



HOLY SEE

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**Statement by H.E. Archbishop Celestino Migliore, Apostolic Nuncio,
Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations**

**Second Biennial Meeting of States to Consider 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**

New York, 11 July 2005

Mr Chairman,

The Programme of Action, adopted in 2001 to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects at the national, regional and global levels, is the first UN-level document intended to identify steps that States may take to confront this question. This meeting is an opportunity to review the realisation of the Plan of Action and see if it is still the cornerstone it should be of the new international legal framework for the control of small arms and light weapons. The efforts made by the open-ended Working Group to negotiate an international instrument to enable States to identify and trace, in a timely and reliable manner, illicit small arms and light weapons, do appear for now to head in that direction.

Such a regime is yet another step towards the effective promotion both of human rights and of humanitarian law, able to "enhance the respect for life and the dignity of the human person through the promotion of a culture of peace", as underlined by the Programme of Action itself.

Thanks also to the process launched at the UN, there appears to be a growing international awareness of this complex question. Since 2001, there has been an accumulation of information, experience and best practices in this field; what is more, civil society and various NGOs have also played an important role in this regard and continue to do so. Nevertheless, given the need for an approach that is both multidimensional and multidisciplinary, greater international cooperation will be needed in order to block effectively the spread and availability of the arms under discussion.

These efforts should be made in line with the indications found in the Secretary-General's report *In Larger Freedom*, which rightly urges the adoption of a more comprehensive concept of collective security, one that will tackle new threats and old and that will address the security concerns of all States, since the threats we face are clearly interconnected. Threats to the poor will undoubtedly leave the rich vulnerable too.

It is not hard to apply such an assessment to the question at hand. International efforts to control the illicit trade of small arms fall perfectly in line with the Secretary-General's judgement that there can be "no development without security and no security without

development".

The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons is an obvious threat to peace, development and security. That is why the Holy See adds its voice to the calls for a common approach, not only towards the illicit trade in small arms but also to related activities, such as terrorism, organised crime and the trafficking in persons, to say nothing of the illicit trade in drugs or other lucrative commodities.

Furthermore, as well as considering the illicit offer of arms, we must also be mindful of the dynamics of the demand for arms. This part of the equation also requires further research, and demands of the international community a concerted and serious effort to promote a culture of peace among all members of our respective societies.

Yet another aspect which the Holy See considers important is the special needs of children affected by armed conflict, as described in the Plan of Action. Children need to be considered in programmes of disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR), in post-conflict situations, in peacekeeping and peacebuilding, and in development programmes, through community-based approaches.

In this sense, the Holy See supports the Secretary-General's remarks found in his February report on small arms and light weapons, where he suggests that DDR must also address the needs of former combatants, including women and children, and receiving communities.

Long term strategies will need to be developed, which include the aim of halting the scourge of the illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons, in order to promote peace and security, both internally and externally. The Holy See is convinced that investment in prevention, peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding has the potential to save millions of lives.

Finally, the international community would do well to consider seriously a debate on the creation of an arms trade treaty, based on the best principles of international law on human rights and humanitarian law. Such an instrument could help contribute to the eradication of the illicit arms trade, while underlining the responsibility of States to reinforce the Plan of Action under discussion today.

Thank you, Mr Chairman.