STATEMENT

Delivered by

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to the United Nations in New York

GENERAL EXCHANGE OF VIEWS (HIGH LEVEL SEGMENT)

Fourth United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made 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

Conference Room 1, United Nations Headquarters, New York
18 June 2024, 3:00 p.m.

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

Es un honor para mí dirigirme a esta distinguida asamblea en la Cuarta Conferencia de Revisión del Programa de Acción de las Naciones Unidas (UNPoA) para Prevenir, Combatir y Erradicar el Comercio Ilícito de Armas Pequeñas y Ligeras en todos sus Aspectos. En primer lugar, me gustaría felicitar a la Embajadora Maritza Chan de la Misión Permanente de Costa Rica por su elección como Presidenta de la Conferencia de Revisión y a su buró, compuesto por los delegados de Australia, Argentina, Croacia, Egipto, El Salvador, Ghana, Indonesia, Letonia, Nepal, Rumania, Filipinas, Portugal, Sudáfrica y Suiza.

[It is my honor to address this distinguished assembly at the Fourth Review Conference of the United Nations Program of Action (UNPoA) to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in all its Aspects. First of all, I would like to congratulate Ambassador Maritza Chan of the Permanent Mission of Costa Rica for her election as President of the Review Conference and her bureau, composed of delegates from Australia, Argentina, Croatia, Egypt, El Salvador, Ghana, Indonesia, Latvia, Nepal, Romania, Philippines, Portugal, South Africa and Switzerland.]

We gather at a crucial time, reflecting on our progress and identifying paths to enhance our collective efforts against the proliferation of illicit small arms and light weapons.
The Philippines commends President and her team for Rev1 of the Draft Outcome Document, which serves as a solid foundation for the outcome document of this conference. We support its structure and the inclusion of several critical elements: establishment of the Open-ended Technical Expert Group; implementation of the Fellowship Program; the destruction of seized, obsolete, and unserviceable SALW; the prevention of diversion to unauthorized recipients; the significant role of regional and sub-regional organizations and civil society organizations in supporting national implementation; the integration of a gender perspective in combating illicit SALW proliferation and misuse and the full, equal, meaningful, and effective participation of women in all decision-making and implementation processes relating to the POA and the ITI; nexus between weapons regulation and sustainable development, including in the implementation of peace agreements; reference to mental health; and the engagement of youth and other marginalized groups in small arms control processes.

We recognize the need for action-oriented measures to promote effective international cooperation and assistance. The Philippines actively seeks international cooperation and assistance to secure technical support, strengthen through-life arms diversion prevention, including end-use/r systems, and enhance capabilities in marking, recording, and tracing small arms. Importantly, such cooperation and assistance should be devoid of political conditions or any form of conditionality.

The Philippines emphasizes the necessity of respecting the priorities of recipient states, fostering trust, and facilitating genuine cooperation. We look forward to further work on establishing a balanced and systematic approach to international assistance, ensuring a process that honors the recipients’ priorities and builds trust among states.

Reflecting on our experiences, the Philippines highlights two pivotal complementary regional initiatives: the Cambodia-led ASEAN Declaration on Combating Arms Smuggling and the Philippine-initiated Regional Roadmap Towards Regional Mechanism on Weapons Regulation. These initiatives illustrate our collective resolve in Southeast Asia to combat illicit arms proliferation and establish a comprehensive framework for weapons regulation, extending our efforts to South Asia and Pacific states. These initiatives not only reinforce regional cooperation but also offer models that can be adapted by other regions facing similar challenges.

Reporting is another critical aspect of the UNPoA. Transparent and consistent reporting enables countries to share best practices and progress, fostering an environment of accountability and continuous improvement. However, we must address the gap in reporting. Enhanced commitment from member states and greater support and resources are essential to improve the quality and frequency of reporting. Nil reporting should be context-specific, recognizing earlier efforts where illicit trafficking is no longer a significant issue, and should be seen as progress rather than non-participation.

In our current polarized political environment, with ongoing conflicts posing challenges to multilateralism, it is imperative to adopt flexible, context-specific initiatives that avoid prescriptive approaches. We advocate for regional approaches and support learning from states with stringent regulations on weapons possession, promoting evidence-based policies and measures.
The Philippines acknowledges the critical role of international cooperation and assistance. We propose utilizing the United Nations Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation (UNSCAR) as the primary international assistance mechanism. UNSCAR’s support has been instrumental in developing our Regional Roadmap on Weapons Regulation, demonstrating its effectiveness in furthering international cooperation and assistance. As a testament to this trust, the Philippines is in the process of donating to UNSCAR. We take pride that the Philippines is the first UNSCAR beneficiary country to be a donor to UNSCAR as well. This contribution represents our commitment to leveraging investment in our region, reinforcing our dedication to international cooperation and sustainable development.

In conclusion, the Philippines remains committed to revitalizing the UNPoA. We advocate for focused discussions on current challenges, a systematic approach to measuring progress, and enhanced international cooperation and assistance. Let us work together to create a safer and more secure world, free from the scourge of illicit small arms and light weapons.

Thank you, Madame President.