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**UK Statement at the 2006 Review Conference of
the UN Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat
and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and
Light Weapons in All its Aspects**

**Statement by Rt Hon Gareth Thomas MP
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State,
Department for International Development**

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Check against delivery

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Mr President, Excellencies

Like our Austrian friends the United Kingdom remains committed to full implementation of the Programme of Action at national, regional and international levels. Within the Programme of Action the UK believes the Review Conference should focus its attention on:

Transfer Controls, and

Small Arms Control and Development.

If we fail to address these issues successfully it will leave all of us open to the charge that we did not take seriously the commitments we made in 2001 when we agreed the Programme of Action.

Mr President,

Effective regulation of Small Arms and Light Weapons transfers is specifically mentioned in the Programme of Action. With many other nations we have worked through the Transfer Controls Initiative to develop guidelines to enhance this section.

The Programme of Action refers to the need for consistency of national responsibilities under relevant international law. This was the essential underpinning bedrock we established back in 2001. Since then, however, a number of countries have come to the conclusion that the Programme of Action would benefit from further elaboration in the area of Transfer Controls.

Wide consultations have taken place. We are not far from agreement. A concrete outcome in the form of global guidelines would send a clear message that we are committed to implementing the Programme of Action in full. A commitment to agreed principles on transfer controls in the outcome document would show that we are all determined to bring the illicit trade in small arms under control and prevent weapons from being used to fuel conflict, undermine human rights and hold back development.

To help our discussion, the UK has put forward a Working Paper explaining the progress made by Transfer Controls Initiative since 2003. And we have distributed a reference booklet outlining all the national, regional and international agreements on transfer controls achieved in recent years.

But I particularly welcome the Kenyan Government's Working Paper with some suggested international guidelines for transfer controls. These guidelines, drafted at the conference in Nairobi in April this year, are an

attempt to summarise existing national responsibilities in international law, and I believe are a strong basis for discussion here.

Many states have expressed support for the TCI. I hope we will hear their voice over the next two weeks on the need for common minimum international guidelines for transfer controls.

Mr President

The UK has allocated over £27 million since 2001 for measures to help reduce the supply of and demand for small arms. We have supported NGOs and UN partners to collect and destroy weapons, improve weapons storage facilities, implement national and regional control agreements, and undertake public awareness campaigns.

We should pay tribute to the significant achievements of some of our partners. UNDP has a global programme in over 30 countries supporting armed violence reduction and disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration. The Regional Centre on Small Arms in Nairobi facilitated agreement of a legally binding protocol on small arms control by the governments of East Africa and the Great Lakes. And with excellent high quality research, NGOs such as Saferworld, IANSA and the Small Arms Survey have improved our understanding of the illicit small arms trade – and our ability to make progress in stopping it.

Mr President

The second important issue for the UK is the relationship between Small Arms Control and Development. I welcome the language in the draft outcome document highlighting the contribution of small arms control and armed violence reduction to development objectives.

We know that arms availability does not *cause* crime or conflict. But it can accelerate a slide into violence that spreads fear and terror. We know that such insecurity, as much as any other factor, condemns the poor to continued poverty.

We also know that projects and programmes that try to persuade people to hand in their weapons only work if people feel safe and secure, and have real alternatives to violence. That is why integrating small arms control into national development planning frameworks will help to ensure that decisions are made locally, reflect national and local priorities and help donors unlock more resources to support the implementation of the Programme of Action and other measures to reduce armed violence.

We were one of the 42 countries who, earlier this month in Geneva, committed ourselves to strive for measurable reductions in armed violence. We now look forward to working with our partners to translate this commitment into action.

To conclude Mr President,

Progress has been made, but as the Secretary General made clear in his opening address, much, much more remains to be done.

This Review Conference can and should produce effective outcomes, particularly on transfer controls and on small arms and development. This will help accelerate progress towards our collective goal of a more stable and prosperous world free of arms trafficking and armed violence.