COURTESY TRANSLATION

STATEMENT DELIVERED BY AMBASSADOR HÉCTOR VASCONCELOS, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF MEXICO, AT THE FOURTH CONFERENCE TO REVIEW PROGRESS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME OF ACTION TO PREVENT, COMBAT AND ERADICATE THE ILLICIT TRADE IN SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS IN ALL ITS ASPECTS

New York, 18 June 2024

Esteemed colleagues,

The United Nations has undertaken numerous efforts to strengthen joint action and cooperation to combat the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, as well as to address their severe consequences. In this regard, Mexico attaches the highest priority to the Programme of Action (PoA) adopted in 2001. However, we must acknowledge that our efforts have been insufficient.

Small arms and light weapons claim more victims than any other type of weapon and are involved in almost half of all violent deaths worldwide. A large proportion of arms and ammunition fall into the hands of unauthorized recipients through illicit channels, inadequate legal frameworks, and inefficient control mechanisms.

For Mexico, preventing and combating arms trafficking is a priority, since it impacts national security, public safety and, consequently, sustainable development and peace. Each year, thousands of weapons enter my country illegally, ending in the hands of organized crime that threatens the rule of law.

The scourge is not exclusive to my country or the Latin American and Caribbean region; this is a worldwide problem. It gravely and multidimensionally affects civil society and destroys the social fabric, perpetuating violence against the most vulnerable. In stark contrast, arms producing companies have increasing revenues through irresponsible practices. There is no justification for placing the intelligence, innovation, and the resources of societies at the service of the arms industry.

Simply stated, if arms and ammunition would not be so readily available or almost limitless, the majority of armed conflicts under the Security Council's
agenda would have better chances of being solved through peaceful means. As long as actors in conflict – especially non-state armed groups, mercenaries and criminals – have weapons, these will prefer using force instead of dialogue and diplomacy.

Dear colleagues,

My country has been highly critical of the original weaknesses of the Programme of Action and of the lack of political will to strengthen it. We need to redouble efforts to find political, legal and technical solutions that allow us to address the entire life cycle of arms. It is necessary to articulate comprehensive strategies with equitable commitments for all countries. The responsible contribution of each country is necessary, considering their own social and legal realities, to prioritize human values above all else.

For this conference, Mexico proposes five lines of action:

1. Governments and the private sector need to collaborate to stop the trafficking of arms and ammunition. Private actors must contribute with decisive actions of self-regulation and monitoring of their supply chains to prevent the diversion of the weapons they produce. They must ensure that the arms that are legally manufactured do not fall in the hands of criminals. It is not enough to agree on actions in the countries where the weapons are received, while the causes of origin, such as production and export, persist.

2. Strengthen controls to prevent the diversion at each stage of the arms life cycle. We must find viable ways to establish cooperation mechanisms to prevent diversion and develop joint solutions under a shared responsibility approach, taking into consideration the role that each actor plays in the supply chain.

3. Acknowledge that ammunition is inseparable from arms and that they are essential for their operation. The majority of countries insist on addressing the issue of ammunition; deliberations on small arms and light weapons that omit the issue of ammunition are artificial.

4. Objective balance regarding challenges that new technologies present in arms production compared to traditional means. Small arms and light weapons manufactured with new technologies still represent a smaller
percentage within those weapons seized from criminal groups or those recovered in conflict zones.

5. The need for a clear gender perspective in implementing the Programme of Action. While progress has been achieved, our actions must reflect a better understanding on how gender plays an important part of trafficking and the illicit use of small arms and light weapons. This involves collecting disaggregated data related to gender and sexual orientation, to empirically understand the intersectional impacts of armed violence on specific populations. My country will continue to advocate for the active participation of women at all decision-making levels.

Madam President, you can count on the support of the Mexican Delegation in the following two weeks. We are convinced that under your leadership, we can enrich and correct the global strategy to prevent and combat the trafficking of small arms and light weapons. We call on all delegations to join efforts to achieve concrete results that address current challenges.

Thank you.

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