

NEW ZEALAND MISSION to the UNITED NATIONS



## **Te Mängai o Aotearoa**

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**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 APSECTS**

**STATEMENT BY THE NEW ZEALAND REPRESENTATIVE  
NIK KIDDLE**

**MONDAY 11 JULY 2005**

Mr Chairman

Allow me to join others in congratulating you Mr Chairman on the preparations for this important conference. New Zealand fully associates itself with the statement made by the distinguished delegate of Samoa on behalf of the Pacific Island Forum countries.

The threat posed to international and regional peace and security by the excessive accumulation and uncontrolled spread of illicit small arms and light weapons continues to grow, and has both damaging humanitarian and socio-economic consequences.

It is however extremely encouraging that the international community is making good progress in strengthening and enhancing controls on small arms and light weapons. This is evident by the entry into force of the UN Firearms Protocol and the very recent adoption by the open-ended working group of an instrument to Identify and Trace Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons.

Our efforts to combat illicit small arms and light weapons are, however, only just beginning. Our next task will be to lay the groundwork to enhance international cooperation to prevent, eradicate and combat illicit brokering in small arms as mandated by the General Assembly and expressed in the UN Programme of Action. We look forward to the establishment of a Group of Governmental

Experts on brokering and trust that will reflect an appropriate balance of geographical interests. Similarly we look forward to the Review Conference of the Programme of Action in 2006.

Mr Chairman as we prepare for the tasks ahead of us in 2006 and 2007, we would like to emphasise our full support for Oxfam's initiative for an Arms Trade Treaty. In addition we are closely examining recent proposals put forward by the government of the United Kingdom.

Mr Chairman, my delegation welcomes the fine yet strong fabric of international commitments and obligations that is gradually being woven together to address all aspects of illicit small arms and light weapons. New Zealand looks forward to sharing with other states its experiences and the lessons it has learnt from its efforts to combat and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. Mr Chairman you can be assured that you will have this delegation's full cooperation and support in the week to come.

Mr Chairman at the national level, New Zealand substantially complies with the UN Programme of Action. Firearms control is achieved in New Zealand through licensing individuals. In New Zealand the civilian ownership of pistols, military style semi automatic firearms and restricted weapons must be registered. While the category of firearms which must be registered in New Zealand does not

extend to sporting rifles or shotguns, civilians wanting to possess these firearms are nevertheless subject to a strict vetting and licensing regime.

In New Zealand no civilians are allowed to possess firearms unless they are 16 years of age or over and have a firearms licence issued by the New Zealand Police. A person wishing to hold a firearms licence is required to go through a vetting process that includes, but is by no means limited to, a series of Police checks, interviews with the applicant, their spouse, partner, next of kin, an unrelated referee and any other inquiries Police consider necessary. There is also a requirement on licence holders to secure firearms. The physical inspection of security also forms a key part of the vetting process.

Mr Chairman let me be quite open in saying that New Zealand's system is suited to meet our needs and our problems. We are fortunate that despite having relatively high levels of firearms ownership in New Zealand, we still continue to have very low rates of firearms related crime by international standards. This is in large part due to our responsible sporting and hunting community who make up the majority of firearm owners in New Zealand.

The state also sets a positive and public example. The New Zealand Police do not routinely carry weapons for their day-to-day work. New Zealand Defence personnel in some peace monitoring situations overseas will make a point of operating without firearms. For instance New Zealand in order to promote peace and disarmament principles with the local people in Bougainville made it

very clear at the outset that New Zealand forces would be unarmed. Furthermore New Zealand Defence Force training, and rules of engagement, are clear that weapons are rarely to be used for any purpose other than self protection.

In this case Mr Chairman it's not just a matter of "doing as I say" but literally "doing as I do". Whenever it is possible, governments must lead by example, and not expect the public to readily accept calls for greater controls on firearms when say their armed forces or police are seen as promoting a culture of excessive firearm use.

We would hope that our experience shows that an arms control regime is likely to be more effective if it takes into account the differing histories, cultures, environments and patterns of firearms possession and use that are apparent in different States. A 'one size fits all' approach is likely to be less effective than approaches that address these differences. The Programme of Action itself appears to support this view, committing States to take steps that bear in mind the 'different situations, capacities and priorities of States and regions.

Mr Chairman, from a regional perspective while the Pacific region has had a mostly peaceful history, the Pacific continues to face multiple problems and stresses, deep rooted in fragile economies, overpopulation, youth unemployment and a poor fit between traditional structures and imported forms

of governance. Ethnic strife has become more common; illegally held small arms have proliferated, and there is a risk that countries may be used for trans-national criminal activities.

A priority for New Zealand remains assisting with the effective implementation of the UN Programme of Action in the Pacific. For instance New Zealand's Defence Force under the mutual assistance and training programme continues to offer Pacific countries' defence and police forces assistance to improve security, storage, maintenance and management of their weapons. In 2005/2006 New Zealand plans to assist with a number of armoury, small arms munitions, and disposal programmes in the Pacific for instance in Tonga, the Cook Islands, Vanuatu and Tokelau.

New Zealand continues to be substantially involved in the Regional Assistance Mission in Solomon Islands. The focus of the mission is shifting from immediate conflict resolution and security issues to one of longer-term social and economic stability. The presence and circulation of illicit firearms continues to be monitored in this context, as it is a contributing factor to ensuring lasting stability in Solomon Islands.

On the theme of regional cooperation New Zealand extends its appreciation to the Governments of Australia, Fiji and Japan and the UN Department for Disarmament Affairs for hosting and organising the seminar on small arms and light weapons for the South Pacific held in Nadi in August 2004.

New Zealand participated in the seminar and made a presentation elaborating on New Zealand arms control legislation and its implementation at a practical level. We received positive feedback from Pacific participants about possibly using New Zealand's licensing and vetting procedure as a guide to improve firearm controls

At the seminar, Pacific countries not surprisingly raised concerns about the risk created by poor gun maintenance and inadequate security procedures for civilian firearms. In response to these concerns the New Zealand Police in close liaison with New Zealand non-governmental organisations, the New Zealand Council of Licensed Firearms Owners and the New Zealand Mountain Safety Council, will be hosting an International Firearms Safety Seminar in February 2006 in New Zealand. The primary aim of the seminar will be to assist Pacific Island States with firearm safety and training.

Mr Chairman, we in the Pacific are committed to tackling the uncontrolled spread of small arms and light weapons in the region - as demonstrated by the endorsement of a common regional approach to weapon control in a document called the Nadi Framework, and the endorsement of draft model weapons legislation. Pacific States have provided military and police support to the Regional Assistance Mission in the Solomon Islands, to assist in addressing a situation where the spread and circulation of illicit small arms and light weapons contributed significantly to the domestic instability.

Mr Chairman, we would join you in urging those delegations that have yet to submit reports to do so at their earliest convenience. We commend the Reporting Assistance Package that has been usefully prepared by the UN Institute for Disarmament Research, the Department of Disarmament Affairs, and the UN Development Programme.

Mr Chairman let me reiterate New Zealand's firm commitment in the week to come. The conference is a timely opportunity to build on the momentum we have had in recent times in adopting international instruments to combat the scourge of illicit small arms and light weapons. Let us make the most of this opportunity and be frank about any difficulties we have had in implementing the Programme of Action. Mr Chairman, that at the very least, is what we, as the international community, owe to the thousands of people that continue to fall victim to illicit small arms and light weapons.