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BIENNIAL MEETING OF STATES  
TO CONSIDER THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE  
UN PROGRAMME OF ACTION ON  
SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS

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Statement by H.E. Ambassador John Freeman  
Head of UK Delegation to the Biennial Meeting of States  
on behalf of the European Union

NEW YORK  
11 July 2005



Mr Chairman,

1. I have the honour to take the floor on behalf of the European Union. The acceding countries Bulgaria and Romania, the candidate countries Croatia and Turkey, the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia and Montenegro, the members of the European Economic Area, Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein, as well as Moldova and Ukraine, align themselves with this statement.
2. At the outset, Mr Chairman, allow me to congratulate you on your assumption of the chair of this meeting. I am confident that under your leadership we will be able to make significant progress that will pave the way for a rich and constructive Review Conference in 2006.

Mr Chairman,

3. Much progress has already been made since the agreement of the Programme of Action. Nevertheless, four years on, the European Union remains convinced that the excessive and destabilising accumulation of small arms and light weapons, and their unrestrained transfer, still pose serious challenges international security, human safety and socio-economic development.
4. In the hands of criminal gangs, armed groups or terrorists, small arms, light weapons and the ammunition and explosives they use, are used to kill and injure hundreds of thousands of people every year. Violence perpetrated with small arms and light weapons destroys livelihoods and displaces entire communities. We note that the UN Secretary General highlighted the threats posed by small arms and light weapons in his report "In Larger Freedom: Towards Security, Development and Human Rights for All", and we share his sense of urgency on the need to combat the proliferation of these weapons.
5. Since September 2001, the alarming rise of terrorist activities compels us to strengthen international cooperation in order to prevent terrorist and other criminal organisations from acquiring the weapons they need to carry out their plans.

Mr Chairman,

6. The European Union remains committed to work against the spread of small arms and light weapons around the world.
7. The mandate of the current session calls for a second assessment of the implementation of the UN Programme of Action. The European Union will therefore present an overview of its achievements to date and is ready to learn from the experiences and lessons learnt of other partners, international organisations and NGOs.

8. Much was achieved at the July 2003 Biennial Meeting. This second meeting on the Status of Implementation of the UN Programme of Action is an important opportunity to assess progress so far and maintain momentum on implementation. We believe that this meeting ought to be ambitious and forward-looking. In particular, the European Union hopes that our discussions on the most important aspects of this issue will allow all states to give consideration to areas of further work so that we can make best use of the 2006 review conference.
9. While fully relying on your guidance, Mr Chairman, the European Union suggests that delegations focus - under the thematic discussions - on what we believe are crucial elements such as transfer controls, marking and tracing, brokering activities and the relationships between small arms and development.
10. In assessing initiatives undertaken since 2003, I wish to underline that the European Union has sought to comply with the provisions of the UN Programme of Action at three different levels:
  - by strengthening domestic legislation already adopted in order to eliminate identified loopholes;
  - by actively contributing to initiatives launched in relevant regional fora (the OSCE, the Wassenaar Arrangement) in order to foster international cooperation and develop common standards;
  - by providing financial and technical assistance to countries affected by widespread accumulation of those arms.
11. EU member states have supported the implementation of the OSCE Document on Small Arms and Light Weapons and the dissemination of OSCE best practice guidelines on small arms control. EU member states also contributed to new OSCE agreements on ammunition stockpile management, end-user certificates and verification procedures, brokering, and exports of Man-Portable Air Defense Systems (MANPADS).
12. In the framework of the Wassenaar arrangement, the EU member states have supported new initiatives that include tightened controls over MANPADS, enhanced transparency in small arms and light weapons transfers, and elements for national legislation on brokering. These agreements build on the "best practices guidelines" for exports of small arms and light weapons, agreed in 2002.
13. From 2003 to 2005, the European Union allocated in total nearly 6 million euros for actions undertaken by affected countries to deal with the excessive and destabilising accumulation of small arms and light weapons. The EU has given financial support to projects in Cambodia (contribution of approximately 2.8 million euros), in Latin America and the Caribbean (contribution of 700,000 euros) and in Albania (contribution of 1.3 million euros for the demilitarization of surplus small arms and light weapons ammunition, a project managed under the terms of the NATO Partnership for Peace trust fund). Contributions of 660,000 euros have also been

made for the running costs of SEESAC, the joint Stability Pact/UNDP small arms and light weapons clearinghouse in Belgrade. Most recently, the EU is now considering contributing 1 million euros for small arms and light weapons destruction in Ukraine, also through the Pfp fund, and over half a million euros for the ECOWAS small arms unit in Abuja.

14. In addition to measures supported by the European Union, small arms and light weapons projects in Africa, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries are also eligible for support under the European Development Fund, which is managed by the European Commission and which amounted to more than 82 million euros from 2003 to date. Additional activities supported through this fund include EU assistance for the implementation of the Tanzanian national action plan, as well as substantial contributions for disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration activities in a number of ACP countries.

Mr Chairman,

15. In sharing this information, the European Union recognises the value of systematic information exchange among donor and recipient countries on small arms and light weapons assistance, and calls for lessons learned and guidance on future cooperation. In this respect, we support your call, Mr Chairman, for a survey of multilateral assistance to affected countries.
16. The EU also believes that its political and financial support for these measures is a demonstration of its commitment to this issue. The Union has become one of the foremost international actors in efforts to combat the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. EU member states are committed to a continued leading role in this area, and call on others to maintain momentum on the implementation of the Programme of Action in the coming years.
17. As I have already indicated, the European Union hopes that States will use the opportunity of this second biennial meeting to identify and discuss follow-up measures to complement those parts of the UN Programme of Action that need to be strengthened. Although we understand that there will not be Chairman's Summary from this meeting, we hope that a way can be found to reflect key points from this discussion during the preparation process for the Review Conference.
18. Among these areas further substantive work is required on brokering controls, which remains a high priority for the European Union. Illicit brokering and trafficking are recognised as among the main factors fuelling the illegal trade worldwide. Strict domestic legislation on brokering - as required by the EU common position - should be accompanied by transparent exchange of relevant information. The EU was amongst those who insisted on the inclusion in last year's resolution (A/RES/59/86) entitled "The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects" of a mandate to establish of a group of governmental experts on illicit brokering. The EU calls for this group to be convened as soon as possible after the 2006 review

conference to decide on the measures necessary to combat the menace of and harm done by illicit brokers.

19. The EU also attaches great importance to improved transfer controls. The EU encourages the use of minimum common standards including criteria or guidelines to determine authorisation for transfer will prevent small arms and light weapons from being used to fuel conflict, repress human rights or undermine development and from being diverted. The 1998 EU Code of Conduct on arms exports represents one of several examples of agreed regional instrument. Many other regions have also called for increased co-operation on transfer controls within the framework of the Programme of Action. In particular, we note recent progress made on transfer controls in Central America, the MERCOSUR region, the Caribbean and the Great Lakes region and Horn of Africa. We strongly encourage these and other regions and states to voice their support for small arms and light weapons transfer controls during this meeting so that this can be considered in preparation for the 2006 Review meeting.
20. The EU believes that the current international discussions on small arms and light weapons transfer controls constitute an interesting source of inspiration that may help future discussions within the UN on global principles for the control of all arms conventional transfers. The question of the transfer to non-state actors is another area of great relevance to be duly considered. The use of Man Portable Air Defence Systems to endanger civil aviation highlights the problems caused by transfers to non-state actors. The important issue of end-use certificates (EUCs) also deserves attention and should also be dealt with in the context of transfer controls.
21. Global standards on the marking and tracing of small arms and light weapons are essential if we are to understand, track, and crack down on the illegal trade in these weapons. The EU welcomes the hard work done by the Open Ended Working Group on Marking and Tracing, under the Chairmanship of Ambassador Thalmann.
22. The EU regrets that no operational provisions on ammunition and peacekeeping operations were included, and that the instrument is not legally-binding. We hope that it can be strengthened at further review meetings. The EU will be strongly committed to promoting further the issue of ammunition, thus taking up the recommendations of the Chairman's Procedural Report. It is however a first and important step in the implementation of the 2001 United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons. In that sense, it represents a positive Signal from the international community to those countries most affected by this scourge. If it is applied by states with the necessary political will, the content of the instrument will help to discourage, and thus reduce, the illicit trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons. This is the very least we owe to victims of illicit SALW.
23. The European Union believes that assistance should be provided to conflict-prone countries with the aim of fostering security, disarmament and demobilisation - as well as the reintegration of ex-combatants into civil society - as an integrated part of post-

conflict peace agreements and development strategies. We welcome work done elsewhere within the UN to develop common international standards for disarmament, demobilisation and integration and call for the sharing of additional best practice on small arms reduction programmes. We hope that our meeting will draw lessons from existing or already concluded programmes, such as EU-supported initiatives in Cambodia and South Eastern Europe, and with a view to agreeing on common measures to be taken at the national, regional and global level.

24. The European Union believes the easy availability of small arms and light weapons, and high levels of armed violence, act as a major barrier to development. It will be important to take this issue forward, notably in light of the upcoming UN summit on implementation the millennium development goals. In view of attention given by both the High Level Panel and the Secretary General to the link between security and development, the EU calls on States and development agencies to increase their capacity to control small arms and reduce armed violence. The European Union particularly encourages countries to explore the link between the two and to routinely address armed violence and arms availability as part of their development assistance programmes. Progress on this issue should channel more resources to the implementation of the Programme of Action in developing countries - and this support will be more effective because it will be tied to long-term development needs.

Mr Chairman,

25. The implementation of the UN Programme of Action should be further monitored and enhanced after this second biennial meeting. The European Union also encourages this meeting to take full account of the work of relevant NGOs and civil society, which have always provided valuable contributions to our works and deliberations.

Mr Chairman,

26. In carrying out your task, you can rely on the full and consistent support of the European Union, which stands ready to take part in open and constructive discussions with all interested delegations. With reciprocal engagement from all our partners, we are confident that we will be able to build a solid foundation for the Review Conference.