“Opening remarks of the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, to the Fifth Biennial Meeting of States to Consider 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”

Delivered by

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Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

On behalf of the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Ms. Angela Kane, who is away on mission, I declare open the Fifth Biennial Meeting of States to Consider 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.

You are gathered here in New York for the next five days for a very important task: to consider the implementation of the Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons.

The Programme of Action together with its International Tracing Instrument are strong political commitments, agreed to by the full body of Member States within the United Nations. They form a global framework at the international community's disposal to effectively address the perennial issue of illicit trade of small arms and light weapons, at the global, regional and national levels.

While in the past years there have been major achievements in the fight against this pernicious, too-often uncontrolled trade, Member States continue to face daunting challenges. Hundreds of thousands of lives across the globe are destroyed by guns that ended up in the wrong hands. Illegal guns fuel crime and conflict, threaten refugees and aid workers, and impede socio-economic development.

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

The three main substantive items on the provisional agenda of BMS5, namely stockpile management, consideration of the International Tracing Instrument, and international cooperation and assistance, are all vital to preventing and combating the illicit trade in arms and address the needs of today’s world. I am confident that the careful examination and discussion of these topics during BMS5 will enable Member States to identify further practical measures commensurate to the challenges of a changing international environment, where the only constant is that peace and security remain fragile.

International and regional organizations, as well as Non-Governmental Organizations remain important partners in the ongoing global efforts to tackle the issue of small arms and light weapons. This BMS meeting coincides with the Global Week of Action against Gun Violence organized by civil society, which has my strong support.

The continued participation of civil society representatives in meetings under the Programme of Action is important: it helps raise awareness on the issue of small arms and presses decision-makers to find the appropriate solutions.
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to commend your Chair-designate Ambassador Zahir Tanin of Afghanistan and likewise the ITI moderator-elect, Mr. Anthony Simpson of New Zealand and his predecessor Mr. Wolfgang Bindseil of Germany, for working with Member States in such a transparent and constructive manner and skilfully steering the preparatory process for BMS5. I am confident that under their helm and guidance, BMS5 will culminate in a productive outcome.