



**Seventh Biennial Meeting of States to consider the implementation of the  
Programme of Action (PoA) to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit  
trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects and its  
International Tracing Instrument (ITI)**

**Statement by Mr. Thomas Markram, Director and Deputy to the High  
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New York  
26 July 2021

Mr. Chairman,

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Having earlier extended warm congratulations to Ambassador Kimani on his election as chair. I also wish to extend to all delegations a warm welcome to BMS7.

Multilateral disarmament and arms control processes are complex. Even in the most ideal of circumstances, States face challenges when pursuing meaningful progress on issues that cut to the core of international peace and security.

Tackling the cross-cutting and multi-faceted threats posed by the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons is an integral part of this challenge. And as small arms and light weapons continue to play a central role in initiating, exacerbating and sustaining armed conflict, pervasive violence and instability, the sense of urgency for effective and forward-looking control measures remains as potent as ever.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated this burden. Nevertheless, despite the complexities and demands of virtual engagement, creative and innovative solutions have been found to make progress. The compromises that have been made for BMS7 to be held under the present conditions underscore the importance of the small arms issue and the need for timely and effective solutions.

Member States have, indeed, risen to the challenges at hand laying the groundwork for genuine forward movement this week.

Under the able leadership of the Chair and his team, delegations have engaged in a robust and inclusive preparatory process on both the substantive and the process aspects. This has produced mutual understanding and agreement on several issues before the opening gavel this morning.

I am encouraged by the sense of compromise that has characterized the preparatory process and would like urge continued flexibility in your deliberations.

Distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

This year marks the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the adoption of the Programme of Action on small arms and light weapons.

This is a moment for collective celebration.

At the same time, it is also a moment for reflection and recommitment.

The progress made since 2001 is significant, but I am sure you would all agree that much more work lies ahead. I would encourage all delegations to carry with them the sense of constructive engagement of the past with a redoubling of efforts for the future.

The current draft outcome document is a step in the right direction. It consolidates core elements of the PoA and ITI and highlights how the secure and effective management of weapon stockpiles as well as marking, record-keeping and tracing, among other issues, are key to preventing the diversion of weapons to unauthorized recipient.

We also know that the implementation of the PoA and ITI does not take place in a vacuum. I therefore commend States for the progress they have made over the past years to link the instruments to the broader policy agenda, which is vital to ensure that small arms control measures are part of initiatives related to sustainable development, armed violence and conflict prevention and gender equality. I encourage States to continue to foster and further explore those linkages during BMS7.

In light of this year's anniversary, I hope States will continue to propel the political process and the implementation of the instruments forward to ensure their relevance and effectiveness in the years to come. Proposals to move forward with discussions on new technologies are as crucial as strengthening international cooperation and assistance mechanisms. The proposed fellowship programme for practitioners could provide for enhanced capacity building with the objective to fully implement the instruments. And voluntary target setting could revitalize the political process, by allowing national and regional priorities to drive the global discourse. I am confident that States will seriously consider those proposal and ultimately, agree on how they wish to take them forward as part of their deliberations this week.

Let me conclude to say that unusual times have required unusual measures. I therefore would like to express my deep appreciation to those delegations as well as representatives from civil society, and regional and international organizations who are joining us virtually this week.

The geographical distance and virtual screens do not diminish your importance and presence in this room and in this Meeting.

I wish the Chair and all delegations successful deliberations and forward-looking recommendations from a truly historic meeting. You can count on the unwavering support of the UN Secretariat.