EU Statement

By

Ms. Clara Ganslandt

Head of Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Division

Chair of the Global Disarmament and Arms Control Working Group (CODUN)

European External Action Service

Fifth Biennial Meeting of States

on the UN Programme of Action to prevent, combat

and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects

(Stockpile management, including physical security measures)

United Nations

New York

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*Check against delivery*
Mr Chairman

1. I am speaking on behalf of the European Union. The Candidate Countries Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, Montenegro*, Iceland† and Serbia*, the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, the EFTA country Norway, member of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

2. As this is the first time I take the floor during this Biennial Meeting of States, allow me first to congratulate you on your appointment as chairperson. The EU welcomes the way you have steered preparations for this meeting, including the early circulation of the drafts of the outcome document. We remain convinced that the ultimate goal of each biennial meeting is to agree on precise and operational recommendations aiming at ensuring the full implementation of the UN Programme of Action.

3. The EU strongly welcomes that the issue of stockpile management, including security measures, is high on this meeting's agenda. The EU considers that this issue deserves our utmost consideration. Poorly managed and insufficiently secured small arms and light weapons and ammunition stockpiles remain a prime means through which small arms and light weapons are diverted from the legal to the illicit market. They also continue to pose a significant risk to international and regional security as well as to human security and public safety, as explosive accidents happening at regular intervals sadly remind us of.

4. The activities of the EU and its Member States in this field are guided by the EU small arms and light weapons strategy, adopted at the level of heads of states or governments, in December 2005. That strategy acknowledges that the abundance of stocks of small arms and light weapons and ammunition makes such arms easily obtainable by civilians, criminals, terrorists and combatants alike. The EU thus stresses the need to pursue preventive action

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* The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.
† Iceland continues to be a member of EFTA and the European Economic Area.
to ensure that arms and ammunition stockpiles are well guarded, managed and controlled.

5. With the Programme of Action, States have explicitly committed themselves to ensure that there are adequate and detailed standards and procedures relating to the management and security of small arms and light weapons stocks. We consider that this is also true of the ammunition stockpiles, which are part of the same problem.

6. We must use BMS5 to adopt a substantial outcome document that explores ways to improve our efforts in securing and maintaining small arms and light weapons through comprehensive systems for sound physical security and stockpile management.

7. In the EU and its Member States view, we should further develop agreed standards and best practices in the field of physical security and stockpile management, based on such instruments as the International Small Arms Control Standards (ISACS) and the International Ammunition Technical Guidelines (IATG). These instruments provide clear, practical and comprehensive guidance to practitioners and policymakers.

8. Moreover, the EU considers that the potential of modern technologies should be fully explored to improve the management and the security of small arms and light weapons and ammunition stocks.

9. Finally, the EU considers that particular attention should be drawn to countries emerging from conflicts, where ill-secured or ill-managed stockpiles can have particularly devastating effects.

10. The EU along with its Member States is investing considerable resources to assist states in the field of physical security and stockpile management, notably in Libya and in the OSCE area, including South-East Europe. In addition, the EU has already provided substantial financial support to the development and implementation of UN technical guidelines for ammunition stockpile management.

11. Mr Chairman, the EU looks forward to our deliberations on the very serious issue of stockpile management, which demonstrates the practical value of the Programme of Action. Thank you.