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United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects

9-20 July 2001

Summary record of the 1st meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 9 July 2001, at 10 a.m.

Temporary Chairman: Ms. Fréchette (Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations)

President: Mr. Reyes Rodríguez (Vice-President) (Colombia)

later: Mr. Donowaki (Vice-President) (Japan)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Opening of the Conference by the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations

1. **The Deputy Secretary-General** declared open the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

Election of the President

2. *Mr. Reyes Rodríguez (Colombia) was elected President of the Conference by acclamation.*

3. *Mr. Reyes Rodríguez (Colombia) took the Chair.*

Statement by the President

4. **The President** said that, by convening the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, the Organization had incorporated into its agenda the search for a comprehensive solution to the problem of small arms and light weapons, which had caused 90 per cent of the deaths which had occurred in armed conflicts over the past decade. The illicit trade in such weapons spread violence and intensified armed conflict; affected many aspects of development, such as health, education, environment, property and freedom; and undermined democratic rights and institutions. For many countries, the Conference offered an opportunity to draft, establish and strengthen policies that would promote the security and the very survival of their populations, their future and their national identity.

5. He appreciated the valuable contribution made by the participants in the preparatory process. The draft programme of action which they had prepared would form the basis on which the participants in the Conference would seek to consolidate the international community's efforts to prevent, combat and eradicate illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons.

Address by the President of the General Assembly

6. **Mr. Holkeri** (President of the General Assembly) said that the convening of the Conference reflected the international community's awareness of the severity of the problems associated with the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, which posed a threat to international peace and security, and its determination to solve them by means of a programme of action, in line with the commitments made at the Millennium

Summit. The issue of small arms had only recently been moved to the centre of the international agenda; it had first been highlighted by the United Nations Secretary-General in 1995, and had been the subject of two reports of government experts since then.

7. Currently, the use of small arms and light weapons in the context of war, civil strife and crime resulted in over 500,000 deaths each year. The uncontrolled spread of such weapons exacerbated conflicts, endangered peacekeepers and humanitarian workers, undermined respect for international humanitarian law, disrupted social, political and economic development, caused the displacement of millions of people, threatened legitimate Governments and benefited terrorists and perpetrators of organized crime. Urgent action must be taken to eradicate the illicit trading and excessive accumulation of small arms and light weapons. In particular, global norms and a programme of action at the national, subregional, regional and global levels were needed. The programme of action agreed upon at the Conference must contain unambiguous political commitments and practical and firm measures, as well as a vigorous, wide-ranging follow-up mechanism. The participants in the Conference must demonstrate the political will to address the problem, for the common good of all people and to prevent further suffering and loss of life.

Address by the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations

8. **The Deputy Secretary-General** said that the Secretary-General was fully committed to playing his role in the fight against the scourge of small arms and light weapons. While the vast majority of the estimated 500 million small arms and light weapons in circulation were in the hands of police forces, government armies and lawful private owners, a significant number fell into the hands of irregular forces, criminals and terrorists. Such weapons not only exacerbated conflict situations, but also contributed to a culture of violence and crime.

9. Small arms played a role in well over 1,000 deaths every day. Since 1990, their use in armed conflicts had killed about 4 million people, of whom 90 per cent had been civilians and 80 per cent, women and children. According to the Inter-American Development Bank, the direct and indirect costs of small-arms violence amounted to as much as \$170 billion a year in Latin America alone. As the Secretary-

General had noted in his report to the Millennium Assembly (A/54/2000), small arms “could well be described as ‘weapons of mass destruction’”. Although the trade in small arms amounted to some \$1 billion a year, the vast supply of small arms made them very inexpensive and easy to obtain. Small arms were also linked to the issues of peace and security, human rights, drug trafficking and money laundering. Their destabilizing effects led to a vicious circle in which insecurity led to a higher demand for weapons, which itself bred still greater insecurity.

10. Immediate progress in reducing the number of small arms in circulation and preventing future accumulations was possible in three areas. The first was that of laws and regulations. Despite the progress made in elaborating international norms with respect for nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and anti-personnel landmines, no framework of binding norms and standards had yet been established to eliminate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. The Secretary-General urged Member States to sign and ratify the relevant Protocol to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, which included standards for marking firearms and controlling their import and export.

11. The second area in which immediate progress was possible was that of international cooperation. The Organization of African Unity (OAU) had already mapped out a continent-wide strategy for tackling the problem; the countries of West Africa had agreed to impose a moratorium on the import, export or manufacture of light weapons; the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives and Other Related Materials had entered into force; European nations had agreed on a code of conduct for arms exports; and the South-East Asian countries had begun to examine the problem in their region. Such efforts should be intensified, with the help of the World Customs Organization, the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), organizations of civil society and the United Nations Department for Disarmament Affairs.

12. The third area was that of practical disarmament measures. More funding was needed for the weapons collection and destruction activities already being carried out in the context of peacekeeping operations and peace-building strategies. Consideration should also be given to non-monetary incentives for the

voluntary surrender of weapons. For example, individuals in a number of countries had received tools and construction materials, and communities had been provided with new schools, health-care services and road repairs. Manufacturers could cooperate by marking weapons clearly and selling them only through registered brokers.

13. The effort to combat the illegal arms trade raised many complex issues related to the distinction between the licit and illicit trade in weapons, the need to respect national sovereignty, the responsibility of States to provide security and the right of States to self-defence. She hoped that, in line with the commitments contained in the Millennium Declaration, the participants in the Conference would adopt the strongest possible programme of action with a view to achieving a more peaceful and secure world in the twenty-first century.

Adoption of the rules of procedure (A/CONF.192/L.1)

14. **The President** drew attention to the draft provisional rules of procedure of the Conference (A/CONF.192/L.1). In rule 4, the phrase “most recent session” should be understood to mean the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly. In rule 6, the number “29” should be inserted before the word “Vice-Presidents”. He took it that the participants in the Conference wished to adopt the provisional rules of procedure, as orally revised.

15. *It was so decided.*

Adoption of the agenda (A/CONF.192/L.2)

16. *The agenda was adopted.*

Organization of work (A/CONF.192/CRP.1)

17. **The President** said he took it that the participants in the Conference wished to adopt the provisional programme of work of the Conference (A/CONF.192/CRP.1).

18. *It was so decided.*

19. **The President** recalled that, in accordance with rule 63 of the rules of procedure of the Conference, a list of non-governmental organizations wishing to attend the Conference had been circulated previously to all delegations. Since no objections had been raised, he took it that the participants in the Conference approved the attendance of those non-governmental organizations.

20. *It was so decided.*

Election of officers other than the President

21. The President said that, in accordance with the recommendations of the Preparatory Committee and the rules of procedure, the following countries had been nominated by their respective regional groups to serve as Vice-Presidents of the Conference: Egypt, Kenya, Mozambique and South Africa (Group of African States); China, Indonesia, Japan, Nepal and the Philippines (Group of Asian States); Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine (Group of Eastern European States); Argentina, Brazil, Cuba, Jamaica and Mexico (Group of Latin American and Caribbean States); and Australia, Belgium, Norway, Spain, the United Kingdom and the United States of America (Group of Western European and Other States). He took it that the participants in the Conference wished to elect the representatives of those countries to serve as Vice-Presidents of the Conference.

22. *It was so decided.*

Credentials of representatives to the Conference

(a) Appointment of the members of the Credentials Committee

(b) Report of the Credentials Committee

23. The President said he took it that the participants in the Conference agreed that, as indicated in rule 4 of the rules of procedure of the Conference, the composition of the Credentials Committee should be based on that of the Credentials Committee of the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session, namely, the Bahamas, China, Ecuador, Gabon, Ireland, Mauritius, the Russian Federation, Thailand and the United States of America.

24. *It was so decided.*

25. **The President** said it was his understanding that, in accordance with rule 4 of the rules of procedure of the Conference, the Credentials Committee would examine the credentials of representatives and report to the Conference without delay.

Confirmation of the Secretary-General of the Conference

26. **The President** said he took it that the participants in the Conference wished to confirm the appointment of Mr. Joao Honwana, Chief of the Conventional Arms Branch of the Department for Disarmament Affairs, as Secretary-General of the Conference, and of Mr. Mohammad Sattar, Senior Political Affairs Officer of the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services, as Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference.

27. *It was so decided.*

General exchange of views

28. **Mr. Bell Lemus** (Colombia) said that his Government had made the fight against arms trafficking one of its highest priorities, since the unregulated circulation of small arms and light weapons had a serious impact on the peace and stability of the country and the region. The problem had also been given the highest priority at the regional level, as witnessed by the adoption of the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives and Other Related Materials.

29. The draft programme of action before the Conference must establish the necessary follow-up mechanisms to ensure compliance, as well as those needed to monitor the links in the chain of trade in small arms and light weapons at all stages from production to distribution and sale. The outcome of the Conference would represent a very important step towards international peace and stability and would strengthen the position of the United Nations as interpreter of the wishes of the international community.

30. **Mr. Michel** (Belgium), speaking on behalf of the European Union and the associated States Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Turkey and, in addition, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, said that small arms and light weapons were a threat mainly to civilians caught up inadvertently in armed conflict or targeted directly in defiance of humanitarian principles. They also represented a threat to peacekeepers and representatives of non-governmental organizations in the field. The European Union had taken a number of specific measures to

combat that threat and had taken an active part in the drafting of the document of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) on small arms and light weapons. It welcomed the adoption by the General Assembly of the firearms protocol to the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, which would help combat the illicit trade in firearms and contribute to the common effort against organized crime.

31. Because its membership included countries which were producers of small arms and light weapons, the European Union was determined to cooperate with other countries in ensuring that weapons exported by its member countries did not end up in the wrong hands or contribute to criminal activity. To that end, it had undertaken projects in several regions, notably Africa, Asia and Latin America, and wished to take a more systematic approach in order to strengthen future such projects.

32. The European Union believed that the programme of action resulting from the Conference should do more than simply list the problems associated with the proliferation of small arms. The goal should be to reach agreement on political commitments, principles for action and concrete solutions. The programme of action should cover the key areas of export controls, marking and tracing, arms brokering, management of stockpiles, surpluses and their destruction, and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants. Small arms proliferation could also have a negative impact on sustainable development efforts, and the Conference outcome should therefore include capacity-building measures and the promotion of good governance and respect for human rights and humanitarian law. The important contribution of civil society in general and non-governmental organizations in particular should also be recognized. Follow-up would be needed to ensure ongoing implementation of the programme of action and the European Union therefore supported the proposal for a five-year review conference in 2006, as well as meetings of participating States every two years until that date.

33. Participants in the conference must keep in mind that their efforts could make a difference for the all too many victims of the uncontrolled flows and destabilizing stockpiles of small arms and light weapons. If they kept sight of that essential objective, it should be possible for them to reach agreement on the necessary action.

34. **Mr. Manhenje** (Mozambique) said that the proliferation of small arms and light weapons had initially been perceived as affecting developing countries, particularly in Africa, but its negative impact was increasingly being felt worldwide, threatening the individual and collective security of States, fuelling conflict and violence, undermining democratic institutions, destabilizing elected governments, perpetuating poverty and contributing to crime.

35. In Mozambique, the proliferation and illicit use of firearms was linked directly to the country's many years of armed conflict, which had resulted in the destruction of the economic and social fabric and created a situation where the possession of firearms was no longer limited to the armed forces and the forces of law and order, but had become a means of survival for many ordinary citizens. With the establishment of the United Nations Peacekeeping Mission in Mozambique (ONUMOZ), following the 1992 peace agreement, a process of collection and destruction of firearms had been initiated. However, after the phasing out of ONUMOZ, the availability of illegal firearms had increased. To reduce the potential for violence, the Government had made the identification and disposal of arms caches and the destruction of weapons a priority. Such operations were beyond the Government's means, however, and he acknowledged the close cooperation of South Africa in making them a success. That was a clear example of the regional cooperation and partnership that was flourishing in southern Africa.

36. Its Government had also encouraged initiatives by civil society, some of which provided a bridge between disarmament and development by offering equipment such as tractors, ploughs, sewing machines, bicycles and construction materials in exchange for firearms.

37. Growing concern at the proliferation and illicit use of small arms and light weapons throughout Africa had enabled the African countries to come to the Conference with a common position, enshrined in the Bamako Declaration, which presented an African vision of how to eradicate the problem in Africa, including a set of recommendations for its implementation.

38. The programme of action resulting from the Conference must be realistic and pragmatic. His Government believed that the draft contained in

document A/AC.192/L.4/Rev.1 was a balanced proposal and looked forward to its adoption. National and regional initiatives would be essential for the successful implementation of the programme of action, but international assistance and cooperation would also be necessary, as well as an implementation and follow-up mechanism within the United Nations system.

39. Lastly, in the context of Small Arms Destruction Day, Mozambique had destroyed over 1,500 weapons of different types to show its unequivocal determination to build a society free of illegal arms and violence, where the culture of peace, dialogue and tolerance prevailed.

40. **Mr. van Aartsen** (Netherlands) said that the illicit arms trade could not be tackled without further regulating the legal arms trade. Transparency in the legal trade could be enhanced by improving the making and registration of weapons, implementing stricter export rules and regulating arms brokers, and by prohibiting the supply of small arms to non-State actors. The instruments developed within OSCE, the European Union and elsewhere for that purpose should have a place in the programme of action. Reducing the number of small arms and light weapons involved not only responsible management of stockpiles and destruction of surpluses, but also collection schemes for illegally held small arms as an integral part of post-conflict programmes. Cambodia was an example of how efforts to collect and destroy small arms could be linked to reconstruction and development. Measures to prevent small arms proliferation should also be an integral part of development frameworks.

41. Raising public awareness of the threat posed by the abundance of small arms to countries most in need of progress, stability and prosperity was also essential. The proclamation of Small Arms Destruction Day and the voluntary destruction of small arms and light weapons in countries such as Brazil, Mali, Congo, Sierra Leone and Cambodia proved that the message was being brought home and that efforts were starting to bear fruit.

42. Because energetic follow-up to the programme of action would be crucial, his Government strongly supported the proposal to hold follow-up conferences every two years rather than every five years. Ways must be found to involve non-governmental organizations and civil society in the implementation of the programme of action. Lastly, coordination among

all parties was a precondition for success, because small-arms proliferation was not a national or regional problem, but a global one.

43. **Mr. Kharrazi** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the purpose of the Conference was to try to reduce insecurity at a time of disappearing borders by curbing the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, in order — in the words of the Charter — to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war.

44. Low-cost, readily available and easily transportable small arms and light weapons had taken a heavy toll in human lives in conflicts both between and within States, but their proliferation could be halted by taking concerted action based on the principles of the United Nations. There was a linkage between the illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons and the trafficking of narcotic drugs, and his country was in the forefront of the campaign against the latter. It should be noted that there were 10 million small arms circulating in Afghanistan alone. He called on the Conference to help States such as his own in their struggle against terrorism, insurgency and drug trafficking by helping prevent the use of small arms and light weapons in those activities.

45. In addition to regional and national initiatives to curb the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, a global effort was needed, and the firearms Protocol to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime was a valuable first step in that direction.

46. The programme of action should focus on the production, marking and stockpiling of firearms. The developed countries bore special responsibility for reducing production and also for marking weapons so that they could be traced. No country should allow small arms and light weapons to be produced without proper State authorization. To cut demand, all countries should pass legislation to ban transfers and imports of small arms and light weapons outside authorized channels. With regard to stockpiles, countries should take the necessary steps to ensure that weapons were not stolen from police or armed forces armouries. They should also enact and enforce legislation to outlaw and penalize illegal possession of small arms.

47. Illicit arms brokering could be combated by international cooperation, particularly through Interpol, and the relevant Interpol database could be expanded to include information from countries on the illicit trade

in small arms and light weapons. The least developed countries, which faced the biggest problems as a result of the illicit trade in small arms, should be helped to enforce and strengthen their national controls. Lastly, rehabilitation programmes and job creation schemes should be put in place to prevent former combatants from reverting to the use of weapons.

48. His country had put in place effective measures to curb the illicit traffic in small arms, but in the long run only peace-building, dialogue and public education could help change the mindsets of some decision makers and show them that arms were not the solution to all their problems but a serious impediment to social and economic development.

49. *Mr. Donowaki (Japan), Vice-President took the Chair.*

50. **Mr. Bolton** (United States of America) lauded the goals of the Conference in the abstract, but stressed that his country could not accept any measure that curtailed its citizens' right, under their Constitution, to bear arms. He drew a distinction between, on the one hand, small arms and light weapons for military use and, on the other hand, hunting rifles and pistols, which were commonly owned and used by citizens in many countries. Not all small arms and light weapons were the same, and they were not all problematic.

51. All transfers of small arms and light weapons from the United States of America were conducted responsibly and under rigorous controls to ensure that they did not contribute to regional instability, arms races, terrorism, proliferation or human rights violations. Onward transfers without United States approval were prohibited and the authorities conducted investigations and acted quickly to curtail exports to recipients who did not meet United States criteria for responsible use.

52. The United States supported international initiatives such as the Wassenaar Arrangement on Export Controls for Conventional Arms and Dual-Use Goods and Technologies and the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, and it offered financial and technical assistance worldwide, focusing on regions of conflict and instability, to curb the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. Such assistance included training, technical assistance and funds to improve border security and curb arms smuggling. Also, it had recently instituted a programme to assist

countries in securing or destroying excess and illicit stocks of such weapons.

53. While his country supported the provisions in the draft programme of action calling for effective export and import controls, restraint in trade to regions of conflict, observance and enforcement of Security Council embargoes, strict regulation of arms brokers, transparency in exports, improved security of arms stockpiles and destruction of surpluses, it believed that some aspects of the draft programme went beyond what was appropriate for international action and should remain matters for national lawmakers: the legal manufacture of and trade in small arms and light weapons should not be constrained and diversions from the legal trade were best dealt with by effective export controls. The legitimacy of such activities should be explicitly recognized and countries that already had adequate legislation, regulations and procedures in place for the legitimate manufacture, stockpiling, transfer and possession of small arms and light weapons should be acknowledged.

54. His delegation objected to the provisions in the draft programme on the promotion of international advocacy in favour of controls on small arms and light weapons; since advocacy was not consistent with the views of all Member States and United Nations support for it was therefore inconsistent with democratic principles. His delegation also could not support provisions prohibiting civilian possession of small arms: that was a matter for individual Member States. The draft programme should target only illicit international activities. Moreover, limiting trade in small arms and light weapons solely to Governments was a flawed and impractical notion: in the absence of a clear definition of such small arms and light weapons, that could be construed as outlawing legitimate international trade in all firearms. Besides, the violent, non-State actors at whom that particular provision was aimed were unlikely to obtain arms through legal channels. Most importantly, the proposal would preclude assistance to an oppressed non-State group defending itself against a genocidal government.

55. His Government also could not support a mandatory review conference, which would serve only to institutionalize and bureaucratize the process. Nor would it negotiate or agree to any legally binding instrument which might prove unfeasible, unnecessary and in need of review over time. The final document of

the Conference must be legitimate, practical, effective and acceptable to all Member States.

56. **Mr. Marín Bosch** (Mexico) said that the global dimensions of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, its links to organized crime and the way in which it intensified and prolonged conflicts were obvious; international cooperation must therefore be intensified in order to deal with it. Of the millions of victims of that trade, the majority were civilians, most of them women and children. The number of arms manufacturers had more than doubled in less than a decade, with that rising trend showing no sign of levelling off.

57. The terms of reference of the conference must include a clear definition of small arms and light weapons. The United Nations Panel of Experts had defined them as those “manufactured to military specifications for use as lethal instruments of war”. The Conference must recognize explicitly the close linkage between transfers of such weapons and internal and international security, and he recalled the statement made by the President of the Security Council in September 1999 (S/PRST/1999/28) expressing the Council’s concern about the destabilizing effects of excessive stockpiles of such weapons and their circulation and proliferation.

58. He called on all States to combat the illicit manufacture and trafficking of small arms and light weapons, reduce and control their legitimate manufacture and the legitimate domestic and international trade therein and reduce arms ownership, particularly where civilian ownership was not banned. Mexico was taking such action, particularly in view of the linkage with organized crime and drug trafficking. The Conference should map out a programme of effective action to combat the illicit manufacture of and trade in small arms and light weapons at the national, regional and international levels that complemented and strengthened the provisions of the firearms Protocol to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

59. The Conference must also address not only the responsibility of recipient States but also the responsibility of countries that manufactured the small arms and light weapons that were causing such enormous suffering. Lastly, it must set up a follow-up mechanism for the programme of action. He trusted that the outcome of the Conference would lead to the

negotiation of legally binding instruments restricting the manufacture of and trade in small arms and light weapons to Government-authorized or -licensed manufacturers and brokers.

60. **Mr. Segiura** (Japan) noted that small arms had claimed more lives than had been lost in the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. His Government did not permit the export of weapons to any country and strictly controlled civilian possession of small arms; he hoped that other countries would do likewise. In cooperation with the European Union, his Government had implemented a “weapons for development” project in Cambodia and was considering similar projects in the Balkans, the Asia and Pacific region and Africa. A feasibility study would be carried out to that end and it would therefore be useful if the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) were to assess the success or failure of past projects.

61. His Government had contributed US\$ 1.87 million to the trust funds of the Department for Disarmament Affairs and planned to donate an additional US\$ 900,000. Its contribution had been used to finance projects such as a fact-finding mission to Cambodia and a confidence-building seminar on conventional weapons transfers held under the auspices of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Regional Forum.

62. It was important to achieve consensus on the programme of action to be adopted at the Conference and to convene a follow-up meeting; his Government stood ready to host such a meeting in early 2002.

63. **Mr. Garrigues** (Spain) noted that according to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), small arms and light weapons had been used either exclusively or primarily in 101 conflicts between 1989 and 1996. States bore the main responsibility for preventing the spread of such weapons, but civil society had a decisive role to play in providing and implementing solutions and serving as a catalyst for Government thinking.

64. The Conference should take a comprehensive approach to the problem of illicit arms trading. The establishment of criteria for arms exports would make it possible to differentiate between legal and illegal operations. It was also important to look into the issue of arms brokers and to develop a reliable marking and tracing system, capable of identifying individual weapons, in order to prevent the diversion of arms to

illicit traffic. Lastly, the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants and the elimination of arms stockpiles were essential for the post-conflict normalization of society.

65. Spain would be occupying the Presidency of the European Union in the first half of 2002 and would therefore have a special responsibility for the implementation of the programme of action adopted at the Conference. It planned to maintain contact with all interested States to ensure that the political momentum generated by the Conference led to stricter controls on small arms.

66. While it was true that excessive realism could keep the conference from achieving more ambitious results, it would be equally irresponsible to advocate impossibly idealistic solutions. It was important to establish the limits of the possible and then endeavour to move one step beyond. The Conference was not a point of arrival, but of departure.

67. **Mr. Gregori** (Brazil) said that the worldwide epidemic of violence, which was fuelled by the illicit trade in small arms, threatened citizens' welfare, public security and, in some countries, the very viability of the State. In Brazil, the illegal trafficking and excessive circulation of small arms were associated with increasing rates of crime and violence. In response, Government had launched a number of initiatives, culminating in June 2000 in a National Public Security Plan. It had tightened legislation on the trade in and possession of arms by civilians and, since 1999, had fought to obtain congressional approval of an even stricter bill. On 24 June 2001, in partnership with state governments and non-governmental organizations, the Government had promoted public weapons destruction ceremonies. In Rio de Janeiro, approximately 100,000 weapons had been destroyed, in the largest such event not linked to a post-conflict situation.

68. The support of civil society and non-governmental organizations was indispensable to such efforts, but international cooperation was also necessary. Initiatives must not be confined to individual countries; all States bore responsibility for finding a solution to the problem of the illicit trade in small arms. Brazil had participated in initiatives sponsored by the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR) and the Organization of American States, including the adoption of the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and

Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives and Other Related Materials, and welcomed the adoption of the firearms Protocol to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. There was a clear potential for synergy between the Protocol and the objectives of the Conference, and the Conference follow-up process should promote the universal adoption and implementation of the Protocol.

69. The programme of action must be comprehensive and balanced and the follow-up process must include mechanisms for effective monitoring of its implementation. Notwithstanding the diversity of national, subregional and regional perceptions and specificities, there were elements common to all countries that should be used to guarantee the effective realization of the Conference's objectives. In that spirit, he proposed the establishment of an annual international small arms destruction day and pledged his Government's support for all efforts to eliminate the circulation of small arms and light weapons.

70. **Mr. Al-Nasser** (Qatar), speaking on behalf of the League of Arab States, said that the draft programme of action was a balanced document and formed an appropriate basis for negotiation. He reaffirmed the views of the Group of Arab States on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons as contained in document A/CONF.192/PC/44.

71. It was important that the Conference should restrict itself to the mandate set forth in General Assembly resolution 54/54 V by concentrating on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and remaining mindful of the need to respect the sovereignty of States.

72. The response of the League of Arab States to the international community's initiative to convene the Conference did not imply any abandonment of the international community's priority objectives with regard to disarmament, particularly nuclear disarmament, weapons of mass destruction and conventional weapons, as specified in the Final Document of the Tenth Special Session of the General Assembly, to which the programme of action should include a clear reference.

73. As the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons was fuelling many of the conflicts throughout the world which had their roots in political, economic, social and ethnic circumstances inherited from the colonial period or resulting from foreign occupation,

the League of Arab States felt that the preamble to the proposed programme of action should include a clear reference to the nature of the problem along the lines of paragraph 13 of document A/CONF.192/PC/33.

74. It was important that the final document of the Conference should assert States' right of self-defence as set forth in Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, as well as the right of peoples to self-determination, especially peoples still under the colonial yoke or any other forms of foreign domination or occupation.

75. Lastly, it was important that the programme of action to be adopted by the Conference should be realistic, effective and capable of implementation. The main responsibility for its implementation would be borne by the national authorities of the States concerned.

76. **Mr. Minoves-Triquell** (Andorra) said that although his country had been living in peace since 1278, his Government believed that the support of all Member States was needed to find a solution to the problems addressed by the Conference.

77. There were over 500 million small arms and light weapons in circulation worldwide. Since 1990, such weapons had resulted in the deaths of over 4 million people, 90 per cent of them civilians and 80 per cent of them were women and children. It was therefore essential that the Conference culminate in the adoption of a final document that demonstrated the firm will of all Member States to enact international, regional and national measures to control arms sales, trace weapons and strengthen international cooperation in combating the illicit trade in small arms.

78. In 1998, his Government had helped finance the weapons collection project in Albania in the hope of eradicating a mindset dominated by violence and militarism. In 1999, it had provided funding for the exhibition "Taking Aim at Small Arms: Defending Children's Rights" organized by the Department for Disarmament Affairs and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). The exhibition had travelled to various countries, and in Andorra had helped raise awareness among schoolchildren of the problems posed by small arms. He urged all participants to visit the updated exhibition, which was on display during the Conference. His Government had contributed to several other programmes sponsored by

the Department for Disarmament Affairs and to the Global Campaign for Peace Education.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.