

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

Contribution to Cluster V

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on behalf of the European Union

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(check against delivery)

Communication

Mr. Chairman,

I have the honour to take the floor on behalf of the European Union. The Acceding Countries Bulgaria and Romania, the Candidate Countries Turkey, Croatia* and the former , the Countries of the Stabilisation and Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro, the EFTA countries Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova align themselves with this statement.

The EU believes that education and public awareness programmes on the issue of Small Arms Light Weapons are of utmost importance. The importance of these elements has already been reflected in the PoA and it is also mirrored in the EU-Strategy to combat illicit accumulation and trafficking of SALW and their ammunition that has been adopted almost exactly a month ago.

One major element of public education and awareness programmes is effective communication of the Small Arms Light Weapons issue to the wider public, including relevant decision makers and parliamentarians. The EU therefore welcomes initiatives that foster greater understanding of SALW-related problems by conveying important key messages to the wider public. These could comprise the number of casualties suffered each year, the impact of SALW on civilian populations, including women and children, but also young men, the negative impact of SALW on development and what activities are on their way to tackle these issues in order to save lives in the future.

Mr. Chairman,

Many of our aims cannot or at least not sufficiently be attained without appropriate engagement of civil society. In this context, the EU wishes to underscore that the PoA encourages non-governmental organizations and civil society to engage, as appropriate, in all aspects of international, regional, subregional and national efforts to implement the Programme of Action. The EU has consistently welcomed such engagement and will continue to do so. We also encourage this meeting to take full account of the work of relevant NGOs and civil society, which have always provided valuable contributions to our work and deliberations.

Another issue that should be dealt with under Follow-up is the formulation of concrete targets. Modeled on the Millennium Development Goals, these could be targets focusing on for instance establishing comprehensive mechanisms for storing and managing existing stocks, on eliminating surplus stockpiles, on measuring the human, social and economic costs of armed violence, and on achieving full and regular reporting under the PoA.

My delegation is aware of the fact that such concrete standards require careful development. They might even be developed regionally. The Review Conference will in any case come too early to agree on them. However, working towards concrete goals can greatly enhance implementation of the PoA. Therefore, the Outcome Document of the Review Conference could suggest that developing concrete goals to realize the broader aim of the PoA, should be further explored.