

26 June 2006

Original: English

**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, 26 June-7 July 2006

Working paper submitted by Canada

**Proposal for an intersessional programme of work to enhance
implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to
Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms
and Lights Weapons in All Its Aspects**

Foreword

During the meeting of the Preparatory Committee for the 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 held in New York from 9 to 20 January 2006, Canada tabled a working paper outlining a proposal for an intersessional programme of work to complement work carried out during formal meetings of States. There was significant interest in the proposal and several States and civil society organizations requested additional information concerning how such an intersessional process might be undertaken. The present paper further elaborates the essential ideas advanced in the original working paper and reflects many of the comments and suggestions received from States and non-governmental organizations during the meeting of the Preparatory Committee. Canada will continue to consult widely in an effort to further refine the proposal for consideration at the review Conference.



Summary

Effective implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action requires significantly greater engagement by the international community. To that end, it is proposed that the review Conference agree to adopt an intersessional programme of work that would bring the international community together, informally, on a semi-annual basis to develop ideas and recommendations for consideration during formal meetings of States.

Work could be undertaken within thematic, open-ended working groups that would address clusters of related issues in order to improve capacity to reduce the humanitarian and development impact of the proliferation and misuse of small arms and light weapons. Special attention would be given to developing strategies to develop awareness and commitment to effectively address issues relating to small arms and light weapons and to raise the resources required to fully implement the United Nations Programme of Action.

I. Background

1. The proliferation and misuse of small arms and light weapons represent a major threat to peace and security. Small arms alone are instrumental in the deaths of more than 350,000 people annually approximately 1,000 each day. Many, possibly millions more, fall victim to the indirect, but no less lethal, impact they have as an obstacle to the delivery of humanitarian assistance and sustainable development.
2. In the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects adopted in 2001, States expressed their determination to reduce the human suffering caused by the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects and acknowledged that the international community has a duty to deal with the issue.
3. Among other things, the United Nations Programme of Action mandates meetings of States every two years in order to assess implementation of the Programme of Action, and a Review Conference in 2006. **Notwithstanding some progress since 2001, many States, United Nations agencies, international organizations and non-governmental organizations share the view that the current regime of meetings and other cooperative arrangements is insufficient to fully implement the United Nations Programme of Action.**
4. The following proposal represents an attempt to strengthen existing arrangements in order to achieve the objectives set out in the Programme of Action, in so doing, to realize the collective vision of the international community in this critically important area.

II. Proposal

5. It is proposed that the review Conference adopt an intersessional programme of work that would bring the international community together, informally, on a semi-annual basis to develop ideas and recommendations for consideration during formal meetings of States. Among other things, an informal intersessional programme of work could serve to:

(a) Provide more frequent occasions to assess the progress of implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action by States and to formulate plans and activities required to ensure that objectives are met in a timely fashion;

(b) Provide opportunities to examine, in depth, specific issues related to the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action by States;

(c) Facilitate the regular exchange of information, including lessons learned, thus enhancing the capacity of States to implement the United Nations Programme of Action;

(d) Facilitate the efforts of States to seek and receive technical and financial assistance in order to implement national programmes;

(e) Develop public awareness and resource mobilization strategies to increase awareness of and appreciation of the critical importance of the issue and to generate adequate resources required to fully implement the Programme of Action;

(f) Provide additional opportunities, as appropriate, to hear and consider the views of experts, non-governmental organizations, representatives of industry and Parliamentarians;

(g) Provide a mechanism to further inform the proceedings of formal meetings of States on an ongoing basis.

III. Organization of work

6. Intersessional meetings could focus on three primary elements:

(a) Work on specific aspects of implementation, tasked by and reporting to formal meetings of States;

(b) Activities on priority thematic issues;

(c) Organizational work related to preparing for formal meetings of States.

IV. Open-ended working groups

7. Addressing thematic areas could be facilitated by establishing open-ended working groups, which would operate informally, albeit with sufficient structure to ensure efficient proceedings and effective outcomes. Each group would carry out substantive work on specific priority topics and would meet serially to enable interested parties to participate in any or all, as desired. The working groups could include:

- Working group on the general status of implementation;
- Working group on humanitarian issues;
- Working group on regulatory issues and procedures;
- Working group on stockpile management and destruction;
- Working group on cooperation and assistance.

8. A public awareness and resource mobilization contact group could assist in the development of strategies to generate the will and financial and technical resources required to fully implement the United Nations Programme of Action and address issues related to the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects.

V. Mandate and approach

9. The intersessional programme of work would be mandated and tasked by States during formal meeting(s) and would report back to formal meetings of States. Activities would be complementary to existing arrangements and undertaken in a manner consistent with the principles of inclusivity, partnership and openness in order to maximize mutual support and practical cooperation.

VI. Resources

10. In order not to increase the budget of the United Nations, the intersessional programme of work could be funded by voluntary contributions from States in a position to do so. A sponsorship programme could be established to provide travel assistance required to ensure the participation of all interested States. Canada is prepared to work with other States to generate the funds required to support both the intersessional process and the sponsorship programme.

VII. Participants

11. All Governments and relevant international organizations, institutions, non-governmental organizations and stakeholders would be invited to participate actively in intersessional meetings. Representation from a broad spectrum of developed and developing nations from all regions of the world would be essential.

VIII. Frequency and location of meetings

12. Canada proposes that States meet informally twice annually in years when there is no formal meeting of States and once when there is a formal meeting scheduled, whether this is a biennial meeting of States or a review Conference. Given the importance and urgency of implementing the United Nations Programme of Action, meeting semi-annually is, in our view, both feasible and desirable. As many members of the community working on issues of relevance to small arms and light weapons are represented or based in Geneva, it might be desirable, at least initially, to conduct the intersessional programme of work in Geneva.

IX. The way ahead

13. Canada recommends endorsement and adoption of an intersessional programme of work by States at the 2006 review Conference.

14. Canada further recommends that the review Conference authorize the Chair of the review Conference and such Friends of the Chair as he might select to further refine the details of the intersessional programme of work and organize a schedule of intersessional meetings for 2007, to be held in Geneva. Reports of Working Groups produced at intersessional meetings would be circulated and reviewed at the next Biennial Meeting of States, including recommendations as to the continuance of the intersessional programme.

15. Canada will continue to consult States, the United Nations, international organizations and civil society to seek input and suggestions on the proposed intersessional programme of work.
