

Check Against Delivery

**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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**for the Panel Presentation by the
United Nations Coordinating Action on Small Arms (CASA)**

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Mr Chairman, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen

We have gathered here in New York this week to take stock of our collective efforts to implement the UN Programme of Action.

While much has been achieved since we last met in 2003, the global scourge of gun violence continues to destroy lives and livelihoods, breed fear and insecurity, and hamper the prospects for human development.

Today I will be making a short statement on behalf of the UN Coordinating Action on Small Arms (CASA) on the theme of 'Development Cooperation and Implementation'

My colleague from UNICEF has spoken eloquently about the human impacts associated with the proliferation and misuse of small arms and light weapons.

I will speak briefly about why the issue of small arms and light weapons is not only a disarmament issue, but also a development issue, and how the development community is addressing the issue of small arms and light weapons, and is making a significant contribution to the implementation of the Programme of Action

Section I. Small Arms as a Development Issue

The Programme of Action makes limited references to the development dimensions of the small arms issue.

In **Preambular paragraph 2** States express concern that the illicit *manufacture, transfer and circulation of small arms and light weapons and their excessive accumulation and uncontrolled spread in many regions of the world, have a wide range of humanitarian and socio-economic consequences and pose a serious threat to peace, reconciliation, safety, security, stability and sustainable development at the individual, local, national, regional and international levels*".

In **Preambular paragraph 3** States also express concern about "*the implications that poverty and underdevelopment may have for the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects*".

In **Section III, paragraph 17**, States are encouraged to make '*greater efforts to address problems related to human and sustainable development*' thus reemphasizing the link between development and small arms.

However, since 2001 our understanding of the impact of small arms availability and misuse on development has increased considerably, and we now have a large and growing body of evidence from many parts of the world which

highlights the many different ways in which gun violence can threaten, or undermine, a country's development prospects.

Earlier this year the UN Secretary-General in his report – **In Larger Freedom** stated that *‘the accumulation and proliferation of small arms and light weapons continue to be serious threat to peace, stability and sustainable development’*

His words reflect what the development community is confronted with on a daily basis – how small arms threaten sustainable development in a number of ways.

Tomorrow, UNDP will be launching a new publication entitled ‘Securing Development’ which documents the impact of small arms and light weapons proliferation and misuse on sustainable development, based on our experience of providing support to a large number of countries to address small arms issues.

The direct impacts include death and injury, and the fact that hundreds of thousands of people are killed or injured every year with small arms, in situations of crime and conflict.

The indirect impacts include the collapse of basic services (education, health), displacement of people, declining economic activity, including declines in both domestic and foreign investment, and the withdrawal of development assistance.

In September this year, world leaders will gather here in New York for the World Summit to review the achievement of the MDGs. While the MDGs do not specifically mention small arms, or the relationship between small arms and development, it is now increasingly clear that those countries which are experiencing high levels of small arms-related violence, whether in situations of crime or conflict, are struggling to achieve the MDGs. This is because the achievement of the various MDGs – for example, achieve universal primary education – cannot be realized if schools are attacked, teachers killed or abducted at gun point, and children forcibly recruited as child soldiers.

Section II. The role of the Development Community

The fact that the proliferation and misuse of small arms and light weapons have a range of impacts on sustainable development means that the development community can, and should, play a role in supporting countries to address the many development-related issues associated with small arms and light weapons.

The United Nations and its development partners have an opportunity to address the dangers of the misuse of small arms and its direct and indirect impact as a development challenge. As a development issue, activities such as civilian disarmament, disarmament of ex-combatants, security sector reform and establishment of national focal points should not be addressed only as a security

issue but should be seen as contributing to establishing an enabling environment for the pursuit of national development goals.

In many post-conflict contexts, the continued availability of small arms and light weapons beyond the signing of a peace agreement means that economies cannot be restarted and livelihoods regained due to the continuing insecurity caused by small arms. In these contexts, suffering is prolonged and the ability of a country to regenerate is considerably hindered.

In this context, the role of the development community is three-fold:

- **It can provide specific forms of development-oriented assistance** designed to provide agents of violence with alternatives to violence-based livelihoods. Such assistance is important both as incentives for voluntary disarmament targeting both individuals and communities (for instance in weapons for development programmes), but also as a means to ensure the sustainable reintegration of former agents of violence into normal social and economic life;
- **It can support communities in rebuilding societies and economies after conflict and armed violence**, and in regaining essential livelihoods. In this respect, development programmes (and particularly community recovery and reintegration) constitute the broader framework, and are an essential corollary for, for small arms and armed violence reduction activities. In this regard, the development community plays an important role in linking small arms to UN and national development frameworks and processes (including PRSPs, CCA/UNDAFs and national development plans);
- The development community also has an important role to play in consolidating the gains achieved through disarmament or small arms reduction activities by **strengthening capacities at local and national levels to prevent, and reduce the incidence, or re-occurrence of violence** (through strengthened weapons licensing controls, for instance) as well as strengthening the capacities of public and non-governmental institutions in providing development-oriented services and assistance that could address some of the socio-economic factors underlying violence.

In addition, by ensuring that measures to address the proliferation of small arms are embedded in a development framework, the development community can develop comprehensive strategies that complement a focus on addressing the supply and demand of weapons, with measures to address the impact of violence on women, the spread of HIV/AIDS, empowerment of women and displaced persons, conflict prevention and conflict resolution, livelihoods improvement, child protection, human rights, health and public security. Through partnerships with the international community, government and civil society, such initiatives could contribute to the establishment of an environment for sustainable development and the attainment of the MDGs.

Section III. How the development community is contributing to the implementation of the POA at national, regional and global levels

The UN Programme of Action on SALW provides the international development community with a powerful tool to address at various levels the issues of illicit trade and proliferation of SALW. Since 2001 the development community has contributed significantly to the implementation of the Programme of Action at 3 levels: international, regional and national.

International level

At the international level, the development community has worked toward the promotion and implementation of the UN Programme of Action and the strengthening of the international framework governing all aspects of the small arms issue. In that context, and under various mechanisms (UN Coordinating Action on Small Arms - CASA) the development community has been very involved in all the discussions aimed at assessing and evaluating the UN Programme of Action and at developing new international instruments (Marking and Tracing). In March 2005 the OECD Development Assistance Committee approved the use of official development assistance (ODA) for controlling, preventing and reducing the proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

Regional level

The issue of small arms proliferation cannot be addressed merely at the national level. Therefore, the development community has been supporting regional and sub regional organizations to play an enhanced role in tackling the issue of small arms proliferation. As a consequence, many regional programmes aiming at implementing the provisions of the UN Programme of Action are now being run by the regional organizations themselves (e.g. ECOWAS)

National level

The primary responsibility for implementing the provisions of the UN Programme of Action lies with states themselves. Therefore, development organizations have provided substantial support to the implementation of the Programme of Action at the national level. In many post conflict situations, these organizations are now the principle actors helping to control and reduce the availability of small arms and light weapons. This is being done mainly by developing the capacities of both Governments and civil society organizations to address the issue of SA proliferation. In that context for instance, a joint UNDP/UNDDA/ UNDIR/SAS project has been launched in 2003 with a view to build the capacities of Governments to submit their national reports on the implementation of the UN Programme of Action. In less than two years, the project has provided assistance to more than 120 Governments through national/regional workshops, desk assistance and field missions.

Whether it is at the international, the regional or the national level, development organizations are contributing more and more to the implementation of the UN Programme of Action. In that context, the development community will actively participate in the process leading up to the 2006 Review Conference, so that its knowledge and experience can be usefully taken into account as Member States meet to review the future of the Programme of Action