



SLOVENIA

**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**

**Statement by
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on behalf of
the member countries of the Human Security Network**

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Mr Chairman,

It is my honour to deliver this statement in my capacity as chair of the Human Security Network on behalf of the member countries – Austria, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Greece, Ireland, Jordan, Mali, Norway, the Netherlands, Slovenia, Switzerland, Thailand and South Africa as an observer.

Let me begin, Mr Chairman, by congratulating you on your election as chair of this important conference and to commend you for your hard work and extensive consultations in the lead-up to this event. There is no doubt your efforts prior to and throughout this conference will advance our work a great deal.

Mr Chairman,

The UN Programme of Action agreed to in 2001 was a significant and tangible response to our shared concern that the proliferation and misuse of small arms have “a wide range of humanitarian and socio-economic consequences and pose a serious threat to peace, reconciliation, safety, security, stability and to sustainable development.”

We reconvene now, five years after its adoption, to take stock of our progress to date in implementing the Programme of Action in order to reduce the death and suffering caused by these weapons, and to further develop our strategies for the future.

Clearly there has been some progress since 2001. Many States, acting individually and in concert with other countries, the UN and its agencies, international organizations and civil society have undertaken a wide range of activities. However, many challenges remain.

There are in excess of 640 million pieces of small arms and light weapons in circulation, throughout the world. An additional eight million small arms and light weapons and 10 to 14 billion rounds of ammunition are produced each year. Small arms alone are instrumental in the deaths of more than half a million people annually – approximately 10,000 per week or one person every minute. The vast majority of victims were civilians. Many more people were victims of indirect, but no less lethal, effects of these weapons as obstacles to humanitarian assistance and sustainable development.

Mr Chairman,

How we approach this issue is critically important. Clearly it is a multi-faceted problem, which should be addressed both as a discrete area of humanitarian activity and as an integral element of broader efforts in conflict prevention and resolution, post-conflict stabilization and longer term development.

These linkages were clearly noted in the World Summit Outcome Document, in which States reaffirm commitment to implementing the Programme of Action and recognize that "development, peace, security, and human rights are interlinked and mutually reinforcing."

The exciting but formidable task immediately at hand, however, is to make this Review Conference a resounding success. In our estimation, we will be successful if we are able to objectively take stock of our achievements over the past five years, take note of the lessons learned from our experiences and use them to create a forward looking and substantial outcome document that will help us chart the course for our activities for the next five or six years. Our goal is and shall remain to accelerate the implementation of the Programme of Action.

At this point, Mr Chairman, I wish to touch on a few of the main substantive priorities of great concern to the Human Security Network:

- Small arms and light weapons pose a particular threat to children, millions of whom have been killed or injured by small arms and light weapons. They are victimized in other ways as well. As many as 300,000 children still participate in armed conflicts around the world as child soldiers. For this reason, we particularly support the references to child protection and to Security Council resolution 1612 in the draft final document and urge States to consider including child advocates on their national small arms commissions.
- It is also appropriate to acknowledge and reaffirm the importance of gender dimensions in implementing the Programme of Action. We know, for example, that young men are both the main victims and perpetrators of armed violence, and that women can and have contributed immensely to conflict prevention and resolution. We also know that the diverse needs of women and men must be considered when designing and delivering disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration programmes, if they are to achieve maximum impact.
- Increased international coordination, cooperation and assistance are necessary to assist nations in need to do what they must in essential areas such as stockpile management and destruction, public health and injury prevention, victim assistance, and the establishment of national small arms coordinating bodies.
- It is also important to emphasize the negative humanitarian and socio-economic consequences that the illicit manufacture, transfer and circulation of small arms and light weapons and their excessive accumulation continue to have on the lives and livelihoods of peoples and communities in various parts of the world. The international community should redouble its efforts to address this pressing challenge to human security and development.

In this respect, I would like to express strong support of the members of the Human Security Network to the parts of the draft final document that are related to the negative humanitarian and development impact of illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. To us, these references form the essential basis for increased practical cooperation under the Programme of Action, to be elaborated in the follow-up section of the Final Document.

- Members of the Human Security Network would also like to reiterate the practical commitments aimed at reducing the negative impact of armed violence on sustainable development, contained in the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development adopted at the Geneva Summit on 7 June. We believe that this Declaration could be used as a valuable input to the outcome of the Review Conference.

Mr Chairman,

The Human Security Network is steadfast in its commitment to address the threat that armed violence poses to the safety and well-being of people throughout the world. Reducing the human suffering caused by the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects is an important part of this effort. It was the fundamental objective of the 2001 Conference and it remains our objective during and following this Conference. We look forward to working with all of you throughout our time here and in years to come.

Thank you.