

NEW ZEALAND MISSION to the UNITED NATIONS

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**THE PREPARATORY COMMITTEE FOR THE UNITED NATIONS
CONFERENCE TO REVIEW PROGRESS MADE IN THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME OF ACTION TO PREVENT,
COMBATE AND ERADICATE THE ILLICIT TRADE IN SMALL ARMS AND
LIGHT WEAPONS IN ALL ITS ASPECTS.**

GENERAL STATEMENT BY

**NICHOLAS KIDDLE
HEAD OF DELEGATION**

09 JANUARY 2006

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Mr Chairman

Let me join others in congratulating you on the excellent preparations you have made for this meeting. We especially appreciate the suggestions you have made on thematic clusters to guide our discussions.

We consider that this year will be critical to making progress on the Programme of Action. The Review Conference will provide an opportunity to enhance commitments and strengthen efforts to counter the illicit manufacture, transfer and circulation of small arms and light weapons. It may also help counter their excessive accumulation and uncontrolled spread in many regions of the world. We hope to make the most of this opportunity.

We welcome progress already made to strengthen and enhance controls on small arms and light weapons. In this context we would highlight as particularly important the adoption of the instrument to Identify and Trace Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons and the entry into force of the UN Firearms Protocol.

While the New Zealand Parliament is yet to complete required legislative processes, the Government is fully committed to becoming a party to the Firearms Protocol.

We believe that whenever it is possible, governments should be leading by example. Our own experience shows that arms control measures are likely to be more effective if they take account of differing histories, cultures and patterns of firearms possession and use. And this is reflected in the Programme of Action itself which commits States to bear in mind the 'different situations, capacities and priorities of States and regions'.

Since the last biennial meetings of states, New Zealand has remained active in promoting the POA at the regional level. We continue to place priority on assisting its effective implementation in the Pacific. Through our Mutual Assistance Programme we

continue to assist Pacific Island countries' defence and police forces to improve armoury security, storage, maintenance and management of weapons. Such assistance is coordinated with the Australian Defence Force. We also remain engaged in the Australian-led Pacific Regional Policing Initiative. In Bougainville, we continue to support community policing. And in the Solomon Islands we are pleased to report that the Regional Assistance Mission has met with such success that its conflict resolution duties have been refocused on longer-term social and economic stability activities.

Looking ahead, as early as next month in fact (February 2006), we will be hosting an International Firearms Safety Seminar. It will respond to concerns expressed mainly by our Pacific Island neighbours about risks they face from poor gun maintenance and inadequate security procedures for civilian firearms. The Seminar will call attention to responsible firearm use; motivate research into firearm safety; exchange ideas, strategies and procedures for firearm safety and it will encourage community participation. We are providing funding to facilitate representation by Pacific Island governments.

In contrast to the progress we are making at the regional level, at the international level it appears there is still much work to do before we will fully realise our goals.

We do not, however, wish to see renegotiation of existing commitments under the Programme of Action.

Instead, we welcome renewed attention to new and additional elements such as the proposal to establish a Group of Government Experts. We look forward to more detailed discussion of the proposed composition and expected outputs of this group.

We would also welcome further progress on transfer controls. We consider that the establishment of import, export and transshipment controls for small arms and light weapons will constitute an important further step towards strengthening the Programme of Action.

So we support the United Kingdom's proposal to develop common international standards for small arms and light weapons transfers. And we would like to work with the UK and other interested delegations on the details of it. Accordingly we believe that this issue - transfer controls - should be formally added to the agenda of the Review Conference in June.

Mr Chairman, my delegation would also like to record our wish to see further progress in other areas, especially illicit brokering and the safe management and destruction of stockpiles. And in this context we are grateful for, and are looking closely with interest at various proposals that have come forward to this meeting in non papers prepared by France and Germany, Japan, Sweden, Switzerland, Canada and The Netherlands, as well as those prepared by a number of non governmental organisations.

Before I conclude, Chairman, I should recall, and this will come as no surprise to many in this room, that we continue to see merit in an Arms Trade Treaty too. We would hope that in the course of discussions over the next two weeks the best means to move it forward will become clearer.

Mr Chairman, let me conclude by saying that we look forward to working with you and with other delegations over the next two weeks. You can be assured that you have this delegation's full cooperation and support as we work toward the Review Conference in June.

Thank you.