

**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**

**Statement on behalf of the European Union**

**H.E. Mr. Hans Winkler  
State Secretary for Foreign Affairs  
of Austria**

New York, 26 June 2006

**(check against delivery)**

Mr President,

1. It is my honour to deliver this statement 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 the EFTA country Iceland, member of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova align themselves with this statement.

2. The European Union warmly congratulates you, Mr. President, on your appointment as President of the Review Conference. We look forward to working closely with you and the UN Secretariat (DDA) to ensure a successful outcome of this conference.

3. Addressing this important forum as the first speaker implies some responsibility for the European Union. Let me begin by recalling that small arms, light weapons (SALW) and their ammunition are instrumental in the deaths of more than 500.000 people annually - approximately 1.400 per day. The vast majority of victims are civilians, 300.000 people are killed by SALW in armed conflicts every year. The fight against the illicit trade in SALW has become even more urgent in the context of the intensified international action against terrorism.

4. By adopting the UN Programme of Action to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in SALW in all its aspects in 2001 the international community responded to a worldwide concern that the proliferation and misuse of SALW have serious humanitarian and socio-economic consequences and pose a threat to peace, stability and sustainable development. Over the past five years, considerable progress has been made in the implementation of the Programme of Action. Regional engagements and initiatives have been undertaken, among others the EU's strategy on SALW in 2005 and the Antigua Guatemala Declaration adopted in May 2006. However, we are far from achieving full implementation.

Mr. President,

5. Now, five years after its adoption, we reconvene to review progress to date in implementing the Programme of Action and to further develop our strategies for the future. We should not forget that we are doing so in order to reduce the death and suffering caused by small arms and light weapons and to alleviate the serious impact of their proliferation on conflict, development and human rights. We also need to bear in mind that those parts of the world most affected by the illicit spread of SALW as well as international public opinion would hold this conference responsible for a weak result.

6. We, the Member States, must make best use of the Review Conference by adopting a forward looking and substantial outcome document. At the January Preparatory Committee there was consensus that the UN Programme of Action, although not yet fully implemented, was the key starting point for further action on small arms. The European Union is convinced that United Nations' efforts to control SALW have to be intensified in particular in those crucial areas where significant obstacles to full implementation persist. We believe these are transfer controls, marking and tracing, brokering regulations, ammunition and the integration of small arms measures into development assistance. In addition, the question of how to

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\* Croatia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

structure the follow-up to the Review Conference is central to the EU in ensuring progress in the further implementation of the Programme of Action.

Mr. President,

7. In the European Union's estimation, your composite non-paper released after intensive consultations with Member States on 18 May 2006 and proposing text for the outcome document is an excellent and balanced basis from which to proceed into the finalisation phase of the document. You can rely on the support of the EU for this draft which contains, among other important provisions, a number of valid references to our priority issues.

8. The EU attaches great importance to improved controls over the transfer, understood as exports, imports, transshipment and transit of small arms and light weapons. The Programme of Action contains important guidance on controlling transfers of SALW in section II paragraph 11, but we need to build on this and identify key common factors for Member States to consider before issuing a licence for an international transfer of SALW. The EU favours the use of minimum common standards including criteria to determine whether a proposed transfer of SALW will aggravate a conflict, repress human rights, undermine development or constitute a risk of diversion in the recipient country. In recent years, the Transfer Control Initiative (TCI) has been instrumental in developing global guidelines that reflect Member States' existing responsibilities under international law when it comes to considering authorisations for the transfer of SALW. Therefore, the EU stands ready to discuss such guidelines on the basis of, inter alia, the global guidelines for national controls governing transfers of SALW, agreed by representatives of 11 governments at the Nairobi Conference in April 2006, with the aim of building consensus support at this conference. Let me emphasize at this point that global guidelines are not aimed at imposing supply side controls on the legal trade in SALW, but at providing national authorities in all Member States with a set of principles reflecting and summarizing States' existing responsibilities under international law.

9. The 1998 EU Code of Conduct on arms exports is one of several examples of agreed regional instruments. Together with many partners from around the world the EU was involved in facilitating inclusive dialogue on transfer controls. Recent progress on transfer control has been achieved in Central America, the Mercosur region, the Caribbean and the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa region. Only two weeks ago, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has adopted a landmark legally binding Convention on Small Arms, Light Weapons, their Ammunition and other associated material. Many regions have called for increased co-operation on transfer controls within the framework of the UN Programme of Action. The EU strongly encourages these and other regions and states to voice their support for enhanced SALW transfer controls during the conference.

Mr. President,

10. For the European Union, the fight against the illicit trade in ammunition is another pressing task. Surplus ammunition can be diverted from military stockpiles into zones of instability or get into the hands of terrorists or criminal gangs. From the beginning of the United Nations' process on SALW, ammunition has formed an integral part of the problem. In 2005, the report submitted by the chairman of the Open-Ended Working Group on Marking and Tracing of SALW which was endorsed by consensus contained a recommendation to address the issue of SALW ammunition in a comprehensive manner as part of a separate process conducted within the framework of the United Nations. In 2005, the UN General

Assembly for the first time adopted a resolution exclusively dedicated to the problems of conventional ammunition stockpiles in surplus and the illicit trafficking of ammunition. The European Union welcomes the reference to ammunition in the draft outcome document.

11. Global standards on marking and tracing of small arms and light weapons are essential if we are to track and crack down on the illegal trade in these weapons. The European Union therefore appreciates the adoption of an international instrument in this regard by the UN General Assembly in 2005. The instrument is a first and important step in the implementation of the Programme of Action. We believe that a reference to further strengthening the instrument in the future, e.g. by making it legally binding, should be agreed upon by this conference.

12. Brokering controls remain a high priority for the European Union as illicit brokering is recognised being among the main factors fuelling the illegal trade in SALW world-wide. The EU therefore fully supports the First Committee resolution which calls for the establishment of a Group of Governmental Experts on brokering to be convened as soon as possible after the Review Conference. In our view, the Group should take a practical approach to its work and decide on the measures necessary to combat the harm done by unscrupulous arms brokers. Important work has been undertaken on this issue including the OSCE principles on the control of brokering as well as Norway's and the Netherlands' efforts in raising awareness and encouraging the discussion of the matter.

13. The EU also believes that the issue of the possession of small arms and light weapons is of relevance in the context of the Programme of Action and should be duly considered.

Mr. President,

14. The European Union is convinced that assistance to countries affected by armed violence should be provided as an integrated part of development strategies. We hope that the Review Conference will draw lessons from armed violence reduction programmes, such as EU-supported initiatives in Cambodia and South Eastern Europe. Given the close link between security and development, the conference should call on Member States that require assistance to increase their capacity to control small arms and reduce armed violence and to address these issues within their poverty reduction planning processes. The conference may also take note of the "Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development" which was adopted on 7 June and clearly spells out the linkages between armed violence and development.

15. The EU believes that Member States should mainstream action to eliminate illicit SALW and integrate armed violence prevention programmes in plans and strategies related to security, development and poverty reduction. In this regard, we are pleased with the text contained in the draft outcome document as many donor countries need such references in order to be able to provide substantial assistance. By making more resources available to affected Member States mainstreaming action on illicit SALW will certainly improve the implementation of the Programme of Action.

16. The new European strategy on SALW and their ammunition adopted in December 2005 formalises the Union's existing small arms policies. It is a strategy with a global geographic scope. It identifies Africa as the continent worst affected by the impact of internal and cross border conflicts aggravated by the destabilising influx of SALW, but the strategy covers Eastern Europe, Asia and Latin America as well. The EU expresses its readiness to provide

financial and technical support to governments, NGOs, regional organisations and arrangements engaged in the fight against SALW trafficking and misuse, and the elimination of dangerous small arms stockpiles. One highly effective example of a regional approach supported financially by the EU is the joint UNDP and Stability Pact initiative SEESAC (South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for SALW Control). It provides operational support and programme development assistance to a wide range of stakeholders across the region. SEESAC is now a proven capability and could act as a model for other regions to follow.

17. The European Union encourages the Review Conference to take full account of the important work of relevant NGOs and civil society, which have provided valuable contributions to the SALW process from the outset.

Mr. President,

18. In the view of the European Union, part IV of the outcome document on the follow-up of the Review Conference is of utmost importance and one of the central parts of this document. Only a well-organized follow-up provides the needed incentives and enables us to assess where we are making progress and where we are lagging behind in the implementation of the 2001 Programme of Action. The question of how to structure the follow-up to this conference is instrumental in ensuring progress in the further implementation of the Programme of Action.

19. The European Union commends you, Mr. President, for the draft for part IV of the outcome document as it provides a good basis for the structure and vision that we need in the follow-up to the Review Conference. While agreeing with other Member States on the importance of a practical focus on activities to be carried out in implementing the Programme of Action, we are convinced that only the horizon of further formal meetings of Member States including another Review Conference no later than 2012 would put the necessary pressure on Member States to comply. The ultimate goal of this conference to accelerate and enhance implementation of the Programme of Action can only be attained by a well structured follow-up process.

20. To sum up, Mr. President, the European Union wants this Review Conference to objectively take stock of our achievements over the past five years and on this basis to adopt a forward looking and substantial outcome document. In this respect, Mr. President, you can rely on the full and consistent support of the European Union. We are ready to enter into open and constructive negotiations with all interested delegations and, with reciprocal engagement from all our partners, we are confident that we will be able to find common ground for substantial results.