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BANGLADESH

STATEMENT

BY

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PERMANENT MISSION OF BANGLADESH
TO THE UNITED NATIONS

AT

THE GENERAL DEBATE

IN

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

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PERMANENT MISSION OF BANGLADESH TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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Mr. President,

Let me begin by congratulating you on your well-deserved election as President of this conference; also the other members of the bureau. Your unrivalled wisdom and dynamic stewardship, I am confident, will lead to a successful conclusion of this review conference. You can count on my delegation's full support in your endeavour in this direction.

Mr. President,

The unanimous adoption of the Programme of Action in 2001 was a watershed moment in the history of disarmament and non-proliferation. Progress in its implementation, however, has been uneven. It is important now to consolidate the progress made since 2001. We will remain open to all ideas towards an expedited and full implementation of the Programme of Action.

Although Bangladesh's preference had been for a legally binding instrument, the adoption last year of the international instrument on marking and tracing of SALW was also a step in the right direction.

But we see no room for complacency. The SALW, which we consider "the real weapons of mass destruction in use on a daily basis", have been both the source and the exacerbating factor of armed conflict. Their proliferation and excessive accumulation continue to cause havoc in many parts of the world causing death, disability, displacement and destruction of livelihoods of hundreds of thousands of people every year, including women and children. The review conference is a seminal opportunity for us to put an end to these miseries of our peoples by agreeing to undertake concrete measures towards the full and effective implementation of the Programme of Action. We must rise to the occasion.

Mr. President,

As a low-income country and amidst a variety of constraints, Bangladesh has recorded phenomenal successes in many social development indicators. Empowerment of women coupled with home-grown ideas such as micro-credit and non-formal education have played critical role in this regard.

Sporadic deterioration of law and order situation caused by the unbridled flow of SALW across our porous borders, however, continues to be a cause of concern for my government. It has been slowing down our effort to create an environment where people can engage in socio-economic activities with an assured sense of security. Also, availability of smuggled SALW at a relatively low price has led these arms to fall in the hands of extremist elements in the society, who my government has successfully brought to justice in the recent months. Full implementation of the Programme of Action, therefore, is of paramount importance to our people.

Bangladesh, a country with impeccable disarmament and non-proliferation record, remains committed to the full implementation of the Programme of Action. We have put in place legislative norms and administrative procedures for regulating lawful possession, manufacture, conversion, transfer and transport of SALW. Strict procedures are followed in the management of stockpiles including storage, physical security, control of access, inventory management and accounting control. Confiscated illegal small arms and light weapons are routinely and publicly destroyed as provided for in our National Stockpile Management Programme. Bangladesh observes 9th July every year as "Small Arms Destruction Day" to raise public awareness about the human, social and economic cost extracted by illicit trade in SALW. We have eliminated our entire stock of anti-personnel landmines in fulfilling our obligations under the Ottawa Convention.

Bangladesh manufactures and imports, from legitimate sources, a small amount of SALW for use by our security and defence agencies solely for the legitimate purposes of national defence and security; also for UN peacekeeping operations. Bangladesh has been regularly reporting to the UN Register of Conventional Arms and to the UN Standardized Instrument for Reporting Military Expenditures. We believe that trade in arms, as much in all other goods and services, should be brought under an agreed international regulatory framework, and would support conclusion of a conventional arms trade treaty under the UN auspices.

The Programme of Action, Mr. President, rightly emphasises on the importance of promotion of a culture of peace to alleviate human sufferings caused by illicit trade in SALW. Bangladesh, with enthusiastic support of the UN membership, has been tabling every year its flagship resolution in this regard under the GA agenda item Culture of Peace. For, we are convinced that promotion of such a culture of peace in all societies will immensely contribute to the reduction of armed conflict. Also, our commitment and contribution to UN peacekeeping operations, despite their inherent danger, emanates from the conviction that for sustainable development to take place, an ambience of peace and security must be sustained.

Mr. President,

The Programme of Action should be implemented in its entirety at national, regional and global levels. Maintaining a higher and predictable level of international cooperation and assistance would be critical in this direction. It should entail significant capacity-building cooperation in the form of technical, legal and financial assistance. Training of officials and speedy transfer of technology are crucial for success in this area.

We also need to streamline and further strengthen the ongoing DDR programmes in post-conflict societies. We are looking forward to a pro-active role of the Peacebuilding Commission, which has just started its much awaited journey last week, in the implementation of these programmes. We also believe that DDR should be a part of the peace agreements signed before sending in a UN peacekeeping mission.

Bangladesh believes that civil society participation, including the NGOs and the parliamentarians, in the implementation of the Programme of Action, particularly through raising public awareness, is of critical importance.

We would be inclined to express our support, in principle, to the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development adopted in June this year with the hope that the Declaration would complement our efforts under the Programme of Action.

Mr. President,

We believe that the Programme of Action that we agreed to in 2001 is a carefully crafted document, and this delicate balance must be maintained. This has been the cornerstone of our efforts in building norms and setting standards in regulating the affairs related to SALW. We have always maintained that the review conference of the Programme of Action should focus primarily on reviewing its status of implementation, and on the follow-up actions to accelerate its full implementation. This can be done only under the rubric of disarmament and non-proliferation.

We have no illusion, however, about the pervasive and destructive effect of uncontrolled and illicit proliferation of SALW on societies in terms of their overall development. There is also no denying that there remains a direct relationship between disarmament and development. It could, therefore, be useful for us to assess the human, social and economic costs of armed violence caused by illicit trade in SALW. This must be done, however, with the clear understanding that our deliberations in this regard shall not lead to establishing any linkage between international cooperation and assistance in the implementation of the Programme of Action and development assistance under the existing multilateral as well as bilateral arrangements. This will be one message from Bangladesh, Mr. President, to this review conference.

I thank you Mr. President.