

**UNITED STATES OPENING STATMENT TO THE PREPARATORY
COMMITTEE MEETING FOR THE FIRST REVIEW CONFERENCE OF
THE UNITED NATIONS PROGRAM OF ACTION FOR SMALL ARMS
AND LIGHT WEAPONS**

Delivered by
Steven Costner
Deputy Director for the Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement
United States Department of State
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Thank you Mr. Chairman.

In 2001, UN Member States came together to address the problems caused by the international illicit trade in SA/LW. The United States continues to stand unequivocally behind the positions we expressed in our official statement at that meeting and have consistently applied since then. We have worked hard since 2001 in multilateral fora and bilaterally with many of the states present here today to meet the provisions of the UN Program of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects (POA). All of us now have the opportunity in June to consider our achievements in implementing this instrument, and ways to improve our efforts.

We already have reviewed at the Biennial Meetings of States in 2003 and 2005 what has been done to implement the POA. Many hundreds of thousands and possibly millions of excess, loosely secured, or otherwise at-risk small arms and light weapons (SA/LW) have been destroyed, and many more have been secured. New legislation has been drafted in many capitals to facilitate implementation of POA provisions. But there is clearly room for improvement and wider implementation in some states that have not yet demonstrated the full political will to do so.

I would like to highlight three areas in particular where the United States can provide assistance to states to better implement the POA.

- First, the Department of State's SA/LW destruction program continues to assist States in destroying their surplus, obsolete, and loosely secured stockpiles. The

program supports such destruction both bilaterally and in conjunction with other donors through regional organizations.

- Second, the Department of Defense, through the Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA), counters global and regional proliferation of SA/LW by providing foreign governments with assessments, technical advice, and orientation to U.S. best practices for the Physical Security and Stockpile Management of SA/LW. In certain cases, DTRA's recommendations can provide a basis for the Department of State's SA/LW financial assistance.
- And third, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives in the Department of Justice offers a variety of courses related to firearms and ballistic identification and firearms tracing for international law enforcement professionals. In addition to these courses, and as we noted many times during the marking and tracing negotiations, the U.S. government stands ready to provide advice and share our expertise to trace U.S.-origin firearms.

Another important area that we should focus on is that of transfer controls. Effective export and import controls are absolutely essential to any successful effort to mitigate the problems of illicit SA/LW trade and are a key element of the Program of Action. The United States goes to great lengths to ensure that small arms and light weapons transferred under our jurisdiction are done so with the utmost responsibility. The transfer of all military articles of U.S. origin is subject to extremely rigorous procedures under the U.S. Arms Export Control Act and International Traffic in Arms Regulations. All U.S. exports of defense articles and services, including small arms and light weapons, must be approved by the Department of State. Assurances must be given by the importing country that arms will be used in a manner consistent with our criteria for arms exports: they must not contribute to regional instability, arms races, terrorism, proliferation, or violations of human rights. Arms of U.S. origin cannot be retransferred without approval by the United States. To ensure that arms are delivered to legitimate end-users, our government rigorously monitors arms transfers, investigating suspicious activity and acting quickly to curtail exports to those recipients who do not meet our strict criteria for responsible use. We therefore support the goals of the Transfer Control Initiative that has been circulated by the United Kingdom, and we support the inclusion of a discussion on transfer controls in the Review Conference agenda, as it is critical to the implementation of the POA.

The United States supports the international instrument to aid in the marking and tracing of SA/LW that was adopted at the 60th UN General Assembly this past fall.

We believe that the negotiated instrument provides a useful tool for the implementation of the POA, and we encourage all Member States to implement the guidelines and mechanisms that it provides.

We also look forward to convening the Group of Governmental Experts on brokering after the Review Conference. We anticipate that its work will help identify effective ways to deal with the problem of illicit brokering. However, since the mandate already is set for the GGE and its deliberations, we should not make any recommendations, as part of the RevCon process, that could possibly prejudice the work of the GGE, and any findings it may present, before that body even begins to meet.

Just as there is much agreement on ways to implement the POA, it can be expected that there will be differing views on what should be accomplished at the Review Conference and what should be included for discussion. During the negotiations for the Program of Action, the United States clearly articulated its positions and redlines, which remain unchanged. We strongly support measures in the Program of Action calling for effective export and import controls, restraint in trade to regions of conflict, observance and enforcement of UNSC embargoes, strict regulation of arms brokers, transparency in exports, and improving security of arms stockpiles and destruction of excess. These measures, taken together, form the core of a regime that, if implemented by all countries, would greatly mitigate the problems we all have gathered here to address.

The scope of the POA is the illicit international trafficking of small arms and light weapons. Accordingly, the United States continues to oppose measures that would constrain legal trade and legal manufacturing of small arms and light weapons; impose domestic regulations or restrictions on the civilian ownership and use of SA/LW; include recommendations concerning ammunition and explosives; or a ban on transfers to non-state actors. These issues are outside the scope of the POA, and consistent with our longstanding position, we would strongly oppose their inclusion in any document resulting from PrepCom deliberations that would be forwarded for consideration at the RevCon.

Although the United States acknowledges the progress made since 2001, there is still much work to be done to implement the POA. We see little to be gained in reopening the document for negotiation, and will therefore oppose efforts to do so. It is imperative that we remain focused on fulfilling the obligations made in 2001 without our attention being diverted by revisiting old debates or addressing issues

that are tangential to our main purpose: to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

The U.S. delegation looks forward to working with our fellow delegations to reach consensus on a realistic and workable agenda for the Review Conference during this session. As long as we remain focused on our main objective, this is an achievable goal. We sincerely believe that if we all commit to working hard during the next two weeks we can conclude our efforts by the end of the afternoon on January 20. Mr. Chairman, you have the U.S. delegation's full support and cooperation toward this goal.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.