



PAPUA NEW GUINEA

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STATEMENT

BY

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**REPRESENTING
THE PAPUA NEW GUINEA FOCAL POINT FOR THE
PROGRAMME OF ACTION ON SALW**

ON THE OCCASION OF THE

**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**

27 JUNE 2006, NEW YORK

Mr. President,

Let me join other delegations before me in congratulating you as the President of the Review Conference. We are confident that under your Chairmanship and guidance we will achieve the aims of this Review Conference as well as its intended outcomes.

We associate ourselves with the Pacific Islands Forum statement delivered by H.E. Ambassador Robert Aisi, the Permanent Representative of Papua New Guinea.

Mr. President,

In accordance with the PoA to Prevent Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, the Government of Papua New Guinea has set up in the interim, three main agencies to lead the National Focal point. This comprise of the Department of Foreign Affairs - the link with International Organisations, Police Commissioners Office, - the custodian of the Firearms Act, and Department of National Planning, - the Chair for National Coordination Mechanism (NCM) for the Law and Justice Sector.

In furthering the efforts of the PoA, Papua New Guinea has recently participated in a Ministerial Summit on Armed Violence and Development in Geneva. I am pleased to announce that Papua New Guinea endorsed the **Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development**.

The illicit use of SALW has had a serious and significant impact on the economic, social, and political development of our country. The use of SALW caused misery to thousands of people on Bougainville Island during the civil war which lasted for 10 years and the situation of instability dragged on for almost 16 years. A generation lost opportunities for education, health care and economic opportunities. The issue of weapons disposal was a precondition to the autonomy arrangements for Bougainville. The method used in conducting awareness and stockpiling, including disposal were paramount towards achieving peace on the island.

Mr President,

The Papua New Guinea Government in its efforts to combat the spread of SALW, appointed a Guns Control Committee in 2005 with the assistance of the UNDP, Australian International Development Assistance (AusAid) and the New Zealand Government to investigate and report on the illicit use of small arms and light weapons after much public outcry. The Guns Control Committee consulted and travelled widely to develop a strategy to control SALW and reduce violence and then developed a plan of action. The Report is now before Cabinet and is proposed to be debated in the National Parliament in the July 2006 Parliamentary Session.

Amongst its many recommendations, the Guns Control Committee proposed a National Guns and Violence Reduction Council that would oversee, coordinate and direct the implementation of the National Strategy. The objectives of the National Strategy are as follows:

- Eliminate SALW crime and gun violence in Papua New Guinea
- Cut off the supply of guns and ammunition available for criminal purposes;
- Remove illegal weapons and ammunition already in circulation
- Restore law and order, foster community empowerment and support opportunities for lawful, sustainable livelihoods in the communities most affected by violence and
- Support regional security by controlling gun trafficking among other aspects of transnational crime.

Mr President,

The proposed national strategy for Papua New Guinea is a huge task when considering the capacity and resource of the relevant agencies such as the police, and the regimes required to put in place an effective control mechanism. The challenges for a developing country such as Papua New Guinea are large and complex.

First, the relevant agencies must be strengthened together with the control and monitoring of the legal SALW. This controlling and monitoring cannot be effective if there are monetary incentives in dealing with illicit use, trade and manufacturing of small weapons that allow proliferation within our communities. Obviously, reduction in poverty and establishing economic opportunities come into play.

Second, enforcement of existing rules and regulations are very much desired objectives. There is an existing moratorium that prevents the sale of SALW and ammunition, and legal provisions to outlaw improvised or home-made apparatus that resembles SALW that came into effect in 2000. After a review of the police functions and on discovering major policing inefficiencies, 62 recommendations are now before the government for improved police service. Some of the ineffectiveness is being addressed through a regional assistance provided by the Australian Government in a bilateral Enhanced Cooperation Program (ECP), Mark 11, revised from earlier version of 2004. Furthermore, our Government has formulated and developed the Proceeds of Crime Act, the Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters Act and the new Extradition Act. These Acts were passed by Parliament in 2005 and were brought into operation on 1st March 2006. These Acts are relevant as far as international cooperation is needed on SALW issues such as gun smuggling, drugs for guns trade, and so forth. These three laws have now been looked at in recent regional seminars on issues related to terrorism, transnational crimes and anti-corruption.

Mr President,

My country has large uncontrolled entry points from any where in the world for various commercial interests. There are fishing vessels, and logging company vessels, that wish to reduce their operating cost by avoiding set procedures for entry into the country in controlled areas. These vessels have been known to take advantage of this laxity to deal with illicit SALW.

Furthermore, international borders with the Solomon Islands to the east and the Republic of Indonesia to the west, are difficult if not, impossible to police when people with common cultural and ethnic identity move freely between these borders. Improved living conditions for these border peoples are also a major challenge. Steps are in their advance stages for development initiatives through applied and sound research between universities of the Republic of Indonesia and PNG through a consortium that would identify areas of greater concern.

Availability of the SALW is perceived to be readily available throughout the country especially with national elections, due in 2007. This perception could be correct. However, Mr President, empirical evidence elsewhere, especially in crime surveys, have shown that people's perceptions become a social norm that differs quite sharply from actual occurrence. And, I quote from the Port Moresby Crime Survey Report of 2005, which was done by the National Research Institute:

"Stories and gossip about crime spread fast through informal networks and the media. Whether or not the stories are objectively true, repetition soon makes them social facts and there has been a lack of reliable data to balance them."

This perception holds truth for our development partners.

The rule of law and appropriate punishment for illicit use of SALW is in place. In the Papua New Guinea Country Report for 2005 on PoA, my Government has put in place measures to destroy SALW that are found to be illicit or have been used in illicit activities that have profound impact on women and children. An example of this is seen in Bougainville where women were the first group of people who went into conflict areas to negotiate peace amongst conflicting factions.

Mr President,

Bougainville is a very sensitive case in point. The people, especially women and children, wanted peace to return after years of civil war. Above all things, peace to all was a sole compromise negotiated amongst all conflicting parties. Peace was also an expressed desire of the women when they made a protest march to the Bougainville police when armed intervention was proposed to arrest the people behind recent unrests in Bougainville

Mr President,

In summary, Papua New Guinea has the further potential to conform to the PoA to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. However, what our country needs is capacity enhancement rather than just capacity building in achieving the goals of PoA.

I thank you.