

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

EU Contribution to Cluster I

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Topic: Development

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(check against delivery)

Cluster I: Human/Humanitarian, socio-economic and other dimensions

Development

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 Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the Countries of the Stabilisation and 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.

As the Programme of Action (PoA) recognizes in its preamble, the illicit trade in SALW poses a serious threat to peace, reconciliation, security, stability, investment opportunities, economic growth and sustainable development. Both the human and socio-economic toll of armed violence perpetrated by the illicit use of SALW in society is huge. Adopting an integrated approach to both SALW and development issues will improve opportunities for development, and will help ensure that small arms interventions are more effective and sustainable. The 2001 Programme of Action (PoA) mentions the impact that SALW can have on reconstruction and development. In the view of the European Union further efforts to provide assistance for small arms reduction and capacity development is desperately needed. Rooting such assistance in the context of development will create new opportunities to promote the PoA's implementation.

The EU welcomes the adoption of General Assembly resolution 60/68, adopted on 8 December 2005, on "addressing the negative humanitarian and development impact of the illicit manufacture, transfer and circulation of SALW and their excessive accumulation." This resolution calls for developing comprehensive armed violence prevention programmes that are integrated into national development strategies, including poverty reduction strategies. Furthermore, it calls for the establishment of small arms funds. Another milestone during 2005 was the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) decision to include "support for controlling, preventing and reducing the proliferation of SALW in those activities which qualify as development spending internationally."

In a context of extreme poverty, unless people feel safe and secure, they might not feel capable of giving up their weapons. National and international poverty reduction strategies should be enhanced to ensure full and proper implementation of the PoA, based on paragraphs III.17 and III.6 of the PoA. At a national level, the inclusion of SALW issues in development policy ensures appropriate and sustainable SALW control measures. At the international level, the OECD DAC and relevant UN agencies should formulate guidance that would examine how best to integrate SALW measures into development frameworks, how interventions should be designed and implemented, which indicators should be used to measure success, and how donors can ensure better co-ordination. The UNPoA could provide a basis for this guidance.

General Assembly resolution 60/68 also calls for “systematically including national measures to regulate SALW in longer term peace building strategies and programmes”, based on paragraphs II.2 and III.6 of the PoA. Also donors are encouraged to pay due attention to integrating SALW perspective to their co-operation frameworks. In post conflict situations SALW often present a significant risk, which - if left unattended - will hold back reconstruction, recovery and development. The newly established Peace Building Commission (PBC) will need to deal with SALW related issues.

General Assembly resolution 60/68 also encourages UN peacekeeping operations to address the safe storage and disposal of SALW as an integral part of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes. The basis in the PoA is in para II.21 and para II.35. Significant progress has been made during the last year to enhance the capacity of the UN and its agencies to develop and implement DDR (Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration) programmes and to formulate guidance covering all aspects of DDR. However, more guidance is needed on the links between formal disarmament and wider voluntary weapons collection programmes. These should complement each other but must be properly sequenced as part of post-conflict recovery. DDR programmes should also take into account weapons management in newly created state security structures. The PoA provides some guidance on these areas but could be further enhanced with the support of the Department of Peace-keeping Operations (DPKO), UNDP and other UN and regional organisations involved in the design and implementation of DDR programmes.