

15 July 2005

Concluding statement by the Chairman of the Biennial Meeting of States, Ambassador Pasi Patokallio

Under-Secretary Abe, distinguished delegates, representatives of non-governmental organizations and civil society, ladies and gentlemen,

We have come to the end of our five days of hard work as the UN Second 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.

We have considered the implementation of the Programme of Action at national, regional and international levels. We have considered the state of play with regard to the full range of commitments assumed by Member States. We have considered these commitments together with our partners, international and regional organizations, UN agencies and non-governmental organizations. It has been a good Meeting.

Our task here was to exchange information and views. We did so and we did so in a good, consensual atmosphere. At this Meeting more time than previously was devoted to an interactive discussion of the complex and interlocking themes that run through the Programme of Action. This time our thematic discussion was also enriched by interventions from international and regional organizations as well as from UN agencies. At the next Biennial Meeting of States we should bring into the thematic discussion also non-governmental organizations as our full partners. Stronger participation of their representatives as well as that of parliamentarians in national delegations was a welcome development.

Distinguished delegates,

I see some overarching themes emerging from our discussions here that will be central to our work in the future.

Implementation of existing commitments remains the foundation. Small arms trafficking, proliferation and misuse could be brought under much better control if all States implemented the commitments they undertook already in 2001. New measures are no substitute for full implementation of old ones.

International cooperation and assistance is required in many cases. Building capacity in affected States so that they can better implement their commitments under the Programme of Action remains a key task. Without real capacity even States with the strongest political will can do little, and they should therefore be assisted to acquire that capacity. But it is equally true that there must be that political will on the part of the recipient State for international cooperation and assistance to make a difference on the ground. Aid can be wasted on small arms projects just as easily as on any other projects if the political will to effect real change is lacking.

Much has been said here of the need for a comprehensive approach. And quite rightly so. Small arms trafficking, proliferation and misuse impact on security, on development and on human rights.

There is a clear need for stronger supply-side measures. Enhancing controls on transfers would go a long way toward preventing small arms and light weapons from being used to stoke conflict, undermine or even reverse development and violate human rights. All States enforcing proper criteria in authorizing small arms transfers would also go a long way toward dealing with the problem of non-State actors as these often are violent groups that plunder resources and certainly do not respect human rights. For the same reason, regulating brokers and brokering activities is also necessary. Given the global nature of these activities, international action is also necessary.

The international instrument to enable States to identify and trace illicit small arms is not legally binding is widely regretted. The instrument nonetheless represents important progress, as Ambassador Thalmann described to us in detail yesterday. The fact that it is not legally binding does not release States from their obligation to implement it fully and in good faith.

There is a clear need for stronger demand-side measures. Aligning action against small arms trafficking, proliferation and misuse with broader development goals make sense and already works in many places. Weapons for development programmes with strong community focus and local participation also work. Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes certainly work better when women are involved as equals in decision-making and in receiving the benefits, and when the special needs of children are taken into account throughout the process.

Simply put, the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals also requires effective action on small arms.

Weapons collection and destruction programmes in affected communities are necessary, with immediate and public destruction of surrendered or confiscated weapons acting as a confidence-building measure. But disarming only works if people feel secure without weapons and trust their police and security forces. That is not often the case. Security sector reform is therefore also a vital demand-side measure in those cases.

The implementation of all of these demand-side measures I have briefly mentioned already benefit from international cooperation and assistance. But more is required, both in terms of the political will in affected countries to deal effectively with the causes of demand and in terms of human and financial resources, both internal and external, to match that political will on the part of recipient countries.

Distinguished delegates,

In the foregoing I sketched some overarching themes for our future work as I see them. The Review Conference of next year and the preparatory process before it, of which this Meeting has been a part, will provide further occasions to address them. And so do the

many other important events organized with a view to prodding implementation of the Programme of Action, such as the many side events during this Meeting.

It remains for me to thank Under-Secretary Abe and his team, especially the Secretary of the Meeting Pamela Maponga, Antonio Evora as well as Christa Giles for their indispensable contributions to our smooth proceedings. The interpreters also deserve our heartfelt thanks. And so does my own team, represented by the ubiquitous Janne Taalas behind me.

Last but not least I would like to thank my Bureau members and all the delegates for making this a good meeting in a good atmosphere.

Thank you.