



Mr. Chairman,

While nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, as weapons of mass destruction, are rightly accorded priority in the area of disarmament and arms control, conventional weapons and small arms and light weapons constitute an important, and arguably, more immediate concern for humanity. This is because of continuing armed conflicts between States where conventional weapons are used, as also the prevalence of intra-State conflicts and terrorism in different parts of the world.

2. India, therefore, continues to remain 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, including by non-State actors, has caused enormous humanitarian concern. Such weapons disrupt political stability and social harmony, derail pluralism and democracy and hamper growth and development. They also fuel international terrorism and internal conflicts.

3. The United Nations has had a 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 common commitment of UN Member States to address this issue. The Programme of Action outlines a realistic, achievable and comprehensive approach to address the problem at national, regional and global levels. India believes that efforts to combat and eradicate illicit trade in small arms and light weapons will contribute to global efforts to combat terrorism and other organised crime. We believe that State responsibility is critical in ensuring this, primarily through efforts made by individual States themselves, and also through cooperation with other States at the regional and global levels.

4. The Biennial Meeting of States in July 2005 provided a welcome opportunity to take stock of national implementation of UNPOA. We now look forward to the 2006 Review Conference, which will 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. We would like the Review Conference to consider additional measures to increase the efficacy of UNPOA, including the prohibition of transfer of weapons to non-State actors.

5. It is a positive development that we succeeded in reaching consensus on a draft international instrument to enable States to identify and trace, in a timely and reliable manner, illicit small arms and light weapons. Even though it will not be a legally binding instrument, which India would have preferred, we joined the consensus, since the instrument contains vital commitments by States to mark all small arms and light weapons according to universal standards and cooperate with other States in tracing illicit ones. This significant achievement reflects our common commitment to achieve the objectives enshrined in the Programme of Action. Indeed, agreement on the instrument reinforces the multilateral ethic, so much absent in today's discourse on disarmament and arms control.

6. India will also continue to 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.

7. Under the CCW umbrella, States Parties to the Convention on certain Conventional Weapons have achieved considerable success in dealing with the humanitarian concerns posed by indiscriminate use of landmines. Its Protocol II, 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 five Protocols, including Amended Protocol II and Protocol V on explosive remnants of war.

8. 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 is continuing its constructive contributions to the deliberations of both these bodies.

9. 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.