recommended that States that wished to do so could also report their transfer of small arms and light weapons to the Register on the basis of an optional standardized form. It also recommended a lower reporting threshold for warships and submarines. These are welcome steps.

We shall continue to work towards steady progress in the areas of conventional disarmament, small arms and light weapons and the CCW process. In particular, we hope to have a positive and forward-looking outcome of the CCW Review Conference in Geneva in the coming month.

I thank you, Madam Chairperson.

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