



THE PERMANENT MISSION OF
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TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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**STATEMENT
BY**

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OF THE
PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF
SOUTH AFRICA TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

**ON THE
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**

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Mr Chairperson,

Allow me to add my delegation's voice to those of other delegations in congratulating you on your assumption of the chair of this Biennial Meeting of States to Consider 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. As a representative of the Bureau for this meeting, South Africa looks forward to working closely with you towards a successful conclusion to our discussions at the end of this week.

This Meeting takes place four years after the adoption of the UN Programme of Action and affords us a valuable opportunity to take stock of what has been achieved at the national, regional and global levels, and of what difficulties are being experienced in the implementation of the recommendations of the UNPOA. We believe that the thematic discussions scheduled for the second part of this week should also serve as pointers to the areas in which we may be able to elaborate on our existing undertakings in the UNPOA.

Assessing our progress in implementing the UNPOA at regular intervals represent important milestones at which we can take stock and identify those undertakings that we have achieved, particularly at the respective national levels. But as my delegation alluded to during the First Biennial Meeting, highlighting our achievements will naturally expose the areas where there are shortcomings. In this regard, it is vital that these biennials are used constructively as the basis for matching needs to assistance and thereby building partnerships to overcome such shortcomings.

Chairperson,

South Africa wishes to highlight a few aspects of its National Report, in order to inform States of some of the progress that has been made in implementing the UNPOA since the First Biennial Meeting of States.

Regulations have been promulgated for the two main legislative frameworks that address issues related to small arms and light weapons. The regulations to the National Conventional Arms Control Act, which are based on the Wassenaar Arrangement controls, were promulgated during May 2004. The Act lays down the requirements for South Africa's conventional arms transfer system. The regulations to the Firearms Control Act, which relate to the accreditation of associations, shooting ranges and training institutions, were promulgated on 1 July 2004. The Act itself provides for the operation control of all legal firearms stocks in South Africa.

The South African authorities declared an amnesty from prosecution for the illegal possession of firearms and ammunition in terms of the Firearms Control Act (2000) for

the period 1 January to 31 March 2005. The amnesty was subsequently extended to 30 June 2005. The amnesty was based on a three-pronged approach:

- The first element was the voluntary handing in of unwanted registered firearms. This was deemed necessary due to the fact that the pool of registered firearms is one of the sources of illegal firearms.
- Secondly, provision was made to recover as many illegal firearms and as much ammunition as possible by providing the incentive of amnesty from prosecution for such possession. No financial compensation was offered for firearms that were handed in.
- Lastly, police operations to locate and seize illegal firearms and to arrest persons in possession thereof, continued unabated during the amnesty period. In this regard it should be noted that a person could not call upon the amnesty after being arrested for the illegal possession of a firearm or ammunition. The above-mentioned police operations are a permanent feature of crime prevention and law enforcement, but were intensified during the amnesty period.

During the entire period of the amnesty a high-profile public awareness campaign was conducted. The total results of the amnesty for the period 1 January 2005 to 30 May 2005 are listed in South Africa's National Report. Some of the highlights include a total of 77 139 firearms and more than 1,2 million ammunition recovered.

The South African Government maintains the position that all surplus, redundant, obsolete and confiscated small arms of a calibre below 12,7 mm should be destroyed in order to prevent these from ending up in the illicit small arms trade. The South African Police Service has announced that from July 2003 to date, it has destroyed 202 796 firearms, which were either seized during crime operations or which were in the possession of the state and found to be redundant or obsolete. My delegation would like to take this opportunity to thank those donor States that have supported our destruction programmes.

As far as South Africa's regional priorities in the field of small arms is concerned, one of the foremost issues to be undertaken is the full implementation of the provisions of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Firearms Protocol. This far-reaching instrument, which goes beyond that of a politically binding declaration, came into force during 2004, and provides the region with a legal basis upon which to deal with both the legal and the illicit trade in firearms.

Chairperson,

As far as our future Biennial Meetings of States and Review Conferences is concerned, my delegation has noted that the small arms calendar will become rather congested over the next few years and that while these two sets of meetings are distinctly different in nature, this series of meeting are likely to repeat this cycle in five years' time. South Africa will therefore consider with an open mind any proposal to better synchronise our meetings following next year's Review Conference.

Chairperson,

South Africa remains committed to the UNPOA, as it presents a practical and implementable framework for concerted action for preventing, combating and eradicating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects. We are of the view that we, in the international community, are still in the early phases of the implementation of the recommendations of the UNPOA. The value of this Meeting therefore lies in enabling us as international community to obtain a clearer sense of the challenges that still lie ahead in the implementation of the UNPOA at the global, regional, and most importantly, at the national levels.

I thank you.