

Statement by Ambassador Pasi Patokallio

Co-Chair of the thematic debate on progress and problems in the implementation of the Programme of Action with specific emphasis on international cooperation and assistance and best practices of SALW projects

30 June 2006

Mr President, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

We have now concluded our exchange of views on progress and problems in the implementation of the Programme of Action with specific emphasis on international cooperation and assistance and best practices of SALW projects. We had a good debate, with fifteen substantive interventions. I detected a remarkable convergence of views between recipients and donors on a number of lessons learned with respect to best practices and international cooperation:

- There is a need for an integrated approach to small arms problems within the context of efforts to improve security and socio-economic development.
- There is a need for capacity building in affected states involving local partnerships, also with NGOs.
- Any approach must be country-specific. In dealing with small arms, one size does not fit all.
- Small arms are a long-term problem, and donors will therefore need to think in terms of longer funding cycles.
- International donor coordination is important in order to avoid duplication of efforts.

Mr. President,

Let me now conclude with some remarks of my own reflecting my experience as Chairman of 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, held in July last year.

We are all aware of the importance of this Review Conference. We are here to reduce in a sustainable way small arms trafficking, proliferation and misuse that cost tens of thousands of lives every year, violate the human rights of millions of people and hold back and even reverse development in many parts of the world. We will be able to move

forward if we build on the broad understanding of the complexity - all aspects - of the small arms issue as expressed in the Programme of Action and subsequent implementation in the field.

That broad understanding acknowledges the interdependence of small arms misuse, development and respect for human rights, and seeks to put in place practical measures that reflect that triangle of interdependence.

I will cluster my brief remarks around three themes: progress achieved in implementation, key problems in implementation, and assistance and co-operation, a theme that cuts across both the successes and failures of implementation.

Mr President,

We have made progress in implementing the commitments of the PoA: close to 140 states have reported on their implementation efforts, more than 130 states have designated a national point of contact, more than 80 states have put in place a national coordination mechanism. An important instrument on marking and tracing of illicit small arms has been agreed upon, the Vienna firearms protocol has entered into force, and soon we will be embarking on a process to develop means to curb illicit brokering. At the regional level, the OSCE has developed guidelines on small arms transfers and ECOWAS has transformed its moratorium into a legally binding treaty.

Indeed, progress has been made but let us not kid ourselves: progress has been slow and patchy, especially if viewed against the hopes many of us entertained in 2001. The uneven nature of progress is amply documented by the Small Arms Survey, the IANSA Biting the Bullet Project and UNIDIR in their publications. I recommend them highly as reality checks.

I cannot stress enough that implementation of existing commitments remains the foundation of true progress. Small arms trafficking, proliferation and misuse could be brought under much better control if all states implemented the commitments they already undertook in 2001. New measures are no substitute for the full implementation of old ones.

Mr President,

I wish to highlight two sets of problems with implementation, the one procedural and the other substantive.

The first set relates to the mandate of a biennial meeting of states as presently conceived under the PoA. The mandate - essentially one of information exchange - has been turned into a straitjacket. The present mandate does not allow such a meeting to play the forward-looking and sensible role it could play in bolstering the implementation of the PoA. Too much of the meeting has to be dedicated to a sterile exercise of oral reporting on what has been reported in writing already. There is no real opportunity to assess implementation together, let alone recommend improvements. Any whiff of negotiation on further steps, however minuscule, can be and has been interpreted as going beyond the mandate.

I am therefore pleased that the President's present draft aims at giving biennial meetings a more substantive and action-oriented role under a new name. A biennial meeting only makes sense if it is fully integrated into the overall process of enhancing implementation in between review conferences.

The second set of problems has to do with the low priority that continues to be given to small arms proliferation and misuse in the context of development programs. Many countries (more than a hundred) continue to lack a national coordination mechanism - even though coordination is a *sine qua non* for a coherent small arms policy given the many ways that small arms misuse impact on a society. Aligning small arms action with broader development goals, and funding it accordingly, would make sense. Too often small arms action continues to be small potatoes.

The recent decision by the Development Assistance Committee of the OECD allowing for the designation of new SALW-related activities as official development aid is a significant step in the right direction and should be fully used to mainstream funding for SALW projects into development programs.

Assistance on small arms needs to be a properly funded part of violence reduction and poverty reduction programmes in general in order to be effective. Small arms misuse is only a part of a complex web of issues creating insecurity and undermining development as well as respect for human rights and humanitarian law. Achievement of the Millennium Development Goals requires effective action also on small arms.

Last but not least, I wish to pay tribute to the important role of NGOs in advancing our common agenda. NGOs are good partners for governments in the field and in many forums inside and outside the UN. They have accumulated useful, practical expertise in many areas. We should treat the NGOs as our full partners not just in the field and other forums but in the UN review conference room as well.

Thank you, Mr. President.