



Govt. of India

## STATEMENT BY MR. V.K. NAMBIAR, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE ON SMALL ARMS AT THE SECURITY COUNCIL ON OCTOBER 11, 2002

Mr. President,

We thank you for convening this open debate of the Security Council on Small Arms.

India is particularly aware of the complexity and lethality of the problems associated with the accumulation, dispersal and transfers of illicit small arms and light weapons. As we have stated in the past, the trade in small arms is licit only if its export and import are through official, legal channels. Arms exported by a government that violate none of its laws are nevertheless illicit if they are sent to non-state actors in another country, bypassing or subverting laws there. During the past decade illicit weapons have been the weapons of choice in an overwhelming number of major conflicts. Small arms have claimed annually between three and five hundred thousand lives of which the overwhelming percentage have been civilian lives and of these mainly the lives of women and children. In India, we are particularly conscious of the lethality of these weapons. Over the past two decades more than 35,000 innocent lives have fallen victim to the depredations of terrorists using illicit weapons. The seizures of small arms and explosives by the Government of India make it abundantly clear to us that this illicit pool is of a magnitude and sophistication that requires urgent and serious attention on the part of all law abiding societies.

In his Report on "The Illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects" ( A/57/160 ), the UN Secretary General has provided an overview of the

activities undertaken under the auspices of the United Nations to implement the Resolution 56/24 V adopted by the UN General Assembly on 24 December 2001. This report which covers the period from June 2001 to June 2002 includes actions taken to implement the Programme of Action adopted by the UN Conference on Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects held in New York in July, 2001. India is privileged to be playing a leading role, as Chairman of the Panel of Governmental Experts established by the UN Secretary General to examine the feasibility of developing an international instrument to enable states to identify and trace, in a timely and reliable manner, illicit small arms and light weapons. The Group of Governmental Experts has held the first of its three mandated sessions, and has been able to identify a number of elements of common understanding on which work will continue at its forthcoming sessions. The Group will submit its findings to the UN Secretary-General at the 58<sup>th</sup> session of the UN General Assembly.

India welcomes the Report of the UN Secretary-General contained in S/2002/1053, which reflects recent initiatives taken by the Security Council. The Report identifies areas where further action by the Council is required in addressing the global problem of illicit small arms and light weapons. It emphasizes the key role of the Security Council, in preventing, combating and eliminating the uncontrolled spread of such weapons. The Secretary-General has in his report listed a number of recommendations

based on suggestions made by member States. We find many of them to be very useful. Some of them are directly addressed to the Council. We trust the Council will take appropriate further action in respect of those recommendations which are directly within its competence. We also hope the Council will consider ways of enhancing its cooperation with the General Assembly on these issues.

We note other initiatives taken, including the joint initiative by France and Switzerland to define a political arrangement on co-operation with regard to the traceability of illicit small arms and light weapons – as well as the voluntary furnishing of information by States on implementation of the agreed Programme of Action. India fully supports the first step of developing a comprehensive tracing system and enhancing co-operation among States towards this end. In this connection we see the need to strengthen the effectiveness of Interpol's International Weapons and Explosive Tracking System. We similarly recognize the role played by the Coordinating Action on Small Arms mechanism in highlighting how illicit small arms and light weapons have actually prolonged conflicts and indeed prevented the reestablishment of peace in various conflict areas around the world.

A collective and co-operative initiative by the international community needs the participation not only of governments but also of concerned non-governmental organisations and agencies as well as elements of civil society at large in order to provide the most effective framework to fight the scourge of illicit small arms and light weapons. The Secretary General has commended not only the consolidation of existing partnerships between States and civil society organs around concrete actions, but also the emergence of new partnerships.

The area of 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 is an important one. Over the past decade the Council has established embargoes to cut off the supply of arms to non-state actors. Where these were being bypassed, the Council did authorize investigations which uncovered the criminal networks established across continents which were being used to sell diamonds and supply arms as well as for the export of drugs in furtherance of terrorist interests. We would urge the Council to continue to take initiatives to monitor relevant areas with regard to embargoes and to tackle the problem in all its aspects. The cooperation and sharing of information among member states and among different bodies under the Council on arms traffickers that have violated embargoes established by the Council would be a step in building up a coordinated approach. This also demands the attention of the Council, the General Assembly and other relevant bodies of the UN. The international community, too, on its part, must generously support economic programmes of rehabilitation to encourage the surrender of illegal arms.

Mr. President,

Perhaps only around 1 % of the global supply of small arms is illicitly held, but that amounts to more than six million weapons. This is an alarming figure, considering that they are held by criminals, terrorists, armed insurgents, secessionists and other non-State actors. While three-fourths of the global trade in small arms is legal, illicit trade in weapons and ammunitions accounts for about \$ 1.5 billion a year.

Further, small arms are now ever more easy to use, more light and lethal, and their users need little or no training to use them to devastating effect to their societies and economies. Governments that desire to protect their societies from this problem must

take the necessary national measures to introduce and monitor vigorous standards and conditions on private holdings of such weapons. All responsible states must undertake an obligation not to supply such weapons to non-state actors. Manufacturers and exporters should be subject to the strictest controls. There should be the strictest insistence on authenticated end-user certificates to ensure effective control over the export and transit of such weapons. The international community on its part must ensure that the trade in arms must, as in the case of the rest of the international trade, flow only through channels authorized by both the exporting and the importing Governments.

Mr. President,

It is ammunition and explosives that kill. Arms are only the means of delivery. This

must be factored into any work done by the international community to tackle, comprehensively, the issue of small arms and light weapons.

Mr. President,

We welcome the initiative of the Security Council in convening this open debate on Small Arms and Light Weapons and trust that the Security Council will take effective and practical steps, to take forward the endeavours of the United Nations in support of the implementation of the Programme of Action adopted at the last UN Conference on Small Arms and Light Weapons, that would check the availability and use of illicit small arms in fuelling and sustaining conflict and terrorism .

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