



SPORTING ARMS AND AMMUNITION MANUFACTURERS' INSTITUTE, INC.

Since 1926

**United Nations Preparatory Committee for the Conference to Review Progress
Made 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, January 12, 2006

Statement by Richard Patterson, Managing Director
Sporting Arms and Ammunition Manufacturers' Institute, Inc.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for this opportunity to speak today. My name is Richard Patterson and I'm the Managing Director of the Sporting Arms and Ammunition Manufacturers' Institute (also known as SAAMI). SAAMI is an association of manufacturers of sporting firearms, ammunition and components. Since 1926, SAAMI has been publishing voluntary standards related to the quality and safety of firearms, ammunition and components. When you use firearms and ammunition manufactured to SAAMI specifications, you know everything will operate safely and reliably. We welcome the opportunity to work with you and contribute our technical knowledge to this process. In fact, for the last 25 years, SAAMI has been a proud contributor to the UN process. We believe in the strength and value of all of us working together towards a common cause.

The basic goal of the Programme of Action—attacking the international illicit trade in small arms and light weapons—is a critically important one. The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons is, by itself, a complex issue. It can be made even more complex and difficult if it includes an effort to broaden the scope by including sporting firearms.

Firearms are tools—and like any tool they are capable of great good and great harm. Any simplistic or myopic attempts to stop the willful misuse of this tool to intentionally cause harm is fraught with the dangers of potential unintended consequences. However repulsive the criminal acts of violence are, the worse crime would be if the actions taken by this body unintentionally created a new class of victims and human tragedies. It would erode public confidence in this institution and make future progress in all UN activities more difficult.

In addition to the danger of creating unintended consequences is the danger of creating solutions that are lofty in their ideals, but unrealistic and unfeasible in their implementation. Frankly, unrealistic or unworkable solutions—no matter how good they sound—aren't worth the paper they're written on.

This is one of the areas where SAAMI can be most helpful. We are the people knowledgeable on the technical aspects of design, manufacture, transportation and storage of firearms, ammunition and components. We are also knowledgeable on distribution systems for sporting firearms and ammunition. Every SAAMI member-company is licensed by the US Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. Domestic sales of both new and used firearms are strictly regulated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation to prevent children, convicted felons and the mentally unstable from being able to purchase a firearm. Every single export must be reviewed and approved by the US State Department and Department of Commerce. We work with these issues every single day and we are happy to share our knowledge.

Another area where SAAMI has a great deal of knowledge and practical expertise is firearm safety education. Firearm safety education has been proven to prevent tragedies. It's an issue that should be addressed at all levels. We applaud New Zealand for their leadership in planning a seminar to address this important topic.

The firearms industry has made safe and responsible ownership of firearms a priority. We have taken a two-pronged approach to this important issue. The first aspect of firearms safety is ensuring the safe and reliable operation of the tools—the firearms and ammunition. The second is educating firearms owners and the general public about proper operating procedures.

Other people may talk about firearms safety Mr. Chairman – we just do it. And our efforts have shown significant success in reducing firearm-related accidents. The great news is that success can be duplicated in countries around the world.

The firearms industry has created and distributed tens of millions of videotapes and publications that directly address firearms safety. Other pamphlets provide clear guidance on the storage of ammunition and specific components like propellant and primers.

Firearm safety videos have been incorporated into the curriculum at many schools. These videos have exposed untold thousands of children to the message of what to do if they come across a firearm. Specifically, leave the area and tell an adult.

Government agencies—at the federal, state and local level—have been important partners with the firearms industry. The most recent of these safety partnerships is Project ChildSafe. Project ChildSafe is an award-winning program for the distribution of free firearm safety kits, funded in part by the United States Department of Justice. The distribution of these kits is done in large part through local US law enforcement agencies. In the last two years, Project Childsafe has distributed more than 32 million safety kits to the public—free of charge.

The results clearly justify our efforts.

For example,

- Firearm-related accidents in the U.S. have been decreasing consistently over the last 25 years, and dramatically in the last 10 years.
- Over the last decade the rate of firearm-related injuries declined by 67 percent.
- Firearms accidents and accidental fatalities are at the lowest NUMBER since the US National Safety Council began keeping these records in 1903.
- Today, firearms are involved in less than 1 percent of all accidental fatalities in the United States.

This success is even more impact-ful when you realize that during this same time period both the National Sporting Goods Association and American Sports Data surveys have shown target shooting was one of the top five fastest growing sports. These historic reductions in firearms accidents have occurred at a time when more people are using more firearms. I would be remiss in not pointing out the violent crime, already low in the United States has also consistently dropped in that same time period.

Mr. Chairman, these programs work. They save lives and prevent needless tragedies. SAAMI is proud of our work in this important arena. We know these programs can make a difference and we want to see them expanded through strategic partnerships.

Even so, Mr. Chairman, we are here to address a very specific issue—namely combating the illicit trade of small arms and light weapons. I believe we should focus on this critical issue. The task is complicated enough, but the need for success warrants our undivided attention.

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