



STATEMENT BY

**THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED NATIONS
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
H.E. MR. JAN ELIASSON**

AT

**THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE TO
REVIEW PROGRESS MADE IN THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME OF
ACTION TO PREVENT, COMBAT AND
ERADICATE THE ILLICIT TRADE IN SMALL
ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS IN ALL ITS
ASPECTS**

**UNITED NATIONS HEADQUARTERS
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Mr. President, Mr. Secretary-General, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

Let me first of all congratulate you, Ambassador Kariyawasam, on your election as President of the Review Conference. I am convinced that you, with your experience and diplomatic skills, will guide this Conference to a successful outcome.

The adoption of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat, and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects five years ago marked a new beginning in placing a long overdue and important issue on the agenda of the General Assembly. By this, we provided the United Nations with a framework to address the human tragedy, injury and death resulting from conflicts fuelled by illicit small arms and light weapons.

Every year since the adoption of the Programme of Action, the General Assembly has decided on further actions to implement that Programme. I recall, in particular, resolution 58/241, which started the process that led to the adoption of the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons. I also want to refer to resolution 60/81, which requested the Secretary-General to establish a Group of Governmental Experts to consider further steps to enhance international cooperation to prevent, combat and eradicate illicit brokering in small arms and light weapons.

As we all know, the General Assembly attaches great importance to the issue of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and its consequences for the lives of millions of people around the world. By exacerbating and sustaining armed conflicts and banditry, the illicit trade in small arms and

light weapons undermines our efforts to secure lasting peace and to prevent states from sliding back into conflict. It also hinders efforts to promote reconciliation in post-conflict areas, to protect human rights and to fight poverty and hunger. As a consequence, progress is delayed towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals, which are vital to improving the well-being of millions of people around the world. We should therefore consider every step towards implementing the Programme of Action as a step both towards social and economic development commitments and towards enhancing security and human dignity.

Mr. President,

The mere availability of weapons does not necessarily lead to armed conflict. It is a combination of factors, often associated with political tensions and low levels of social and economic development, which foster the demand for and use of illicit weapons. Thus a vicious cycle of misery and insecurity is created.

While we implement measures to choke the sources of illicit small arms and light weapons, we must deepen our understanding of the links between the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and development, as well as the factors that fuel the demand for such weapons. We need to explore ways to adopt a more integrated approach in addressing the issue of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects, as called for in General Assembly resolutions.

Mr. President,

The importance of this Review Conference cannot be overstated. We must maintain the momentum generated by the 2001 Conference. We must ensure that the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons remains high on the agenda of the United Nations. At a time when most of the multilateral disarmament agenda is facing set-backs, it is vital that all Member States stand united in their commitment to the full and effective implementation of the Programme of Action.

As you review progress made in the implementation of the Programme of Action, I am confident that you will be guided by this paramount question: has the Programme of Action made any difference for those people whose daily life is affected by the threat of illicit small arms and light weapons?

I believe we all can agree that the Programme of Action is already making a difference in terms of the heightened awareness of the problem. We have seen a surge in activities such as weapons collection and destruction in over 65 countries in all regions of the world. We have seen the establishment of national coordinating bodies to support national policies and implementation, and we have seen a multitude of practical capacity-building projects.

However, much more must be done. During the Review Conference, I strongly hope that you will be able to muster the political will to agree on measures to strengthen the implementation of the Programme of Action. It is only through our joint, tangible and effective efforts on the ground, that we will be able to combat the scourge of illicit trafficking of small arms.