

United Nations Coordinating Action on Small Arms (CASA)



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

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Statement presented by

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On behalf of the CASA

Mr. Chairman,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen

It is with great pleasure that I take the floor today to address this Meeting on behalf of the United Nations Coordinating Action on Small Arms mechanism¹ (CASA).

Mr. Chairman,

Efforts to reduce the proliferation of illicit small arms and light weapons must go hand-in-hand with initiatives in fields such as public safety and security, the protection of children, socio-economic development, human rights and humanitarian assistance in the affected communities. Recognizing this multifaceted nature of the problem, the Secretary-General established CASA in 1998 as a consultative mechanism aimed at providing a comprehensive, coherent and coordinated response of the UN to the small arms challenge. The mechanism strives to achieve the goal of minimizing duplication, pooling scarce resources and maximizing synergistic partnerships within the UN system, with regard to actions in the area of small arms.

The UN continues to devote considerable time and effort to improve the functioning of the CASA mechanism and enhance its effectiveness. These include the development of an information exchange and dissemination system supported, at its core, by an Internet database, as well as the drafting of a strategic framework providing

¹ The following departments, funds and agencies are current members of CASA: the Department for Disarmament Affairs (DDA), the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), the Department of Political Affairs (DPA), the Department for Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), the Department of Public Information (DPI) the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict (SRSG/CAC), the New York Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR), the New York Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Geneva-based United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), the Vienna-based Centre for International Crime Prevention (CICP) of the Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC/CICP), the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the World Health Organization (WHO), and the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP).

guidelines for consultation and interagency cooperation in the field of SALW. This task -- it must be said -- has not been easy, for the lack of resources remain a major hurdle in the way of progress.

Since the First Biennial Meeting of States, there is a wider recognition that the CASA mechanism can play an important role in supporting Member States' efforts to address the complex and multidimensional problem of illicit small arms and light weapons. This is reflected in the presidential statement adopted by the Security Council on 17 February 2005, in which the Council, inter alia, emphasizes the multidisciplinary nature of the issue of illicit small arms and light weapons and urges States in a position to do so to provide support and assistance to CASA. This recognition extends beyond the UN system. For instance, the representatives of the MERCOSUR and Associated States participating in a workshop on SALW import, export and transit controls, held in Porto Alegre, Brazil, on 2 June 2005, adopted a declaration in which, among others, they urge the UN to intensify its assistance to the States of the sub-region in their efforts to develop common understandings on SALW import, export and transit controls and to deliver such assistance in a coordinated manner, through the CASA mechanism.

Mr. Chairman,

Capacity-building is critical to the countries most affected by the problem of illicit SALW, where the lack of capacity to develop and implement measures and activities to tackle the many dimensions of the problem constitutes a serious obstacle to their efforts to implement the 2001 UN Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

When DDA, on behalf of CASA, addressed the First Biennial Meeting of States in 2003, we listed a number of areas where capacity needed to be built as a matter of priority. Despite the progress made in some of these areas, such as weapons collection and destruction, in other areas progress is still outstanding. There is a need to redouble

the efforts to develop national capacity to monitor and eliminate the inflow of illicit small arms and to ensure that stockpiles of small arms and light weapons held by the armed forces, the police and other law enforcement agencies of the Government are adequately managed and secured. More assistance is needed to help developing countries in setting up a modern legislative framework that aligns national legislation with the commitments made by States under the Programme of Action, the United Nations Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition, the recently agreed draft international instrument to enable States to identify and trace, in a timely and reliable manner, illicit small arms and light weapons and relevant regional instruments. There is a need to intensify efforts to safely collect and dispose of illicit and surplus small arms; design and implement measures and controls aimed at preventing the illicit export of small arms; effectively and systematically implement arms embargoes and other mandatory measures imposed by the Security Council. And more needs to be done to help States address the root causes of the demand for illicit small arms -- by launching appropriate initiatives in areas such as conflict prevention and resolution, economic and social development, and employment and job creation -- and to improve their capacity to report on the progress made in implementing the PoA.

The capacity-building challenge is enormous. It requires that national efforts be complemented by international assistance and cooperation as well as the involvement of local and international civil society organizations.

Mr. Chairman,

CASA members, either individually or in various partnerships under the framework of the mechanism, have carried out many activities to help developing countries build their national capacity to adopt and sustain measures to curb the proliferation of illicit SALW, to address the problem of armed violence and its impacts

on society and to create a climate of security conducive to social and economic development.

Since the First Biennial Meeting, assistance has been provided to support the collection and safe destruction of over 340 thousand SALW and well over 1,000 tons of related ammunition, in Africa, Latin America and Southern Europe. In some cases, this assistance included a component of capacity- building to enable Government officials to design and implement weapons collection and destruction programmes in the future. CASA members have provided technical assistance and funding to help improve stockpile management and security, including the development of weapons inventory controls and storage management systems, the creation of weapons registries and related training for approximately 800 Government and law enforcement officials from various countries.

Support has been provided for the development and implementation of projects for Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration of former combatants in various countries, such as, for example, Afghanistan, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti, Liberia, the Republic of Congo, Somalia and Sudan. In this regard, it is worth mentioning the UN's effort to improve the effectiveness of its assistance in DDR through an Inter Agency Working Group tasked, inter alia, with the responsibility of developing Integrated DDR Standards, which are expected to guide UN agencies, funds and programmes in designing and implementing integrated DDR programmes.

In terms of institution-building, assistance has been provided to support the establishment and functioning of national commissions, the design and implementation of national surveys of the SALW situation and the development of national action plans. In this regard, CASA members have often worked in partnership with local and international civil society organizations and have endeavoured to facilitate the establishment of mechanisms to ensure that the participation of non-governmental

organizations in the national commissions is realized through a democratic process. A specific example of such a partnership is the CASA project to support the establishment of the Sri Lanka National Commission Against the Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons, under which umbrella Saferworld, working together with local NGOs, organized a National NGOs Forum to mobilize support from the civil society and to elect its representatives to the Commission.

Recognizing that training is a key component of any capacity-building activity, various training courses, covering a wide range of themes, have been developed and delivered for law enforcement officials, members of national commissions, parliamentarians, and non-governmental organizations. In addition, CASA members, in partnership with interested Member States and NGO's, have facilitated, organized or participated in a large number of meetings, at the national and sub-regional levels, aimed, among others, at familiarizing government officials and representatives of civil society with the PoA and at developing common understandings on SALW import, export and transfer controls, and to improve capacity to report on the implementation of the PoA.

CASA members have also provided assistance to address and prevent the impact of armed violence on human security and development. In this context, armed violence reduction projects are being implemented in Brazil, Kenya, Ghana, Papua New Guinea, El Salvador, Haiti and Colombia. These projects aim at improving understanding of the problem, identifying effective response strategies and promoting dialogue among key stakeholders. Special attention has also been paid to the needs of children, women and the elderly, particularly in conflict situations. Projects have been developed in many countries to address the consequences of armed conflict on children. These include, inter alia, a project to support the integration of small arms and light weapons awareness in education programmes and school curricula in Bosnia-Herzegovina; a catch-up education project in Sri Lanka for close to 44,000 children that had been deprived of education due to war and displacement; in Darfur, Sudan, orientation sessions on psychosocial interventions have been provided to 655 teachers and animators who have provided

support to close to 55,000 children. In addition, CASA members have continued their efforts to improve the DDR of child soldiers as well as their advocacy work towards the inclusion of gender perspectives in DDR programmes and other activities aimed at implementing the Programme of Action.

Mr. Chairman,

The list of activities of CASA members in support of Member States' efforts to implement the Programme of Action and address the problems posed by the proliferation of illicit SALW is indeed long. However, more needs to be done. The demand for SALW continues to be high; institutions in the countries most affected by the problem are still generally weak; knowledge and understanding of the various factors contributing to armed violence and global data on the health impact of such violence remain limited; children and women continue to bear a disproportionate burden among the innocent victims of armed conflict and, generally, there are very few institutional mechanisms set up to provide short- or long-term support to them. An additional challenge is posed by the very limited resources available to the United Nations and other intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations committed to providing assistance in addressing the problem of the illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

We hope that from the lessons and experiences shared during this meeting we will gain further insight into how we can improve the CASA mechanism and to use it to better the quality and effectiveness of our assistance. We also hope to seize this opportunity to forge new partnerships and to renew our call for support to our CASA mechanism.

Mr. Chairman,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen

On this note, I would like to reaffirm, on behalf of the entire membership of CASA, our continued collective commitment to ensure that the United Nations plays its part in the common global struggle to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects.

Thank you.

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