



PHILIPPINES

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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**

28 June 2006, New York

Mr. Chairman,

Allow me to congratulate you on your election as Chair of this review conference. My delegation is confident that you will ably steer this review conference to its successful conclusion. Let me assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation.

At the outset, I wish to state that the Philippines associates itself with the statement delivered by Myanmar earlier on behalf of ASEAN.

Mr. Chairman,

There is no question that proliferation and uncontrolled spread of small arms and light weapons pose a serious threat to peace, safety, security, and, particularly for developing countries, sustained economic growth and development. Illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons has also led to escalation of armed conflict in some parts of the world, and adversely affected the lives of millions of people and innocent civilians, especially women and children.

The Programme of Action adopted by the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in 2001 was a bold step in dealing with the proliferation and uncontrolled spread of small arms and light weapons. The PoA's success in achieving its objective, however, depends on the breadth and depth of its implementation. After two biennial meetings in 2003 and 2005 where States parties shared experiences and best practices in implementing the PoA, the international community now has the chance to move forward at a much faster pace.

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My delegation is confident that this review conference will not only provide the international community another opportunity to comprehensively evaluate the progress in the implementation of the PoA, but will also serve as a mechanism to rally for more serious and sustained commitment in addressing the salient gaps in the PoA and priority issues such as national controls on SALW production and transfers, stockpile management and security and weapons collection and destruction.

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation would like to highlight the following four points at this review conference:

1. International cooperation.

Since proliferation of small arms and light weapons knows no borders, national efforts to control it depends heavily on international cooperation. For this reason, the Philippines counts on the vital contribution of regional and multilateral initiatives to the national implementation of the PoA. This conference should identify a range of doable measures to complement or enhance the implementation of the PoA. These initiatives can include active assistance to enhance cooperation and coordination in the areas of information exchange, tracing, investigation and prosecution on the illicit trade of SALW. In Southeast Asia for instance, we would welcome efforts to help ASEAN develop operational support tools to implement its Plan of Action to Combat Transnational Crime which tackles links between smuggling of SALW and other forms of transnational crime such as terrorism, money laundering and drug trafficking.

The United Nations plays a vital role in enhancing international cooperation and assistance in accordance with Section III of the PoA. We hope that the examination of the implementation of the PoA would encourage States and relevant international and regional organizations in a position to do so to extend more technical as well as financial assistance where needed and in a transparent and mutually beneficial manner.

In this regard, the Philippines endorses the report of the Working Group of the United Nations Workshop on SALW held in Bangkok last 17-19 May, particularly the following recommendations contained therein:

- Organization of a capacity building workshop in the sub-region
- Training for law enforcement officers
- Increasing capacity for effective control of land and maritime borders
- Assistance in stockpile management and surplus destruction
- Assistance in DDR
- Assistance in conduct of public awareness programs

2. Need to promote dialogue and a culture of peace in the implementation of the PoA

The success of implementing the PoA will not be judged simply by the amount of weapons destroyed or by the number of regulations passed, but, more important, by widespread inculcation of a culture of peace among the general population and aversion to the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons as well as the culture of violence associated with it.

Following the mandate of the World Leaders to foster a culture of peace through the different initiatives on dialogue among cultures and civilizations, including the dialogue on interfaith cooperation, as enunciated in paragraph 144 of the World Summit Outcome Document, we can further operationalize the “battle for the hearts and minds” of the people by ensuring that more education and public awareness projects and other related activities are undertaken in the future on this issue.

We also need to tap the support of faith communities representing the world's largest human infrastructures, based on their common mission for peace and distaste for violence and their interfaith call for cooperation to avert destruction and widespread human sufferings.

3. Important role of civil society

Civil society plays an important role in the promotion of a culture of peace. The role of civil society itself has been recognized in several provisions of the PoA. We should continue to engage the assistance and cooperation of civil society, whose members look at this issue through the prism of humanitarian considerations. They can provide impetus for Governments to move forward and avoid unnecessary delay. My delegation therefore supports giving civil society roles in helping carry out the provisions of the PoA in all aspects of international, sub-regional and national efforts to implement the PoA.

The Philippines, in particular, recognizes the role of faith communities and interfaith cooperation in the implementation of the PoA. We recommend measures that would encourage these faith communities to call on respective followers to extend full cooperation leading to the elimination of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. We also recommend measures to promote interfaith dialogue so that the different faith communities would adopt a coherent and unified stand on this issue. The Tripartite Forum on Interfaith Cooperation for Peace, participated in by 50 governments, 15 UN agencies and 110 religious NGOs accredited with the UN can be called upon to extend its support in this regard.

4. Follow-up mechanism

My delegation believes that we should maintain the current momentum in the implementation of the PoA by ensuring that there is a well structured follow-up mechanism. The follow-up mechanism, particularly the convening of the Biennial Meeting of States and another Review Conference, not only provides the opportunity to discuss implementation issues that may arise during the intervening periods, but, more important, it serves to muster the political will necessary to implement the PoA. We hope that this is an issue that all delegations can agree on.

Mr. Chairman,

Illicit trafficking of firearms is a shared problem which calls for common and coordinated solutions among international actors and multi-stakeholders. Let us take full advantage of the opportunity presented by this review conference to come up with practical strategies that would further lead us to our objective of stemming this scourge to humanity.

Thank you.