



PERMANENT MISSION OF THE PRINCIPALITY OF LIECHTENSTEIN
TO 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

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TO THE UNITED NATIONS

NEW YORK, 27 JUNE 2006

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Mr. President

At last year's Summit world leaders lent their full support to the implementation of the 2001 Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons. They did so under the chapter on peacekeeping. This may be understood as an emphasis of the fact that strict compliance of all UN Member States with arms embargoes established by the Security Council is an essential building block for the full implementation of the Programme of Action. Unfortunately, even such a vital element of the Programme has not gone unchallenged in the past. Other elements, such as the need to include the issue of ammunition in our preventive measures to halt the spread of SALW, were also rejected, purportedly because that they were not part of the Programme of Action and should therefore be addressed in another process. Such arguments contradict the main purpose of the Programme of Action, which is, as its name says, to address the issue of illicit trade of SALW in all its aspects. Arguing that ammunition is not an important aspect of the illicit trade in SALW amounts to asserting that small arms and light weapons can be used without ammunition. It is equally futile to try to prevent illicit trade in SALW without having a closer look at the international arms trade. We therefore think that it is high time for the United Nations to start elaborating international standards aimed at establishing the necessary transparency in the international arms trade in order to be fully able to detect, combat and prevent the illicit trade in SALW. In this regard, we fully support the idea of a comprehensive international arms trade treaty.

Mr. President

The adoption of the international instrument on marking and tracing of SALW last year was an important step towards achieving a comprehensive regime in the global fight against the spread of SALW. The upcoming definition of possible measures to combat illicit brokering will be another one. Strict domestic legislation on brokering is a prerequisite for international cooperation in this area. Liechtenstein adopted such legislation in 1999 and is fully committed to its implementation. Better control may, however, not be limited to brokering activities but also encompass the physical transfer of SALW. Such control of arms transfers should be based on international standards which prohibit in particular the transfer of SALW to end-users who do not respect international human rights and humanitarian law.

Mr. President

The worldwide proliferation of SALW and their ammunition has a devastating impact not only on the human rights of millions of people, in particular women and children, it also severely hampers the economic development of individuals, communities and states. The direct and indirect human, social and economic costs of armed violence are tremendous. Halting the spread of SALW would thus make an important contribution to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

We commend in this regard the group of 42 countries which have recently adopted the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development and wish to express our support for this initiative. Liechtenstein is also considering to support specific UN activities in the field of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants. Without successful disarmament, conflicts are more likely to break out again, rendering all peace-building efforts moot. At the same time, disarmament efforts remain inefficient if the flow of SALW into former zones of conflicts cannot be stopped. Disarmament is also hampered as long as there is a widespread feeling of insecurity among the population. Re-establishing and strengthening public structures which are based on the rule of law is one of the most effective measures to end the rule of guns. For this reason, rule-of-law-assistance to countries and communities emerging from conflict has to be considered a major preventive measure against the illicit spread of SALW. The United Nations have a critical role to play in this regard.

I thank you.