

COLOMBIA



COLOMBIAN MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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Statement by
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**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**

- 26 June to 7 July, 2006 -

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Please check against delivery.

Mr. President,

Allow me to begin my statement by expressing my most sincere congratulations for your designation as President of this Review Conference. I am sure that your extensive political and diplomatic experience will contribute to the positive progress of our work over the next two weeks. Similarly, I would like to thank your support staff, as well as the Secretariat's staff, for their support on this important matter. I take advantage of this opportunity to express to you, Mr. President, the full support of my delegation to move forward in this task.

First of all, the Delegation of Colombia fully supports the statement made by Argentina on behalf of MERCOSUR and Associated States. During the two meetings of the Working Group on Firearms and Ammunition, it was possible to reach a common position that reflects the interests of the region on this matter. Similarly, we support the Antigua Declaration, adopted last May by the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean to contribute with a regional perspective to the work of this Conference.

Mr. President, this is a special moment for my delegation. When I had the honour of presiding over the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in 2001, the international community adopted by consensus the Programme of Action to Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

In the agreed Programme of Action, the nations represented at the Conference recognized that *"the primary responsibility for solving the problems associated with the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects falls on the States"*, and that States need to strengthen international cooperation to prevent, combat and eliminate this illicit trade.

The Programme of Action has allowed States to commit to adopting and developing legislative and penal measures to prevent, combat and eliminate the illicit trade of small arms and light weapons in all its aspects; to coordinate activities for the full implementation of the Programme of Action; to generate the political will necessary to achieve the goals of the Programme; to promote assistance and cooperation and develop awareness campaigns to make known the humanitarian effects on the civilian population and the grave socio-economic consequences of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

Similarly, the States reiterated their conviction that the international community should not waste the historic opportunity of that Conference to agree and adopt a series of measures aimed at preventing the illicit trade of small arms and light weapons and their uncontrolled proliferation.

Five years later, we are once again faced with the magnificent opportunity to renew the commitment of all States present and fulfill the Programme of Action within the framework of the United Nations, achieve the full implementation of its recommendations, identify the missing issues and adopt a follow-up mechanism to evaluate the progress made.

My country, for example, has made great efforts in the national implementation of the Programme and as such we have constituted an intersectoral entity that brings together goals and efforts of each one of the national institutions concerned with this issue to work in a joint and coordinated manner. Similarly, the national application of the Programme has led us to generate structural control processes such as: the reinforcement of police infrastructure, restrictions on the carrying of weapons, the severe penalization of crimes related with alcohol and firearms, etc. All of the above, together with our civilian disarmament programmes have yielded very positive results and we have been able to reduce the homicide rate to 20% and criminality in general as the product of the misuse of firearms.

Nonetheless, despite the many achievements at the national and international level in the last five years, it is clear that progress has been slow and it has not comprehensively reflected the actions proposed in the Programme of Action. There are still great challenges we must face in a coordinated and conscientious way, under the principle of shared responsibility by the States that produce, export and import these weapons, as well as transit States.

Mr. President,

First of all, my Government believes it is essential to make progress on the issues of marking and tracing, including ammunition, and on illicit brokering. We are convinced of the necessity of negotiating legally binding instruments on both issues that determine clear norms and responsibilities.

On the issue of brokering, we resolutely support the Group of Experts, which has the challenging goal of drafting a text that consolidates everyone's interests and closes the legal loopholes we have in this aspect of the legal trade which facilitate the diversion of arms towards illicit markets.

Another issue of great importance for Colombia is the issue of **non-State actors**.

There have been thousands and thousands of people in my country who have been victims of the actions of these illegally armed groups. The small arms and light weapons used by these criminal organizations sadly continue to be true Weapons of Mass Destruction, which are acquired through the diversion of international transfers or in the black market, across our borders and entry points into the country. For this reason, we make a strong plea to ban direct arm transfers to non-State actors and to strengthen transfer controls to prevent their diversion.

It is known by all that one of the great challenges facing the international regime today is legislating against non-State actors to be able to effectively combat the new threats such as terrorism, drug trafficking, organized crime, and of course included in all of the above, the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. For this reason we have made progress through Security Council Resolution 1540 in controlling and preventing access to Weapons of Mass Destruction to non-State actors, and as part of that evolution the control of MANPADS.

Why not, then, also make resolute progress in controlling and preventing non-State actors as much as possible from gaining access to the weapons that are truly killing men, women, children and the elderly across the entire world?

It is necessary to strengthen **assistance and cooperation** every time that progress in its implementation at the national, regional and global level has been slow.

Although the Programme of Action contains an entire section on this issue, there has not been enough assistance generated for the implementation of the recommendations or the duties acquired through the different instruments or mechanisms adopted at the regional or the sub regional level. We believe that technical as well as financial resources must be made available for States to be able to make progress in the national implementation of the Programme

In the case of my country, we believe assistance and cooperation on the issue of border controls are very important, bearing in mind that the majority of weapons that go to illegally armed groups and criminal organizations enter clandestinely through our borders. Similarly, it is important to drive forward projects for the collection and destruction of stockpiles to prevent their proliferation.

As a result, emphasis must be made on strengthening these controls and the availability of technical assistance in terms of training customs officials and police or other relevant authorities.

With regards to **transfer controls**, my government agrees with the efforts made by the international community to prevent the diversion of small arms and light weapons towards illicit channels.

To this respect, I believe it is essential to strengthen the regulation of trade or weapons transfers with criteria and guidelines that are objective, transparent, non-discriminatory and agreed to in a multilateral environment.

Although we agree on strengthening international norms on the matter, Colombia believes, among other things, that the lists of countries formulated and used for the application of guidelines for weapons transfers from State to State mediated by contracts and official controls, are discriminatory, tendentious and stationary. We believe that when a country wishes to sell weapons to another, the particular context and situation of the importing country must be taken

into account and the mandate of a list of countries with transfer restrictions should not be applied without deep or updated analysis.

Finally, we believe the United Nations process must be strengthened through the establishment of **follow-up mechanisms**, which must be one of the outcomes of the Review Conference to be included in the final text of the document drafted by your Presidency.

The adoption of a follow-up mechanism will allow for the periodical evaluation of the progress made in the implementation of the Programme of Action in each of its aspects such as tracing and marking, brokering, assistance and cooperation, ammunition, non-State actors and MANPADS.

Similarly, we support the call for biennial meetings of States and the holding of a Second Conference to Review the Programme of Action by the year 2012 at the latest.

Mr. President,

Colombia would like to take this opportunity to highlight the urgent need and the enormous responsibility of the international community in significantly advancing the fight against the illicit trade of weapons and ammunition.

It is enough to be reminded that in the last decade alone, the use of small arms and light weapons caused the death of millions of people, most of them civilians, and among them approximately two million children. It also caused serious wounds and permanent disability and contributed to the forced displacement of towns and villages.

We require more proactive, more responsible, and more action oriented work. For this reason, Colombia believes it is necessary to drive forward the crucial aspects that must be dealt with on this occasion.

Similarly, let us use this opportunity to support resolutely the work that non-governmental organizations have been carrying out to develop each one of the complicated aspects that the fight against the trade and abuse of firearms and ammunition entails. NGO's, as representatives of civil society, have worked arduously during this time to raise awareness of the need for disarmament, have carried out commendable community work, and have presented for the consideration of us States, the challenges that lay ahead.

Let us then work together in coordination and in mutually beneficial association to reach our desired goal.

Thank you very much, Mr. President.