



Setting The Record Straight **THE UN AND SMALL ARMS**

UN Conference to Review Progress in 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, New York, 26 June - 7 July 2006

There are some widespread misconceptions regarding the goals of the UN small arms Review Conference as well as the intentions of the United Nations and its Member States. The following points address these common myths:

MYTH: The Conference is being convened to draft a global treaty to ban ownership of firearms.

- FACTS:**
- ◆ The Review Conference is **not about banning small arms** or prohibiting people from owning legal weapons.
 - ◆ The Review Conference will **not be negotiating any treaty** to prohibit citizens of any country from possessing firearms or to interfere with the legal trade in small arms and light weapons (SALW).
 - ◆ The United Nations Programme of Action on small arms **does not prescribe or suggest any action against the legal** trade, manufacture, possession or ownership of weapons.
 - ◆ Each **sovereign State determines its own laws** and regulations for the manufacture, sale and possession of firearms by its citizens. The United Nations has no jurisdiction over such matters.
 - ◆ The UN Programme of Action is **focused on the illicit** trade in SALW. The programme was agreed to in 2001 by the 191 Member States of the General Assembly including the Permanent Members of the Security Council. They committed to collecting and destroying illegal weapons, adopting and/or improving national legislation that would help criminalize the illicit trade in small arms, regulating the activities of brokers, and setting strict import and export controls.

MYTH: There is a UN Convention banning the possession of firearms.

- FACTS:**
- ◆ UN Member States, including the Permanent Members of the Security Council, adopted a legal convention by consensus, in force since September 2003, to tackle **transnational organized crime**. In it, they agreed to work together to counter drug trafficking; trafficking in human beings; trafficking in firearms; smuggling of migrants and money laundering.
 - ◆ The Convention and its supplemental Protocol dealing with firearms **only commit the States which have ratified them**.

MYTH: The issue of small arms is in the hands of global diplomats who want to take over what is rightfully the domain of national custom, practice and legislation.

- FACTS:**
- ◆ Diplomats work only within the national mandates of the country they are from and cannot work freely on their own will.
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- ◆ It is not the wish of nations attending the Conference **to discuss outlawing the legal manufacture or trade** of these weapons, nor their legal ownership. This Conference is about preventing the diversion of such weapons into the illicit market.

MYTH: The United Nations Programme of Action is the first step towards a global treaty to ban gun ownership by civilians.

FACTS: ◆ Each country is sovereign and has its own laws governing gun ownership by its citizens. The United Nations has **no jurisdiction over such national matters**.

- ◆ The UN is **not pursuing a global treaty to ban gun ownership by civilians**. In the Programme of Action, States committed to tightening their controls over the import, export and transfers of SALW, because without such controls it is easier for weapons to be diverted from the legal trade into the illegal market, and into the hands of warlords, drug traffickers and criminal cartels.

MYTH: The Review Conference proceedings are not democratic, transparent or open.

FACTS: ◆ The UN has invited the **participation of non-governmental organizations and public interest groups** in major meetings on small arms and light weapons. Some sessions, however, may be in caucus-style, limited to government representatives only.

- ◆ Gun-control advocates and pro-gun organizations alike have participated in UN meetings on small arms and light weapons. All organizations have an equal opportunity to present their views.

MYTH: The meeting has been scheduled on the United States 4th of July national holiday.

FACTS: ◆ **No meetings have been scheduled for the 4th of July**, as UN Headquarters will be officially closed in commemoration of the United States national day. In fact, the UN grounds will be used by some 10,000 spectators of the fireworks display on the East River.

- ◆ There is no meaning attached to the scheduling of the Review Conference in July. Meetings on a wide range of issues are held at the UN all year long. The scheduling of meetings depend on many logistical factors, such as the availability of rooms and interpretation services.

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