



PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF CUBA TO THE UNITED NATIONS
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UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE TO REVIEW PROGRESS MADE IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS PROGRAM OF ACTION TO PREVENT, COMBAT AND ERADICATE THE ILLICIT TRADE IN SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS IN ALL ITS ASPECTS. New York, June 26- July 7, 2006

**STATEMENT BY THE HEAD OF THE DELEGATION OF CUBA,
H.E. MANUEL AGUILERA DE LA PAZ, DEPUTY MINISTER OF
FOREIGN AFFAIRS. July 3, 2006**

Mr. President

First of all I would like to congratulate you for the important responsibility for which you, and the rest of the members of the Bureau, have been elected. You can count, Sir, with the support of the Cuban delegation in all efforts aimed at achieving success for this Conference which has the mandate to review progress made – five years after- in the implementation of United Nations Programme of Action to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade of small arms and light weapons in all its aspects.

Mr. President:

The illicit trade of arms still causes severe social, humanitarian and economic consequences to numerous peoples in the world. They witness a serious compromise in their rights to life, peace and the enjoyment of the benefits from sustainable development.

Important commitments were agreed in 2001 with the adoption of the Programme of Action to confront illegal trade of small arms and light weapons. Cuba wishes to reaffirm its commitment with the full implementation of the Programme of Action and avails of this opportunity to inform about the recent presentation of the Second National Report on its implementation. I would like to stress that some of the norms and measures applied in Cuba in this matter were done previously to the most recent commitments adopted by the international community.

In the Republic of Cuba there are laws, regulations and procedures suitable for exerting an effective control on small arms and light weapons. The Penal Code of Cuba includes as a crime the manufacturing, possession, stockpiling and illicit trade of small arms and light weapons, imposing severe sanctions to those committing these crimes. There are no intermediaries in arms trade in Cuba and all activities related to those arms are controlled by the State.

The national legislation related with these issues are still under updating and improving. A draft Decree Law on the Control of Firearms in the Republic of Cuba is undergoing a consultation process among different bodies and institutions related with this subject. The idea is to encompass, in just one legal instrument all applicable norms in this sense, namely: the powers of the national supervising body; the issuing of licenses –including the different types of permits and the requirements for its granting-; the prohibited arms and ammunitions or those of a limited use; the obligations of both individuals and legal entities; the entry into and exit from the national territory of arms and ammunitions; the transport and stockpiling; maintenance and repairing services to arms; prohibitions and the seizure, confiscation and finds.

There is no surplus of small arms and light weapons in Cuba. Thus, we do not carry out the destruction of said items. The only ones destroyed are the small arms and light weapons in poor condition. The destruction process takes place according to the internal rules and regulations of both the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of the Armed Forces. The stocks of these types of arms are pursuant to the requirements by the military doctrine of the national defense, stating that each citizen shall have, whenever circumstances so require, a means to defend the Homeland.

Likewise, Cuba is fully inserted in the international police cooperation system, as a full member country of INTERPOL. At present, the INTERPOL office in Havana holds an information exchange with all homologous offices from member countries, except with the Central National Office in Washington. Cuba has attended the most important events of INTERPOL, as well as it has been present in others linked with groups of experts, training and education, in which it has contributed its experiences in the area of prevention and confrontation of crimes in this field.

Our country has hosted regional courses sponsored by INTERPOL and has taken part in events sponsored by the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Also Cuba had an active participation in the Group of Governmental Experts established pursuant United Nations General Assembly Resolution 56/24 V which studied the feasibility of developing an international instrument to enable States to identify and trace, in a timely and reliable manner, illicit small arms and light weapons.

Given its absolute validity I wish to avail myself of this opportunity to reiterate a principle Cuba has always stated clearly: in view of the fact that small arms and light weapons constitute a defense means for the majority of countries in the world, while for a few other they represent just another category of arms within a vast military arsenal they have –including Weapons of Mass Destruction, all decisions from this Conference shall be sustained and implemented based on the aims and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, in particular those referring to the respect to sovereignty, non-intervention and

self-determination of the peoples, as it was successfully and skillfully endorsed in the Preamble of the 2001 Programme of Action.

Thus the intentions of some of enlarging the scope of the mandate of the Conference to include legal manufacturing, trade and exchange of arms by States is unacceptable.

Mr. President

During the past five years progress has been achieved in the implementation of the Programme of Action. Nevertheless, there is still a long road to walk in order to attain full implementation of the Programme.

International cooperation and assistance with developing countries are of vital importance so that they can achieve full implementation of the Programme of Action.

We do expect that a result of this Conference shall be a reaffirmation of the fact that international cooperation and assistance, together with the responsibility of the State – the fundamental actor in the implementation of efficient measures in combating illicit trade of small arms and light weapons- are key elements in the international efforts to eliminate this scourge.

In order to attain the eradication of illicit trade of small arms and light weapons in the short and medium term, we need to confront the causes generating it. When we notice that international efforts have been basically aimed at confronting the signs of this phenomenon in developing countries rather than in fighting its deepest and determining causes, such as growing poverty, underdevelopment, lack of opportunities for all, namely, the existing international order, the main responsible element in perpetuating the vicious circle of exclusion and inequality, we have to be concerned.

Mr. President:

In Cuba we are fully aware of the serious problems and humanitarian consequences of illicit trade of small arms and light weapons. The Cuban people has been the victim, for almost half a century, of the indiscriminate use of illicit small arms and light weapons in the hands of terrorist individuals and organizations within the US territory, that have committed aggressions and terrorist actions against Cuba. As a result of these atrocious actions 3 478 persons have lost their lives while 2 099 have seen their physical integrity damaged.

In spite of repeated denounces of the Cuban government, several individuals and organization with arsenals of small arms and light weapons, many of them purchased illicitly, are stationed in US territory with full impunity, with the stated aim of committing new terrorist actions against Cuba.

On the other hand, Cuba is defending with absolute firmness, the legitimate right of each State to manufacture, import and retain small arms and light weapons for its legitimate self-defense and security needs, in accordance with Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations.

While unilateralism, pre-emptive wars and aggression against peoples in the world continue to exist, country like ours, willing to defend the independence, sovereignty and self-determination of our peoples should attach to defense the utmost priority.

Finally, Cuba wishes to reiterate its support to the Programme of Action, as well as the will of fulfilling commitments established by said Programme. Likewise, Cuba is willing to cooperate with all type of initiatives and practical measures supporting international cooperation for implementing the Programme.

Thank you very much.