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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**

*PREPARING FOR THE 2006 REVIEW CONFERENCE OF THE
UN PROGRAMME OF ACTION*

STOCKPILE MANAGEMENT AND DESTRUCTION
(Submitted by Canada)

1. INTRODUCTION

Stockpiles of small arms and light weapons and their ammunition may pose serious safety and security threats to states and their citizens. The risks of loss from theft or neglect or accidental discharge/explosion can be diminished, if not addressed fully, through the development and implementation of a comprehensive plan for national stockpile management and destruction. Improved management of SALW and their ammunition is also crucial to combating the illicit trade in weapons and ammunition.

Stockpile management includes a wide range of activities, including marking and inventorying weapons and ammunition, identifying surplus weapons and disposing of weapons. Stockpile management also includes packaging, storing, transporting, securing, and maintaining weapons and munitions.

The most effective means by which to address obsolete and surplus stockpiles is destruction. Destroying stockpiles ensures that weapons will not be illegally transferred or misused which may contribute significantly to stabilization, confidence-building and improved security worldwide.

2. EXISTING COMMITMENTS AND GUIDELINES

UN Programme of Action

The **UN Programme of Action** recognizes that states require adequate and detailed standards and procedures relating to the management and security of their stocks of small arms and light weapons. States require standards and procedures including: “appropriate locations for stockpiles; physical security measures; control of access to stocks; inventory management and accounting control; staff training; security, accounting and control of small arms and light weapons held or transported by operational units or authorized personnel; and procedures and sanctions in the event of thefts or loss.”

OSCE Document on Small Arms and Light Weapons

A section of the **Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe’s** Document on Small Arms and Light Weapons (OSCE Document) is dedicated to the management of stockpiles, reduction of surpluses and destruction. The OSCE Document provides guidelines for states to determine whether they possess surplus stocks, improve national stockpile management and security and implement techniques for destruction and deactivation. In the OSCE Document, states recognize the importance of stockpile management to regional security and agree that destruction is the preferred method for the disposal of SALW. The OSCE Document also provides guidelines regarding the safe storage and destruction of ammunition. As part of the OSCE Handbook of Best Practices on Small Arms and Light Weapons, best practices have been developed on National Procedures for the Destruction of SALW and National Procedures for Stockpile Management.

Nairobi Declaration

The **Nairobi Declaration** invites the United Nations to assist countries of the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa regions “to draw up appropriate programmes for the collection and destruction of illicit small arms and light weapons.” Such plans are described in the **Co-ordinated Agenda for Action on the Problem of the Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa** and the **Implementation Plan** of the Agenda. These documents emphasize the need for states to assess their weapons stocks, identify surplus and obsolete stocks and ensure the destruction of illicit arms seized and collected.

Nairobi Protocol

In the Nairobi Protocol, which entered into force among SADC member states in 2004, states parties agree to “undertake to identify and adopt effective programmes for the collection, safe-storage, destruction and responsible disposal of small arms and light weapons rendered surplus redundant or obsolete...”. The Protocol also includes an article on the disposal of confiscated or unlicensed small arms and light weapons to address excess and illicit civilian holdings of small arms and light weapons.

UN Destruction Handbook

Building on the Secretary-General's Report on "Methods of destruction of small arms, light weapons, ammunition and explosives" (S/2000/1092) of 15 November 2000, the United Nations has published **A Destruction Handbook for small arms, light weapons, ammunition and explosives**.

Other Publications

Several UN agencies and civil society organisations have also produced guidelines for stockpile management and destruction. These include, *inter alia*:

- Bonn International Center for Conversion (BICC), Report 13: Destroying Small Arms and Light Weapons, Survey of Methods and Practical Guide;
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Safe and Efficient Small Arms Collection and Destruction Programmes: A Proposal for Practical Technical Measures; and
- Biting the Bullet, Ammunition Stocks: Promoting Safe and Secure Storage and Disposal.

3. KEY CHALLENGES

Transparency

Some states are concerned that increased transparency with respect to their national stocks of small arms and light weapons may compromise their defence and security capability.

Capacity Building and Assistance

As part of a continuous process of stockpile management, states must be encouraged to build capacity in the areas of identification of surplus and obsolete stocks and develop and implement national systems for the destruction of surplus and obsolete stocks as well as seized and confiscated small arms and light weapons. External technical and financial assistance may be required to build these capacities.

In addition, the Programme of Action calls upon states to put in place "adequate laws, regulations and administrative procedures to exercise effective control over the production of small arms and light weapons within their areas of jurisdiction and over the export, import or retransfer of such weapons in order to prevent illegal manufacture of and illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons, or their diversion to unauthorized recipients."

Development and implementation of the national legal framework prescribed in the Programme of Action may require significant technical legal assistance or financial support.

Ammunition

The security threats posed by stockpiles of ammunition are only now being recognized and addressed in the framework of the United Nations. While the consequence of inefficient physical, stockpile security measures is being felt on the ground, issues relating to ammunition remain contentious within international fora, despite progress on the issue at the regional level.

4. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Review Conference may choose to consider enhancing the Programme of Action to include a formal assistance clause in the same manner as the Mine Ban Treaty or the new Protocol V to the *Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons* (CCW). The assistance that states may consider could include technical, financial or material support.
2. Consideration may also be given to recommending that the UNDP Voluntary Trust Fund for SALW be increased substantially by providing core or project-specific funding to meet stockpile destruction requirements and establishing an informal coordination group.
3. The Review Conference could consider formal recognition of current regional programmes – such as those being implemented by the OSCE, OAS and others - as excellent examples of “best practices”, close cooperation, organizational capacity and implementation of the stockpile destruction provisions of the Programme of Action.
4. The Review Conference might establish a working group to further study the issue of stockpile management and destruction with a view to developing practical guidelines for consideration by states at the next Biennial Meeting of States.
5. The present UN Programme of Action language on arms reduction, which focuses mostly on arms collection and safe disposal, could be redefined with a more comprehensive goal of “creating a positive security environment”. Such an environment reduces demand for small arms, which is often manifested due to, *inter alia*, a weak or poorly developed security sector.
6. Stockpile management and destruction should be integrated into wider Security Sector Reform and arms reduction programmes.
