THE CHEF DE CABINET

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REMARKS TO THE THIRD REVIEW CONFERENCE OF THE UNITED NATIONS PROGRAMME OF ACTION ON SMALL ARMS

New York, 18 June 2018

Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Welcome to the Third Review Conference of the Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons. The Secretary-General has asked me to deliver a message to this conference on his behalf.

Secretary-General’s Message to the Third Review Conference of the Programme of Action on illicit small arms and light weapons

“Every year, over half a million people are killed violently around the world, mostly through small arms fire.

Those pulling the trigger may be soldiers, border guards or police, using their weapons as a last resort, in accordance with the principles of necessity, proportionality and restraint. Some are private security guards or civilians, using a registered firearm for protection or in self-defence.

But the huge majority of those who kill with small arms do not fit this description. They may be members of armed groups who are terrorizing people of a country or a whole region with killings and sexual abuse. They could be members of national security forces who are abusing their power. They might be terrorists aiming to destroy lives and sow fear; criminals holding up a grocery store; or gang members killing those who get in the way of a drug deal.

Tragically, many of them are men using an illegally-acquired weapon against the women who are their partners. In some countries, more than 60 percent of killings of women are committed with firearms.
Illicit small arms are also used against United Nations peacekeeping forces. In 2017, 56 peacekeepers died in violent attacks – the highest number in over two decades.

Regulating small arms is a unique challenge. It is not simply a question of addressing government stockpiles. Out of some 900 million small arms in the world, three-quarters are in civilian hands – the majority unlicensed.

Controlling and regulating small arms therefore requires action that goes well beyond national security institutions. It includes providing alternative livelihoods for former combatants, engaging with municipal governments and police, working with civil society, including grass-roots organizations and community violence reduction programmes, as well as local businesses.

Solutions must be integrated and holistic. Short-term, compartmentalized projects will not keep pace with the seriousness and magnitude of the problem.

That is why the United Nations recommends that the Security Council should address the arms situation when considering geographic and thematic issues on its agenda.

That is also why the United Nations has developed a broad set of voluntary small arms control standards.

And that is why the Programme of Action emphasizes the value of national commissions and national action plans, to foster coordinated efforts and strengthen cooperation.

Small arms are often a factor in large-scale human rights abuses and the forced displacement of civilians.

Small arms control is a prerequisite for stability and conflict prevention, which is critical to achieve the mutually reinforcing goals of sustaining peace and sustainable development.
Only through sustainable development will we be able to build just, peaceful and inclusive societies and to achieve lasting peace.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is our agreed roadmap for building peaceful, resilient and prosperous societies on a healthy planet. Among the 17 Goals, there is a specific target to reduce arms flows, based on improving the tracing of weapons.

The United Nations is promoting the control of small arms through our support for programmes in line with SDG 16. But to achieve lasting peace and the 2030 Agenda, we must address the root causes of violence and conflict.

The Agenda for Disarmament that I launched last month includes a renewed focus on controlling small arms. And it includes my commitment to establish a dedicated facility within the Peacebuilding Fund, to ensure solid financing for coordinated, integrated, sustained small arms control measures.

I invite all States to contribute.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Programme of Action is a dynamic, living framework. It must evolve to address current challenges.

This Third Review Conference provides the international community with a chance for concerted progress; a joint step forward. I urge you to be bold and seize the opportunity. Your decisions will make a difference to people all over the world.

I wish you all success in your deliberations.”

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

This concludes the statement by the Secretary-General.

I thank you for your attention.