Dear Excellency,

It is my honor to write to you in my capacity as Chair-designate of 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 (BMS 5), to be held in New York from 16-20 June 2014.

The follow-up section of the Programme of Action (PoA) envisages the convening of Biennial Meetings of States “to consider the national, regional and global implementation of the Programme of Action.”

I would like to invite you to open, informal consultations on BMS5 on Friday, 25 October at 3:00 p.m. in Conference Room 6 NLB of the UN Secretariat, with the aim of exchanging views on the possible agenda, outcome, and other substantive and organisational aspects of BMS5. In line with standing practice, this informal meeting will be conducted in English. Also in line with past practice – and with the mandate of the International Tracing Instrument (ITI) adopted by consensus in 2005 – it is foreseen that BMS5 will include a separate segment on the ITI.

I would be very grateful if you could contribute your government’s views and suggestions during the informal consultations on Friday, 25 October. In particular it would be appreciated if you could share initial national views on the possible agenda and outcome of BMS5.

It is my intention to hold further open, informal consultations in New York and possibly in Geneva prior to BMS5.

Working methods
I would kindly suggest to use the same working methods as were successfully employed in the past under Programme of Action meetings, most recently by the President(-designate) of the 2nd Review Conference on the PoA in 2012. This included an early circulation of a ‘zero-draft’ outcome document, with ample possibility for open, transparent consultations in the lead-up to the meeting itself.

Also, as there is not enough time for a general debate at BMS meetings, it is suggested that BMS5 – similar to the previous BMSs – have no general debate nor a high-level segment, but moves directly into the thematic debate. In conformity with past practice, I encourage States to consider their national report as their contribution of views on the general implementation of the PoA (ref. UNODA’s Note Verbale 20 September 2013 requesting Missions to submit their government’s national report before 31 December 2013).

BMS5 agenda
At the 2012 Review Conference on the Programme of Action and its International Tracing Instrument, States agreed that international cooperation and assistance, including capacity-building, should be an integral element of all PoA and ITI meetings. States also mentioned physical security measures of small arms and light weapons (stockpile management) as a relevant issue to be further addressed. As always,
the IPI is an agreed recurring theme in any meeting under this process. Consequently, and fully on the basis of past practice and the agreed outcome of the 2nd Review Conference, a highly initial list of suggested themes which could be addressed by BMS5 may include:

1. Stockpile management;
2. Marking, record-keeping and tracing (International Tracing Instrument);
3. International cooperation and assistance;
4. Other issues.

Please note that the fourth point would allow Member States to share views on any other theme which may not have secured consensus.

I would like to emphasize that this is only a very first attempt at a possible agenda for BMS5, with the sole purpose of starting our discussion, and I welcome the suggestions of Members States on the agenda as we move forward. It is my hope that together we can reach an informal agreement on the agenda of the BMS5 by December 2013 in order to ensure a successful outcome of the process.

I thank you in advance for contributing substantively at an early stage to the process. This ensures that the preparations for BMS5 will be transparent, timely, and fully inclusive. I look forward to an interchange of views on achieving our joint objectives, also through bilateral consultations. Let me stress that throughout the coming year I will be available for bilateral consultations on any issue that may be of concern to you regarding BMS5 – as is my team. Feel free to contact my office by phone (212) 972–1212 or by email ambassador@afghanistan-un.org.

Please note that all relevant information pertaining to BMS5 will be posted on the website of the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs: www.un.org/disarmament.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Zahir Tanin
Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Afghanistan to the United Nations

To: All Permanent Representatives and Permanent Observers to the United Nations New York