



HOLY SEE

PERMANENT OBSERVER MISSION OF THE HOLY SEE TO THE UNITED NATIONS 25 EAST 39th STREET, NEW YORK, NY 10016-0903 (212) 370-7885

Check against delivery

**Statement by H.E. Archbishop Celestino Migliore
Apostolic Nuncio
Permanent Observer of the Holy See**

**Preparatory Committee for the United Nations Conference
to Review Progress Made
in 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**

New York, 9 January 2006

Mr Chairman,

The 2006 Review Conference is the most important meeting on small arms and light weapons (SALW) since the adoption in 2001 of the *Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects*. The outcome of the Conference will surely strengthen the process which started in 2001 and which, it should be recalled, is having important repercussions on the promotion of disarmament, peace and post-conflict reconstruction, the fight against terrorism and large- and small-scale organized crime.

As well as being an important chance to update the debate on the mechanisms and regulations in the field of tracing and brokering, the 2006 Conference should agree to establish major international cooperative programmes and mechanisms to promote key parts of the Programme of Action, which may include stockpile management and security, weapons and ammunitions collection and their safe and secure destruction, and national controls on SALW production and transfers. It would therefore be most useful to start a serious reflection on the possibility of negotiating a legally binding instrument on international arms trade, such as an arms trade treaty, based on the more important principles of international law, and in particular on both human rights and humanitarian law. Such an instrument could greatly contribute to uprooting the illicit traffic in arms and to underlining the responsibility of States to strengthen further the international regime on SALW.

The 2006 Review Conference could take useful steps to promote effective engagement on SALW, taking into account its developmental and humanitarian concerns, by launching a process enabling interested States and relevant organizations to flesh out principles, policies and programmes that address the links between efforts to prevent and reduce SALW trafficking, proliferation and misuse.

Often this process has focused its attention on the supply side of arms sale, as can be seen from a careful reading of the Programme of Action itself. However, if we consider both the humanitarian costs of the SALW and the profound connection between them, and the process of human and sustainable development, then it becomes clear that greater attention now needs to be paid to reducing the

demand for SALW. To reduce drastically the demand for small arms requires not only political will but better focused research into the dynamics of conflicts, crimes and violence. This obliges us to act responsibly to promote a real culture of peace and life among all members of society. Adequate international norms and programmes to address the question of demand are also needed urgently, as well as the implementation of educational and awareness activities through, among other things, the involvement of civil society.

In fact, the same Programme of Action recognizes that the participation of and cooperation with civil society is necessary in order to address seriously the problem of proliferation and misuse of small arms and light weapons. The contribution that civil society expertise can make to this process should be worthy of attention in our debate and in the ensuing decision. Therefore, the decisions of the 2006 Conference should look with wisdom towards the future of the international process on SALW and provide an adequate and effective follow-up.

Thank you, Mr Chairman.