

# GHANA



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STATEMENT

BY

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SMALL ARMS

AT THE

SECOND BIENNIAL MEETING OF STATES TO CONSIDER THE  
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UN PROGRAMME OF ACTION TO  
PREVENT, COMBAT AND ERADICATE THE ILLICIT TRADE IN SMALL  
ARM AND LIGHT WEAPONS IN ALL ITS ASPECTS

New York  
Tuesday, 12 July 2005

Mr. Chairman,

At the outset, permit me to join other speakers before me in congratulating you on your election. My delegation is confident that under your leadership this meeting will attain a successful outcome.

It goes without saying that my delegation associates itself with the statement delivered yesterday by the distinguished representative of Nigeria on behalf of the African Group.

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation considers this review conference as critical in the quest to achieve our common goal of eradicating illicit small arms and light weapons, coming before next year's review conference of the Programme of Action. It provides an invaluable opportunity to recognize achievements; share common experiences and more importantly address common concerns on this pertinent issue.

Ghana, like other member states, holds the view that only through a concerted approach at the national, regional and international levels can we effectively rein in the menace of small arms and light weapons.

Mr. Chairman,

Ghana has had more than its fair share of the adverse impact of SALW as a result of the indiscriminate use of illegally acquired weapons. The government's commitment to the POA is therefore premised on the recognition of the reality of the potential of arms proliferation to undermine political stability and the risks to human security that the SALW problem represents.

It is against this backdrop that the Ghana National Commission on Small Arms was established with the mandate to develop and implement a national action plan for adoption by government. This is the context within which the Ghana Small Arms Commission has been

provided support by the UNDP/BCPR with funding from the U.K government for a pilot project in crisis prevention. Preventive development has been the underlying focus of the collaborative UNDP/BCPR and Ghana government small arms control initiative.

The UNDP /BCPR 'Preparatory Assistance - small arms reduction & conflict prevention project has several main components. We are working on a an integrated SALW control strategy which includes cross border control, legislative review, computerization of the registration process, significantly research into the SALW problem in Ghana, an intensive awareness campaign and capacity development for the Ghana National Small Arms Commission

Mr. Chairman,

Although the general levels of small arms proliferation in Ghana looks benign compared to the sub region, Ghana, like other countries in West Africa, does have a gun production sub culture dating back to colonial days. Originally set to meet local demands for hunting, these secret factories have grown in expertise and capacity to meet demands brought about by general insecurity and also feed criminal elements and rebels.

It has been determined that to avoid detection, illicit producers in Ghana have set up networks of parts manufacture, each specializing in the production of specific components of the rifle. The components produced separately – barrel, butts trigger etc are later assembled at a secret location for distribution.

Mr. Chairman,

To address the problem associated with illicit arms and weapons, the Commission has initiated useful dialogue with blacksmiths, which yielded insights into support measures that can be provided to control the levels of illicit production.

A promise by some blacksmiths association to 'Stop illicit production' has yielded much applause. The challenge remains how to transform the rhetoric of the blacksmiths into the reality of reduced and eventual eradication of illicit production.

Mr. Chairman,

Recognizing the importance of public awareness in the quest for achieving the overall goal of the POA, the Commission has embarked on a campaign to build partnerships on human security. In this connection, efforts have been made to initiate a mass movement of people against illicit arms to reduce the demand for weapons and to safeguard our democracy.

We have also requested members of the media to join us in this endeavor as mouthpieces of the battle cry for developmental security and so far they are with us.

A call to establish anti arms groups in schools, interludes of cultural drumming and dramatizations by youth groups within the program, and a showing of the documentary 'Lets join hands' which have received rapt public attention has added to the very successful launch of the campaign.

In tandem, a survey has been conducted to provide comprehensive overview of the SALW situation in the country. The final report which will have the input of 'small arms survey' will be utilized to design institutional strengthening programs and proposed governmental policy as well as guide implementation plans to address the goal of reducing armed violence and combating small arms and light weapons proliferation

Mr. Chairman,

With regard to capacity building, Safer Africa has provided technical assistance within the context of the implementation of international & regional conventions to the national Commission. Capacity

development has included strategic planning, identification of national priorities and effective inter-agency coordination. Training of Trainers workshops for senior security operatives have been conducted.

In fulfillment of the UN tracing requirement The firearms bureau is establishing a national computerized database to provide a network for licensed and registered arms and to facilitate monitoring. This will bring transparency and assist the police to trace firearms during their lifespan. Further, it would facilitate regular inspections of armories and stock levels of licensed dealers and compliance to current ban on imports.

Collation of data on seized arms held in police armories is also underway to facilitate systemic weapons collection and destruction in collaboration with police and military as well as judicial establishment.

Mr. Chairman,

Consultations are underway on the need to enhance legal controls through legislative amendment and harmonization. Ghana's proposed draft legislation will deal, inter alia, with tighter controls on licensed arms dealers, oversight mechanism for transfers from entry points to armories to prevent transit leakages and stipulate tough mandatory sentences for violations.

Mr. Chairman,

With the objective of achieving the international cooperation, Ghana has actively participated in multilateral SALW initiatives, notably, the Biting the bullet consultative group process regarding the issue of arms transfers with particular focus on transfers to non -state actors, the Arms Trade Treaty initiative by Oxfam and Ecowasl networking meetings.

Mr. Chairman,

A program of effective small arms control is capital intensive and requires enormous governmental resources and concerted donor support

We are, therefore, grateful for the laudable financial support of the UK government for the ongoing Ghana program as well as the technical assistance offered by the BCPR & Safer Africa.

We need ever increasing resources for the comprehensive phase of the program, which will link research with policy and targeted programmatic intervention to generate stakeholder buy-in.

Mr. Chairman,

The Ghana preparatory assistance project cannot claim absolute success. However, we do know that significant inroads have been made in the fight against small arms proliferation by the implementation of the outlined activities.

We imagine peace and security as a product to market; it is essential to poverty eradication and achievement of the millennium development goals. The fight against small arms is thus a fight for freedom in development and also connotes the actualization of democratic principles.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.