



UGANDA

Permanent Mission of Uganda
to the United Nations
New York

Tel: (212) 949-0110
Fax: (212) 687-4517

STATEMENT BY

**AMBASSADOR FRANCIS K. BUTAGIRA, PERMANENT
REPRESENTATIVE OF UGANDA
TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

ON

**UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE TO REVIEW PROGRESS
MADE IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS
PROGRAMME OF ACTION TO PREVENT, COMBAT AND
ERADICATE THE ILLICIT TRADE IN SMALL ARMS AND
LIGHT WEAPONS IN ALL ITS ASPECTS**

New York,
June 27, 2006

Please Check Against Delivery

Mr. President,

My delegation wishes to congratulate you upon your election as President of this Review Conference. We are confident that with your experience and able leadership this Conference will attain the desirable results.

Uganda associates itself with other delegations in welcoming this Conference. This Conference is very important because it provides the first formal opportunity to review and strengthen the Programme of Action (PoA) since it was agreed in 2001.

My delegation wishes to acknowledge the progress made across the world in the effort to tackle illicit small arms and light weapons (SALW) since the signing of the PoA in 2001. As a result of concerted international action, there is now greater understanding of the problem and issues of SALW than ever before. This has enabled the establishment of comprehensive measures that permit action at all levels. Although implementation has not been consistent across the world, the PoA provides a strong basis and potential for greater action in the future.

My delegation is looking forward to many important decisions during this conference on measures to enhance implementation of the PoA and to address the limitations and weaknesses.

Clarifying and elaborating some key PoA commitments is seen as essential for enhancing implementation and promoting the overall objectives of PoA. This will help to guide relevant national, regional and international policy-makers, officials, practitioners and other stakeholders to take actions to ensure standards and appropriate practices.

Small arms transfer controls is one of the PoA commitments that is in need of clarifying and elaboration. This relates to guidelines to be applied by national authorities in deciding whether to authorize a SALW transfer. There would be important benefits to clarifying the implications of these commitments and elaborating shared international understandings of the guidelines and criteria that national officials should take into account when deciding whether to authorise applications to transfer SALW.

In this regard, my delegation wishes to express Uganda's consistent support for the elaboration of guidelines on SALW transfers and to endorse the draft text that was adopted at the Nairobi Conference on Transfer Controls held in Nairobi, Kenya on 20-21 April 2006, for consideration by the Conference.

International SALW transfer control guidelines will be of crucial importance particularly for the states and regions that are most affected by illicit SALW. In Uganda, the Great Lakes Region and Horn of Africa, and many other parts of Africa, uncontrolled transfers and trafficking represents a major source of supply for illicit SALW that have continued to fuel and perpetuate conflicts, such as the insurgency by the Lords Resistance Army Northern Uganda. The problem is compounded by lack of capacity for countries of the region to monitor and control transfers, making them conduits for further illicit transfer.

The states of the Nairobi Declaration attach great significance to the need for international guidelines on SALW transfers and have established regional Best Practices Guidelines on Import, Export, Transfer and Transit of SALW. These regional guidelines, however, have limited application and effect, considering that a great deal of illicit SALW inflows emanate from

sources outside the region. The establishment of similar (though not necessarily identical) guidelines in other regions of the world would reinforce our regional measures.

This serious commitment by the States of Nairobi Declaration is reflected in their resolution of the Extra-ordinary Meeting of the Council of Ministers held in Kampala on 25th April 2006 which “recognized the importance of international guidelines on arms transfer controls and appealed to the international community to likewise develop international norms on arms transfers, incorporating the guidelines proposed by the Member States signatory to the Nairobi Declaration and Nairobi Protocol ...”

In the same measure, my delegation calls upon the major manufacturing and exporting countries to endeavour to fulfill their commitments under the PoA by strengthening restrictions and monitoring of SALW transfers in order to detect and interdict illicit activity.

The second issue that calls for resolute action by the Review Conference is the interrelationship between the PoA and development, poverty reduction and humanitarian assistance. My delegation calls for emphasis by the Review Conference, of the importance of the interrelationship between the PoA and development, poverty reduction and humanitarian assistance; and for appropriate and effective integration of national SALW plans into national poverty reduction and development plans, and national security strategies.

In Uganda an effort has been made to integrate the SALW national action plan into the national development plan. The Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP), which is the principle guide to all GoU development activities, highlights the importance of a secure environment for the achievement of recovery and development. The PEAP makes reference to the National Action Plan on SALW, citing its implementation as a priority. The Karamoja Integrated Disarmament and Development Programme, features in PEAP as an example of a local community integrated programme where efforts to remove weapons from the community are linked with initiatives to address the root causes of conflict and insecurity and long-term development.

The implementation of the PoA has been described as “patchy”, indicating that implementation has not been uniform across the world and across the different issues. This “patchy” implementation is attributed to lack of a mechanism to facilitate global cooperation in programmes to enhance PoA implementation. My delegation calls upon the Review Conference to agree a mechanism to establish and facilitate global cooperative programmes to enhance implementation of some aspects of the PoA, such as national controls on SALW transfers, weapons collection and destruction, SALW stock pile management and security. This will facilitate support for practical activities and share lessons learned across many regions of the world.

Uganda welcomes the “International Instrument on SALW Tracing, which was established by the General Assembly in December 2005. Tracing the origins of illegal SALW forms the critical link in the operational initiatives to achieve the reduction and eradication of the illegal pool and criminal use of SALW. The Review Conference should promote early and full implementation of the SALW Tracing Instrument.

The states of the Nairobi Declaration have already taken an important step in this regard. In June 2005 the region adopted Best Practices Guidelines on Tracing and Brokering. The Guidelines establish uniform regional operational procedures for systematic tracing of SALW from

manufacturer to purchaser, to assist in detection, investigation and analyzing illicit activity. A training curriculum on tracing, along with training manuals for law enforcement officials, was adopted. In Uganda the regional Guidelines on Tracing have been incorporated in the Draft Guidelines for the Development of the National Policy and Review of Legislation on SALW. Uganda encourages similar initiatives in other regions and at international level.

There are a number of issues that, though of crucial importance for the implementation of the PoA, did not find a place in the PoA text agreed in 2001, due to constraints of consensus. Some issues such as restrictions on transfers to non state actors have implications for the implementation of the PoA, and merit consideration by the Conference to agree some international norms to guide national decision making on transfers. This issue has important implications for the PoA commitments on SALW transfers.

Transfers to non state actors, particularly to insurgent groups fighting governments, constitutes a major challenge for the implementation of the PoA, as such transfers are responsible for escalation and perpetuation of conflicts, often fueling further proliferation. A case in point is the insurgency by the Lords Resistance Army in Uganda that has excelled in the violation of human rights but had for long been sustained through arms transfers from some states.

The issue of restrictions to non state actors has been fully explored by the informal small arms Consultative Group Process (CGP) since 2003, which has articulated proposals how some international norms can be developed particularly for the so-called 'hard cases', where some states believe that such transfers might in principle be justified. My delegation wishes to express Uganda's support for discussion of the text developed by the CGP as a basis for establishing some international norms on this issue.

I wish to take the pleasure to highlight a few developments in Uganda since the previous reporting in July 2005.

The Uganda National Action Plan on SALW that had gone into effect in June 2004 was formally launched by the Government of Uganda on 26th September 2005. During the launching of the plan a National Stakeholders Workshop was held to discuss partnerships for implementation, and 3,000 SALW were destroyed at a public ceremony to raise public awareness about SALW issues.

In May 2006 Uganda destroyed over 50,000 SALW by smelting. These weapons were collected through seizures by national security agencies, voluntary and amnesty programmes, and DDR programmes. Also destroyed were military and police weapons rendered obsolete, redundant or unserviceable. Public awareness activities were conducted, alongside the event, to raise public awareness about SALW issues and reduction and control measures. Preparations have been completed to destroy over 300 tons of redundant stocks of ammunition and explosives in state possession.

Uganda has instituted a process to develop a comprehensive national policy for the management and control of firearms and review of legislation, regulations and administrative procedures governing SALW. A national stakeholder consultative workshop was held on 1-2 December 2005, attended by security and law enforcement officials, private security organisations, arms dealers, sporting clubs, hunting clubs, etc, to discuss draft Guidelines for the Development of the National Policy on SALW and Review of Legislation. A final draft will be presented to Government for approval and submission to Parliament to amend the Firearms Act 1970.

Meanwhile, the Uganda Police Force has conducted marking of all firearms owned and controlled by the Police, including arms issued to private security organizations. Each firearm is marked with a designated code according to the unit or security organization to which a firearm belongs.

In the Karamoja region, home to nomadic armed communities that are constantly raiding each other for cattle and are forced by harsh arid conditions into violent conflicts over scarce resources, such as water and pastures, a military-driven disarmament exercise that was started in 2004, has since collected over 1,000 SALW. A joint disarmament project has been designed with the Government of Kenya to address the cross-border aspects of the problem.

Implementing the commitments under the PoA demands considerable international cooperation and resources. This need is even greater for the countries that are most affected by the problem of illicit SALW but have limited technical and financial capacity to address the issue. My delegation commends the states and institutions that have extended assistance for its SALW programmes, such as UNDP, Saferworld, SaferAfrica and GTZ, and looks forward to increased international cooperation and support.

I thank you