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**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, 9-20 January 2006

**Working paper submitted by Canada**

**Proposal for an Inter-sessional Programme of Work**

**to Enhance Implementation of the *UN Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and***

***Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Lights Weapons in All Its Aspects***

**Summary**

Effective implementation of the UN Programme of Action requires greater engagement by the international community. To this end, it is proposed that the Review Conference adopt an **Inter-sessional 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 Standing Committees that would address clusters of related substantive SALW issues. In addition, a Contact Group on communications and resource mobilization should be established to develop strategies to increase the popular and political will to address SALW issues and raise the resources required to fully implement the UN Programme of Action.

## **Background**

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 approximately 500,000 people annually. Many, possibly millions more, fall victim to their indirect impact on sustainable development.

In the *UN 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 determination to reduce the human suffering caused by the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects and recognized that the international community has a duty to deal with the issue.

Among other things, the UN Programme of Action mandates meetings of States every two years to assess implementation of the Programme of Action, and a Review Conference in 2006. Several states, UN agencies, international organizations and NGOs are of the view that the current regime of meetings and other cooperative arrangements do not afford the small arms and light weapons issue the attention and dedicated resources it warrants and, indeed, are essential in order to fulfil the promise of the UN Programme of Action.

### **Proposal**

It is proposed that the Review Conference adopt an **Inter-sessional 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.

Such an inter-sessional programme of work could serve *inter alia* to:

- provide more frequent occasions to assess the progress of implementation of the Programme of Action;
- promote regular exchange of information, including lessons learned, thus enhancing the capacity of States to implement the Programme of Action;
- identify priorities for implementation of the Programme of Action;

- facilitate dedicated activity and discussions on the thematic areas contained in the Programme of Action;
- enable states to develop public awareness and resource mobilization strategies which will increase appreciation of the importance of the issue and generate the financial and technical resources required to fully implement the Programme of Action;
- provide additional opportunities to engage experts and representatives of civil society, including NGOs and parliamentarians; and
- inform the proceedings and increase the effectiveness of formal meetings of States.

## **Approach**

An inter-sessional programme of work would be complementary to existing arrangements and undertaken in a manner consistent with the principles of inclusivity, partnership, openness, support and practical cooperation.

## **Participation**

All interested governments, international organizations and institutions, and relevant non-governmental organizations and stakeholders would be invited to participate actively in inter-sessional meetings.

## **Meetings Twice Per Year**

In order to sustain engagement by States on implementation of the Programme of Action, Canada proposes that States meet twice per year. Meetings could be one or two weeks in duration. Many international bodies convene at least twice, and sometimes three times per year. Given the importance and urgency of implementing the Programme of Action, meeting semi-annually is both feasible and desirable.

## **The Programme**

Inter-sessional meetings could focus on two primary elements: 1. reports by States on progress in implementing the UN Programme of Action; and 2. the activities of Standing Committees on priority thematic issues.

Addressing thematic areas could be facilitated by striking Standing Committees which would operate informally with procedural flexibility, albeit with sufficient structure to ensure effective proceedings. Each committee would carry out substantive work on related topics in order of priority.

A Communications and Resource Mobilization Contact Group could assist in the development of strategies to generate the popular and political will, and the financial and technical resources, to put our ideas and our words into action.

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