

**Statement by Malik Azhar Ellahi, Representative of Pakistan in the First  
meeting Of the Open-Ended Working Group to Negotiate an International  
Instrument to identify and trade illicit small arms and light weapons on 16 June,  
2004**

**Mr. Chairman,**

The Pakistan delegation congratulates you on your assumption of the Chairmanship of this Working Group. It is entirely appropriate that this honour should belong to an able representative of Switzerland which has made an admirable contribution to promoting humanitarian norms in cases of armed conflict.

2. Our present endeavour must be placed within the context of a broader imperative. Elimination of the causes which lead to conflict, ensuring that conflicts when they occur do not exacerbate to rampaging murder and terror and evolving cooperative measures to address these serious issues are the challenges that must continue to inform our work as we deal with specific facets of the problem of illicit small arms and light weapons.

3. The devastating consequences of easy access to small arms and light weapons by criminals, warring and marauding groups and terrorists is too well known to be recounted at length. Suffice it to say that hundreds of thousands of human lives lost each year, decimation of economies and societies and the terrible suffering inflicted on the vulnerable segments of the population make it incumbent on the international community to adopt all practicable measures to eliminate the scourge of illicit weapons proliferation.

4. The Programme of Action adopted by the 2001 Conference provides a fundamental framework identifying steps to confront the problem of illicit small arms and for promoting international cooperation. While recognizing the immutable principles of self-defence and self-determination, the document also establishes an adequate basis for further work, as necessary, to deal with specific areas of concern. Indeed, follow-up activities have since proceeded in a satisfactory manner. Similarly, the Firearms Protocol also provides an important document setting up parameters which can be drawn upon to advance work in this Group.

**Mr. Chairman,**

5. Determining the character of the instrument to be negotiated has quite wisely been left to the working group to decide depending on the outcome of its work. In this context, we have noted your anticipated programme for the months ahead. We feel that the first draft capturing the essence of our work should avoid any labels. This will facilitate work on substance without the distraction of lengthy debates on the character of the instrument. For us it is more important that we are able to agree on meaningful, sensible and feasible measures which can be endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly. It would be more advantageous to negotiate an instrument which is flexible and can be improved over time and with the experience gained in its operation.

6. Having participated in the Group of Governmental Experts, Pakistan endorses the view that its report should make a substantive contribution to the proceedings of this working group. With our own domestic industry obligated to mark and keep records of its products, we have no difficulty with the general principle that marking and record keeping should be governed by certain minimum standards acceptable to all States.

7. Similarly, cooperation in tracing is equally important though it may prove to be far more complex than the provisions on marking and record maintenance. Allied issues, such as technical and terminological definitions will also have to be worked out drawing on the group of governmental experts' report and other relevant documents. International cooperation and assistance in capacity building and, should this be regarded as necessary, for harmonising standards is a pre-requisite for worst affected countries and regions.

8. In our view, initiating a tracing request must remain the prerogative of national authorities. In many cases, discretion and confidentiality may prove to be more efficacious. In considering a role for other bodies this consideration must be given due attention.

**Mr. Chairman,**

9. With these brief remarks, I would conclude by saying that we look forward to productive discussions in the following sessions on identified themes.

10. Pakistan supported the establishment of this Working Group and will work sincerely and cooperatively to ensure its success.

Thank You.