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Permanent Mission
of the Russian Federation
to the United Nations

136 East 67th Street
New York, NY 10021

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STATEMENT

**by Mr. Petr G. Litavrin, Deputy Head
of the Delegation of the Russian Federation
at the 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 (SALW) in All its Aspects**

(New York, 26 June – 7 July 2006)

June 27, 2006

Mr. President,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

The Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) in All its Aspects adopted in 2001 now is the only global initiative to control the illicit proliferation of SALW. Remarkable progress has been achieved in the world during the last 5 years in controlling these weapons at the national, regional and global levels. The major achievement is a clear understanding by the international community of the necessity of joint efforts of all the states in combating the illegal trade in SALW.

A lot has been done. At the same time, in spite of efforts that are being made, the problem of illegal SALW not only remains but has worsened in some regions of the world. The Russian Federation has first-hand experience in dealing with this problem. Since the mid 90's our country has been combating relentlessly illegal trade in these weapons including under the circumstances of post-crisis management. Our experience demonstrates that practical results can be achieved only through constant and persistent work.

We are seriously concerned by the humanitarian aspects of the problem of illicit SALW. The existing crises clearly demonstrate a direct interconnection of the illicit trade in SALW with the activities of illegal armed groups, the involvement of child-soldiers in conflicts, mass violations of human rights and the provisions of international humanitarian law, transnational organized crime.

We believe that the Programme of Action is far from being completed and still has a potential that has to be fulfilled. First of all the states should focus on implementing those provisions of the Programme of Action, which deal with the improvement of the efficiency of national legislation in this area, strengthening regional cooperation. This is where we see the main potential in combating illicit SALW.

At the same time we do not consider the Programme of Action as a document, which was formulated once and for all. We have no principal objection to its further development aimed at finding specific and – I would like to emphasize this – practically implementable measures to prevent the illicit trade in these weapons. Meanwhile the “improvement” of the Programme of Action should be done with caution. We believe that any changes and additions should not be introduced into the text of the document itself but should be made in the form of corresponding protocols and annexes.

We do not advocate the promotion of any radical ideas and suggestions that may be aimed at strengthening the fight against the illicit trade in SALW but go beyond the framework of the Programme of Action. We believe that we should focus on fulfilling the review tasks of the Conference and coming to consensus decisions. We consider that our task is to examine the actual situation with the implementation of each aspect of the Programme of Action, to identify those of its provisions whose fulfillment is hampered, to find and analyze the reasons and obstacles that prevent their implementation and to identify ways to overcome these hindrances.

Mr. President,

The purpose of the Programme of Action is the fight against illicit trade in SALW. Indeed the essence of the problem is the illegal transfers of these weapons which are the main source of arms for illegal armed groups, terrorist organizations, criminal elements and the governments of the states which are under the UN Security Council embargoes. The main diversions of weapons into the illicit trade are due to ineffective storage conditions and poor control.

Russia supports proposals to identify best practices aimed at implementing the Programme of Action in the legislative and law-enforcement field. We also advocate the exchange of experience in the elaboration and application of legal norms which prevent the diversion of weapons from legal to illegal trade and thus contribute to the implementation, first of all at the national level, of the provisions of the Programme of Action. We, on our part, are ready, upon request, to assist other states in the elaboration and application of legal norms dealing with all aspects of SALW control.

The discussion within the framework of the Programme of Action of the issue of the control over legal transfers of SALW is a controversial matter. We believe that this issue goes beyond the framework of the Programme of Action.

Consideration of different approaches of states to this issue during a discussion will hardly bring positive results but on the contrary can divert the attention of delegates from considering matters outlined in the Programme of Action.

It is possible, in our opinion, to discuss the issue of legal transfers only when it is aimed at preventing the illegal trade in SALW and elaborating specific measures to prevent the diversion of weapons from legal to illicit trade. We should eliminate any politization of this issue and avoid approaches which could be viewed as restrictions against any state or a group of states. These measures should be clear, updated and, what is of importance, practically implementable.

Mr. President,

In order to prevent the uncontrolled proliferation of SALW, their diversion into the illicit trade and in the hands of terrorists the following measures, in our view, could be useful:

1. A complete termination of the production of SALW under the expired licenses or without a license of a state-the original manufacturer and owner of the production technology. We think that this problem deserves more attention. Sometimes it is neglected on the assumption that this issue allegedly goes beyond the scope of weapons transfers problem. However unlicensed production is also one of the sources of weapons diversion into illicit trade as a result of legal and illegal export. Unfortunately, unlicensed production is still widespread in the world and those who are engaged in this activity are not interested in resolving this issue due to reasons which could be understood but, however, are hardly justified.

2. Strengthening control over the re-export of SALW. We believe that it is necessary to receive an authorization to re-export from the state which is the original exporter or to notify this state, to prevent the re-export to the states under the UN sanctions. It is imperative to stop the practice when weapons produced

under license are upgraded without approval of the state which provided technology, and exported as a new model.

3. The introduction of a practice of random inspections by the exporter of storage conditions and end-use by the importer of some types of SALW, for example MANPADS.

The illegal trade in SALW is a great evil but we are especially concerned by its aspects that relate to the diversion of some of the most dangerous types of these weapons, including MANPADS, into terrorists hands. We believe that combating illicit trade in MANPADS can unify efforts of many countries.

4. A ban on transfers of all types of SALW to non-state actors, not only MANPADS. Such transfers increase the risk of weapons falling into the hands of anti-governmental groups, extremists, terrorists and criminal elements.

5. Strict state regulation of arms brokering activity connected to the export of weapons, including the reduction of a number of brokers. In some countries the number of brokers comes to dozens or even hundreds. Experience shows that the existence of a large number of brokers hampers control over their activity and can contribute to the diversion of SALW into "grey" and "black" markets. In this regard we would like to share our experience in this field. The reduction of the number of companies engaged in weapons brokering activity has led to strengthening the effectiveness of state control over all transfers of military equipment.

Russia is ready for constructive work on the elaboration of the final document of the Conference.

Thank You for Your attention.