



INDIA
भारत

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STATEMENT

BY

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MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT
AND
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ON

CONVENTIONAL WEAPONS

FIRST COMMITTEE
59th session of the
UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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Mr. Chairman,

India remains deeply concerned that conventional weapons, including small arms and light weapons, continue to pose grave danger to the security of States. Their indiscriminate and irresponsible use, particularly by non-State actors, has caused enormous humanitarian concern. Such weapons have disrupted political stability and social harmony, derailed pluralism and democracy and hampered growth and development. They have also fuelled international terrorism and internal conflicts.

2. Multilateral diplomacy has achieved a modest measure of success in dealing with the threat posed by illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. The adoption, by consensus, of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in July 2001 reflected the commitment of the international community to deal with this issue. The Programme of Action outlines a realistic, achievable and comprehensive approach to address the problem at national, regional and global levels. India, however, was disappointed that the Conference in July 2001 could not agree to adopt measures to prevent sale of arms to non-State groups. This is an issue that the international community needs to address during the Biennial Meeting of States in 2005 and the First Review Conference in 2006. These meetings will also provide an opportunity to review the effectiveness of the Programme of Action in achieving its objectives and to consider further measures to strengthen and promote its implementation.

3. India had the privilege to chair the Group of Governmental Experts on Small Arms and Light Weapons. India is also actively participating in the Open-ended Working Group, which is currently negotiating an international instrument to enable States to identify and trace in timely and reliable manner illicit small arms and light weapons. We accord high priority to this exercise, to which we are fully committed. India favours a legally binding instrument and the inclusion of ammunition and explosives within the scope of the instrument, if there is consensus on these proposals.

4. India will also pursue the objective of a non-discriminatory, universal and global ban on anti-personnel mines in manner that addresses the legitimate defence requirements of States. Landmines continue to play an important role in the defence of States that have long land borders with difficult and inhospitable terrains. The process of complete elimination of anti-personnel

mines will be facilitated by the availability of militarily effective, non-lethal and cost-effective alternative technologies.

5. Multilateral processes, when reinforced by adequate political will on the part of key States, can achieve good results. We have achieved considerable success in dealing with the humanitarian concerns posed by indiscriminate use of landmines. The Protocol II under the umbrella of the Convention on certain Conventional Weapons (CCW), dealing with landmines, and booby traps, was amended in 1996 to make it more effective in minimizing the danger posed by landmines. The scope of the Convention was extended in 2001 to cover internal conflicts. And in 2003 another Protocol was added to CCW to deal with the dangers to civilians posed by explosive remnants of war. This was a signal achievement, on which we could build further under the CCW process. India is strongly committed to the CCW Convention and has ratified its four Protocols including Amended Protocol II. The process of ratification of Protocol V dealing with ERW is underway.

6. India had the privilege to Chair the CCW process during 2002 and 2003 when the Working Group on Explosive Remnants of War engaged in negotiations to conclude Protocol V on ERW. A Working Group within the Group of Governmental Experts on CCW continues to consider implementation of existing principles of international humanitarian law, in the context of ERW. It is also studying possible preventive measures aimed at improving the design of certain specific types of munitions, including sub-munitions, in order to minimize the humanitarian risks of these munitions becoming ERW. Another Working Group, on Mines Other Than Anti-Personnel Mines (MOTAPM), has the responsibility to consider proposals with the aim of elaborating appropriate recommendations. The Indian delegation has made constructive contribution to the deliberations of these bodies. We hope that the forthcoming Session of the Group of Governmental Experts in November 2004 will provide crucial momentum to both the Working Groups.

7. We shall work towards steady progress in the areas of Small Arms and Light Weapons and the CCW process. We hope the process is extended to other areas of conventional disarmament, leading towards the goal of general and complete disarmament.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.