

STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR MUNIR AKRAM, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF
PAKISTAN TO THE UN, IN THE SECURITY COUNCIL MEETING ON "SMALL ARMS"
11 OCTOBER 2002

Mr. President,

My delegation expresses its gratitude to you for convening the debate on the issue of "Small Arms" - an issue which has been a source of major human sufferings during the past one decade. We also appreciate the Report of the Secretary General (S/2002/1053) on the subject, which contains many important recommendations.

Mr. President,

2. The post-Cold War era has witnessed conflict and strife at levels unprecedented in recent history. Although the causes of conflict have been varied and complex, their manifestation has been widespread ethnic and social upheaval and armed violence.

3. The consequences of the armed conflicts were made worse by the easy availability of small arms and light weapons, thus increasing their intensity, causing high number of casualties and making peace-keeping more complicated and risky. Having proudly participated in several important UN peace-keeping missions, Pakistan is fully aware of the complexities arising from the wide-spread presence of small arms and light weapons in regions where such missions are conducted.

4. We are, therefore, also cognizant of the need for sound planning and implementation strategies regarding de-weaponization and re-integration as part of peace-keeping and peace-building operations.

5. During its long war against foreign occupation, Afghanistan became a repository of millions units of small arms and light weapons. After the Soviet withdrawal, Pakistan became a victim of this proliferation of small arms and light weapons from the source.

6. Realizing the magnitude of this problem the Government of Pakistan resolved to take strong action to cleanse our society of this menace. We updated the Anti-Terrorism Act last year. We have banned several organizations some of whose members were involved in extremist or sectarian violence or terrorism. Under a comprehensive strategy, over 150,000 small arms and light weapons have been confiscated or voluntarily surrendered by the possessors of these arms since June last year. At the same time, the Government has stopped issuing licenses for new weapons, while a ban on the display of weapons has also been imposed and being implemented completely and vigorously. We are confident that our efforts will produce good results, cleansing our society of repercussions of the two decades of conflict in Afghanistan.

7. The kind of national measures which we have undertaken can be helpful to several countries in the world. We are prepared to share our experiences with other developing countries. Pakistan applauds several regional initiatives which clearly recognize and seek to address the problem in all its dimensions, including human security, development, law-enforcement, de-weaponization and arms control. It is obvious that only such a comprehensive approach which takes into account socio-economic factors can effectively address the problems associated with small arms and light weapons.

8. We are happy to note the successful UN Conference on Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, held in July last year. The Programme of Action adopted by the Conference may not be perfect, but it is a significant step forward. In our view, efforts must now focus on the implementation of this Programme.

Mr. President,

9. The Secretary General's Report (S/2002/1053) reviews the comprehensive measures being pursued to control small arms and their adverse impact on society and peace and security. The Report speaks of "mixed results" achieved by the Security Council's embargoes so far in curbing the flow of small arms and light weapons in conflict areas. We endorse many of the recommendations contained in the Secretary General's Report, including the need for effective enforcement of sanctions.

10. At the same time, measures against small arms must give priority to a more effective role by the UN, specially the Security Council, to resolve the underlying causes of the conflicts. The causes of war are even more important than the instruments of war.

11. UNGA Resolution 50/70 B upheld two principles, one, the right of states, especially the smaller states, to exercise the right to self-defence; and two, the right of peoples struggling against foreign occupation or for their legitimate right to self-determination. We cannot forget hundreds of thousands of patriots who have made the ultimate sacrifice for the cause of freedom and liberty. Pakistan honours the 80,000 Kashmiri heroes who have been killed by an occupation army of 700,000, in this long struggle for self-determination.

12. These three elements: peaceful resolution of disputes, the right of self-defence, and the right to self-determination, should be appropriately reflected in the Security Council's recommendations and the measures taken by the Security Council in the context of small arms. The General Assembly has asked the CD to negotiate "principles" for conventional arms control at the regional and subregional levels - such as the principle of undiminished security of states and elaboration of the concept of "sufficiency" in armaments. The adoption of such "principles" can make a useful contribution to specific negotiations for conventional arms control in various regions of the world, including the control of small arms.

Thank you, Mr. President.