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AUPRÈS DES NATIONS UNIES**

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**Conférence des Nations Unies chargée d'examiner les progrès accomplis dans
l'exécution du Programme d'action en vue de prévenir, combattre et éliminer le
commerce illicite des armes légères sous tous ses aspects**

Déclaration de la Suisse, Segment à haut niveau

par

**l'Ambassadeur Anton Thalmann
Secrétaire d'Etat adjoint**

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**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**

Statement by Switzerland, High-Level Segment

by

**Ambassador Anton Thalmann
Deputy State Secretary**

New York, le 26 juin 2006

Mr President,

I would like to congratulate you on your election to the presidency of this important conference and thank you for the work you have done and the consultations that you have held in recent months in order to prepare the conference. We are looking forward to working together with you constructively to ensure that this conference is a success.

Importance of the Programme of Action

Switzerland is convinced that the United Nations Programme of action to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects is a fundamental achievement because it enjoys the support of all States and contains a complete catalogue of measures to curb the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

We are meeting today, five years after the adoption of the programme of action, to review what has been achieved since 2001 and to plan for the future. In the view of my government, the objective of this review conference is twofold: to review the progress that has been made and to discuss measures to strengthen the implementation of the programme of action, in order to ensure that in coming years it will remain a key instrument in the fight against the illicit proliferation and wrongful use of light weapons.

Since the programme was adopted in 2001, numerous activities have been undertaken by States at the individual and collective levels and by international or regional organisations. Despite this, the problem of the illicit trade in light weapons remains acute. The uncontrolled proliferation of light weapons plays a central role in internal conflicts. The availability of these weapons tends to aggravate and to prolong these conflicts, and leads to high civilian casualties. But the dead and injured are not the only victims of armed violence. This also affects those whose lives are disrupted because of a conflict. I am thinking particularly of women, displaced persons and children. This fact forces us to continue to act and to take measures to curb this phenomenon today and in the future.

I would like to stress that it is imperative to review and to strengthen the implementation of the Programme of action, to ensure that it is an instrument capable of responding to present and future challenges. In particular it is necessary to learn the lessons from our experiences and to adopt, by 7 July, a text which marks the path to follow in the coming years.

In this context, the following subjects are particularly important for Switzerland.

Light weapons and development

I would like to emphasise first of all that greater account needs to be taken of the negative effects of armed violence on development. The programme of action does not enter into detail on this point. Findings have been available on this subject since 2001. In particular, it is important that the consensus expressed at the Millennium

Summit last year on the links between security, peace, human rights and development should be reflected in the Review Conference final document.

Mr President,

The United Nations Development Programme and Switzerland took the initiative of calling a ministerial summit on armed violence and development which was held in Geneva on 7 June. At the end of the summit, a Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development was adopted by the 42 States present. On behalf of these 42 States, we submitted to you the Declaration of Geneva, which will be distributed to all conference members by the secretariat. As we have already stated, we would like the main elements of this declaration to be included in the final conference document. In our view, the main priorities are as follows:

- to integrate armed violence reduction and conflict prevention programmes into national, regional and international development frameworks as well as into humanitarian assistance, emergency, and crisis management initiatives ;
- to make available the funds necessary for this purpose;
- to plan for follow-up mechanisms on this subject, which needs to be implemented.

Transfer of small arms

Another subject which in Switzerland's opinion is crucially important is that of arms transfer control and brokering. The regulation of the transfer of small arms and light weapons, in particular export control and brokering, are indispensable instruments in global efforts to curb the spread of small arms and light weapons.

To fight globally and effectively against the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, the adoption of criteria is essential, not only at the national but at the international level. At the moment, the Programme of action remains vague on the use of such criteria. Switzerland believes that these criteria need to be clearly formulated in order to guide States when they are examining requests for the transfer of small arms and light weapons. Moreover, in addition to the establishment of criteria, Switzerland pleads for a common understanding of such criteria.

Marking and tracing Instrument

Thirdly, I would like to stress that the adoption by the UN General Assembly on 8 December 2005 of an international instrument to improve the identification and the tracing of illicit small arms and light weapons is the first and up to now the only example of the specific implementation of initiatives stemming from the Programme of action. The challenge now is to ensure full implementation of this instrument. The instrument integrates in its provisions a number of mechanisms and procedures, either at the national or the international level. The review conference of the Programme of action presents an opportunity to promote and to ensure the implementation of these provisions. Switzerland supports measures to this effect and, as president of the open-ended working group which drafted this instrument, I am personally very attached to its implementation.

Stockpile management

Fourthly, I would like to stress the importance of a better control of arms stocks. A large proportion of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons is attributable to inadequate control of arms stocks. Secured stocks are a basic element that can create important leverage effects and thus curb uncontrolled flows of arms.

In general terms, Switzerland supports recommendations for a better definition of standards and procedures for the physical security and management of stockpiles with a view to strengthening the implementation of the Programme of action. In particular it supports, at the international level, the drawing up of a list of lessons learnt and of best practice with regard to stocks and their security, with a view to establishing a set of guidelines.

Follow-up

Finally, I would like to look towards the future. The Programme of action has made it possible to create a working framework for the fight against the illicit trade in light weapons. Our task now is to decide how to follow up this process which started in 2001. Switzerland is convinced that today more than ever before it is essential to continue the work that has been started and to prepare for future challenges. Switzerland believes that effective follow-up measures are needed to improve the implementation of the programme of action. The structure of biennial meetings as held in 2003 and 2005 did not prove to be sufficiently effective to achieve this goal. The review conference should agree on the establishment of a more flexible system capable of providing information, analysis, support and advice. In particular, Switzerland supports the proposal to create an intersessional programme of work. This would improve coordination and the exchange of experience between States, non-governmental organisations and regional organisations. We must be united if we are to respond to the multiple and complex challenges posed by the proliferation and the wrongful use of light weapons.

Mr President,

Switzerland is willing to play an important role in the follow-up of this review conference.

Thank you.