



# CROATIA

PERMANENT MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS  
NEW YORK

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**United Nations 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**

**General exchange of views**

United Nations, New York  
26 June 2006

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Mr. President,

Let me join other delegations and congratulate you on your election as the President of the Review Conference and assure you of my delegation's full cooperation. I also thank you and the UN Department of Disarmament Affairs for your tireless efforts in preparing for this Conference.

Croatia has aligned itself with the statement delivered earlier by the Austrian Presidency of the European Union, and would therefore like to point out several key issues regarding the implementation of the Program of Action from a national perspective.

We regard the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects as a key foundation for strengthened global, regional and national actions on the control of small arms and light weapons.

The uncontrolled spread of small arms and light weapons continues to pose serious problems to human security, development, and the protection of human rights around the world. There is an urgent need for the international community to show courage and unity in addressing this critical issue. On the one hand, committed and result-oriented implementation of the Programme of Action at all levels is crucial, for which there has to be adequate resources provided. On the other hand, Croatia believes it is time to consider integrated and parallel measures that could complement and enhance the Programme of Action and help reach the goal of its full implementation. The instrument on marking and tracing is one such example, and Croatia advocates its steadfast implementation and possible future strengthening.

The Review Conference should make a fair assessment of the progress made so far in the implementation of the Programme of Action, and adopt a realistic but forward-looking document to outline a successful strategy for the future. Croatia aligns itself with calls for improving controls over the transfer of small arms and light weapons, which is included in the Programme of Action but would benefit from further elaboration. Minimum common standards for arms transfers should be used to ensure that they will not stimulate conflict, suppress human rights or reverse development. In this context, enhanced measures to authenticate end-user certificates should also be considered. Croatia looks forward to early commencement of work of the Group of Governmental Experts on brokering and is actively looking at incorporating brokering controls into national legislation.

At the same time, we share the view that programmes and projects in the framework of the Programme of Action should be included in reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts in post-conflict areas, and we believe that the UN Peacebuilding Commission should keep the issue of combating illicit small arms in mind when proposing integrated strategies for post-conflict peacebuilding and recovery.

The Croatian Government is keen to continue its work on small arms and light weapons control and is now taking steps to address the small arms and light weapons issue within the country in accordance with international best practices. Since June 2005, Croatia has been a Participating State to the Wassenaar Arrangement and by introducing laws for the control of dual-use goods, Croatia has aligned itself with the European and international legal standards for arms control.

In 2002 the Croatian Government adopted a Decision whereby it agreed to accept the principles contained in the EU Code of Conduct for Arms Exports, where it is stated that stipulated criteria and principles contained in the Code will be followed as a guide in arms control export policies.

Croatia requires original End-user Certificate, issued by the National authority of the state of final destination, with appropriate non-re-export clauses. In the case of non-governmental recipients, Croatia requires the original certificate from the relevant governmental authority. Request for export/import licenses should be submitted on official applications, with all necessary information contained.

In March 2005, the Croatian Government set up the National Commission for Arms and Ammunition which is responsible for coordinating and directing the activities related to arms and ammunition and for drafting national strategy for the small arms and light weapons control. The Commission consists of representatives from all relevant ministries with a role in small arms and light weapons control.

Moreover, in October 2005, the Croatian Government decided to participate in a comprehensive Small Arms and Light Weapons Survey which has recently been concluded. This survey identifies the accessibility of small arms and light weapons and their impact and influence on individuals, communities and the State. The results of the survey will assist the Government in developing an action plan focused on the suppression of illegal production, trade and possession; the control of acquisition and border and transit control; and the development of measures for collecting, safe-guarding and destroying arms and ammunitions.

As a country with a recent history of conflict, Croatia has been active in tackling the significant insecurity associated with the spreading of small arms and light weapons. During the last decade, the Croatian Armed Forces have seized a substantial amount of small arms and light weapons, ammunition and military equipment. Much of this equipment has been destroyed - in 2005 alone, some 2,032 units of small arms and light weapons were destroyed by the Ministry of Defense. As part of an ongoing military reorganization, the Ministry of Defense has recently identified a significant quantity of surplus SALW and is currently looking at ways of disposing of this.

Croatia regularly reports to the OSCE Document on SALW, including the following information: import and export of small arms and light weapons, exchange of information on national procedures for the control of the manufacture of small arms and light weapons, national legislation on small arms and light weapons, stockpile management and destruction procedures.

Croatia has been a leader in supporting regional efforts to fight the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. One such example is one of the most successful Stability Pact projects - the Regional Arms Control Verification Implementation Assistance Centre (RACVIAC) located in Zagreb. At the same time, Croatia continues to actively participate in the regional exchange of information through the Regional Steering Group for the control of small arms and light weapons under the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe Regional Implementation Plan.

Undoubtedly, we have achieved considerable progress in tackling the control of illegal small arms and light weapons by adoption and implementation of laws which are harmonized with EU standards. The most recent example is the Law on Weapons, passed by the Government on 20 June 2006, which considerably tightens the requirements for civilian possession and incorporates a number of safeguards guaranteeing public safety.

Croatia expresses its readiness for experience-sharing and exchange activities in the region and beyond, particularly offering expert assistance for capacity building as well as guidance for media campaigns. In order to achieve this goal, the cooperation within the regional mechanisms is of utmost importance. Through its Chairmanship of the South-East European Cooperation Process (SEECP), in the period from May 2006 till May 2007, Croatia will concentrate its efforts to enhance cooperation and good neighbourly relations in this part of Europe as well as to develop SEECP's closer ties with the EU.

Finally, Croatia would like to welcome the beneficial role that civil society organizations play in this field having in mind that we all share the same values and the same responsibilities for effective control of weapons that every year kill thousands of people around the world.