

11 July 2005

United Nations 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

Opening remarks by the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs

Mr. Nobuyasu Abe

I declare open the Second United Nations 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.

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The adoption, four years ago, of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons marked the beginning of concerted United Nations action to address the excessive accumulation and proliferation of illicit small arms and light weapons with their concomitant threat to international peace and security. Member States committed themselves, among other things, to meet on a biennial basis starting in 2003, to exchange information and experiences in their implementation of the historic Programme of Action. Our meeting today, is the second of such meetings. It comes in the wake of the successful conclusion of the work of the Open-Ended Working Group to Negotiate an International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons and on the eve of the 2006

Conference to review progress in the implementation of the PoA.

The prevention of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons has become one of the major priorities of the United Nations, especially since the landmark conference in 2001, as the threat posed by the illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons has become abundantly clear. These weapons have not only hampered development, political and social stability but they have also maimed and killed hundreds of thousands of innocent people across the world.

Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

In his Report “In larger freedom, towards development, security and human rights for all”, the Secretary-General noted that the world must advance the causes of security, development and human rights together, otherwise none will succeed. Collective security today depends on accepting that the threats each region of the world perceives as most urgent are, in fact, equally so for all.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Much progress has been made at the national, regional and global levels. The Programme of Action has proven to be a valuable and effective tool to tackle some of the common threats and to achieve some of the common goals that the international community faces vis-à-vis the illicit proliferation of small arms. A series of seminars and workshops have been organized to promote the implementation of the Programme of Action. Consultations have been held on issue of brokering in small arms and light weapons.

Partnerships have emerged, among governments, NGOs, civil society and international organizations, in search for new ideas in the fight against the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. For example, last February the Government of Tanzania with the support of the Governments of Finland and the United Kingdom organized an international workshop on global principles for arms transfers. The goal of the workshop was to contribute to a broader international process that would elaborate global principles for the control of international transfers, based on the existing obligations of states under relevant international law and regional commitments. Representatives of 31 countries, 4 international organization and 10 NGOs participated in the workshop.

Another example of growing partnership among governments, civil society and NGOs was the meeting last May organized by the U. K. Foreign and Commonwealth Office to explore how an Arms trade treaty could help set common global principles for trade in conventional weapons which, naturally, include small arms and light weapons. Representatives from 22 countries, regional and international organizations participated in this meeting. The concept of an arms trade treaty has been promoted by a group of Nobel Peace Laureates and a coalition of NGOs led by OXFAM, Amnesty International and IANSA.

An important related event took place on July 3. The Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (the Firearms Protocol), entered into force.

Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

While much has been accomplished, there is no time for complacency. As we explore ways and means to implement the Programme of Action, as we increase cooperation and understanding of the common challenges, we have an opportunity to learn and share a common vision on how to respond to this global challenge. The Department for Disarmament Affairs, together with the other departments of the United Nations Secretariat, is committed to assist you in your efforts in this important undertaking.
