

NEW ZEALAND MISSION to the UNITED NATIONS

Te Māngai o Aotearoa

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**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
ROSEMARY BANKS, NEW ZEALAND PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE**

26 JUNE 2006

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

May I begin by extending our congratulations to you on your election as chair and congratulations too to the members of your bureau. My delegation would like to convey our appreciation for the considerable preparatory work you undertook between the conclusion of the January PrepCom and this meeting.

New Zealand remains fully committed to the Programme of Action and to the advancement of initiatives which are designed to prevent small arms and light weapons falling into the wrong hands, or being used illegally. Our delegation to this meeting has been strengthened by the participation of 3 NGOs, reflecting my Government's recognition of the vital role of civil society in making the Programme of Action work in the real world.

We recognise that illicit use and misuse of small arms and light weapons exacerbates human suffering and exacts a very high price on economic and social development. We are deeply concerned that weapons continue to fuel conflicts, support criminal activities and disrupt lives everywhere, including in our own region of the Pacific.

We have seen through others' experiences how the uncontrolled availability of weapons can lead to a complete breakdown of law and order and begin to unravel decades of development progress. This is a very high price to be paid by people living in states which have struggled to bring armed violence under control. We want to do everything we can to assist.

We consider that actions are appropriate at all levels – national, regional and at the global level. And we welcome progress that has been made. There have been important advances on marking and tracing, on clarifying and highlighting the development link, on regional controls and on the elaboration of principles and norms that currently help safeguard and deliver on humanitarian objectives.

We hope that this review conference will offer a perspective from which to see how far we have come, and to chart the way ahead for further improvements.

While we will wish to work with you Mr President to achieve successful outcomes across the board, my delegation will emphasise a small handful of issues that we consider to be especially pertinent.

The importance of regional cooperation to implement the PoA is one of these. It reflects the reality of the Pacific region in which NZ is situated, and in particular, a Pacific regional interest in stability and prosperity. The region has had unfortunate experiences which demonstrate all too clearly that development prospects can be dramatically affected by armed struggle and civil violence.

The important statement made by Papua New Guinea on behalf of the Pacific Islands Forum outlined the unique challenges facing some of the states of our region as a result of illicit small arms proliferation. We fully endorse that statement and will work to ensure that the interests of the Pacific remain among those at the forefront of our discussions over the next two weeks.

Our desire to assist states to handle challenges associated with small arms and light weapons drives our engagement in missions around the world to help achieve stability and to rekindle growth and development where it has been dashed by armed violence. New Zealand currently has 19 defence and civilian missions operating in 14 countries to address these objectives. The government's aid policy also explicitly recognises and contributes to stamping out the negative effects of conflict on development.

We have been deeply engaged in demobilising, disarming and reintegrating ex-combatants into civil society, and we can attest to its importance in achieving stability and growth. In this regard we were pleased to participate in the joint initiative of the government of Switzerland and UNDP to promote wider recognition of armed violence and development linkages at the meeting convened in Geneva just a few weeks ago.

We have listened carefully to the debate on transfer controls over many years. Nobody has suggested that illegal transfers should be left to go unchecked. We are all agreed that they must stop. While New Zealand fully recognises that the Programme of Action is about the prevention and eradication of illegal transfers, we are convinced that wider recognition and better use could be made of existing humanitarian laws and norms to help guide states in their determination of what constitutes illegal transfers. To that end, we took part in the meeting held in Nairobi in April to discuss guidelines on transfer controls. We consider this to have advanced the objectives of the Programme of Action since we met at the PrepCom in

January, and we are pleased to see the concept reflected in your draft outcome paper

The conference should support a broad approach to eradicating transfers of the full range of small arms and light weapons to the wrong hands. There are many elements to the problem. For instance, some highlight risks associated with transfers of man portable air defence systems. We agree. Others have highlighted transfers to non state actors, and we agree with that too.

We hope this conference will deliver a substantive outcome on transfer controls that will help governments achieve the objectives of the Programme of Action. We would like to work with you, Mr President, and with others to develop and refine text that would address transfers issues, drawing on regional initiatives and working off the Nairobi guidelines as a basis for discussion.

We acknowledge steps taken to establish the Group of Governmental Experts on brokering. We trust that the group will help move that issue forward. In many respects the work of that group should help complement the existing range of instruments we have, and also complement additional steps we should aim for at this conference.

Let me conclude, Mr President, by registering the growing public interest in New Zealand in seeing the United Nations turn its attention to the possibility of negotiating an Arms Trade Treaty. This conference has a part to play in advancing this concept. We hope that our deliberations will help point the way to a future discussion on an Arms Trade Treaty, within the broader UN context. We stand ready to work with others on this, as well as the full range of issues before us over the next two weeks.