



ELEVENTH UN CONGRESS ON CRIME PREVENTION AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Bangkok, Thailand 18-25 April 2005



BKK/CP/26
25 April 2005

PROLIFERATION OF SMALL ARMS BANNED

Ratification by Zambia Completes Efforts to End Production and Trafficking in Small Arms

BANGKOK, 25 April (UN Information Service) -- The United Nations *Office on Drugs and Crime* (UNODC) has announced the entry into force of the Firearms Control Protocol, after Zambia became the fortieth nation to ratify it. The Protocol, a critical component of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, is an opportunity and an obligation for countries to control one of the biggest killers of our time, small arms. With Zambia's ratification, the fortieth, the minimum number of State parties was reached, so that the Protocol can enter into force. Kalombo Thomson Mwansa, Minister of Home Affairs for Zambia, deposited the instruments of ratification during the 11th United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice in Bangkok.

Antonio Maria Costa, Executive Director, UNODC, says, "Small arms traffickers have littered the world with the victims of their trade. Small arms are a multi-billion dollar business. More than 500,000 people are killed every year by small arms, one every minute. From the Balkans to Western Africa, from the Andes to Afghanistan, insurgents are armed by traffickers focused on profit rather than political causes. Pistols, submachine guns, grenades and portable anti-aircraft missile systems are banned by this Convention."

This Small Arms Protocol is part of a larger effort to control crime. Over the past five years, UNODC has brokered five important crime-fighting instruments: the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its three Protocols, and the Convention against Corruption. All but the last are already up and running, powerful tools in the effort to control crime. The Convention against Corruption is expected to enter into force before the end of 2005. "Governments are on the spot now", says Mr. Costa, "because finally, it is their turn to transform Conventions into actual policy and practice."

Over the past two decades, a growing number of States have been racked by violence, when local disputes turn into larger conflict and major killing. In the UN Millennium Report, United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan says "... in terms of the carnage they cause, small arms, indeed, could well be described as 'weapons of mass destruction'".

Failed governments and post-conflict situations offer terrorists and criminal gangs opportunities to trade "guns-for-drugs". The UNODC Executive Director continues to assert there are clear links between drugs, arms, and terrorism. Mr. Costa commended the government of Zambia for its resolve, and added, "Along with the other 39 States who have ratified this protocol, Zambia is sending a powerful message to criminal gangs and gunrunners around the world -- 'Your time is up'".

For more information: Kathleen Millar, Deputy Spokesperson, UNODC, +43 699 1459 5629.

* * * * *