



HOLY SEE

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**Statement by H.E. Archbishop Celestino Migliore
Apostolic Nuncio
Permanent Observer of the Holy See**

60th General Assembly

**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**

New York, 27 June 2006

Mr President,

All of us here have a great responsibility, born of the awareness that the outcome of this meeting may well have a long term impact upon a process which, since 2001, has given a strong initial impulse to the new international small arms and light weapon regime and its legal framework.

The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons is a threat to peace, development and security. It is a threat which comes not only from conflict but also from civil unrest, organised crime, trafficking in persons, terrorism, and even poverty, and it thrives in an interconnected and globalised world. The Holy See therefore supports those who call for a common approach in order to combat, not just the illicit arms trade, but activities related to it, like terrorism, organized crime, and the illicit trade in drugs and precious stones, not forgetting the ethical, social and humanitarian dimensions of these scourges.

Among the first to benefit from this common approach will be poor countries which, having heard so many promises, justly demand the concrete implementation of their right to development. In this context, my delegation wishes to recognise and lend its support to the recently adopted Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development, by which some 42 countries commit themselves to promoting the integration of small arms control into development frameworks.

Today, my delegation would also like to highlight some aspects of the Programme of Action which merit greater attention, starting from the premise that, since there is a close link between weapons and violence, weapons and destruction, weapons and hatred and social disintegration, arms cannot be treated as if they were commercial goods like any other.

Firstly, it is important for the 2006 Conference to agree to establish major international cooperative programmes, mechanisms and guidelines to promote key parts of the Programme of Action, which may include the establishment of adequate standards for the management and security of the stocks of these weapons; the defining of clear criteria for the export of arms; and more regulated national controls on SALW production and transfers through more incisive means of accountability, tracing and brokering.

Thus, it would be useful to consider seriously negotiation of a legally binding instrument to address the illicit arms trade, such as a treaty based on relevant principles of international law, including those of human rights and humanitarian law. For such an instrument to help uproot the illicit arms trade, its negotiation would have to involve developed and developing countries, exporting, importing and transit states, military industries, NGOs,

and civil society alike. In particular, the Holy See strongly supports the United Kingdom's proposal for the negotiation, in the United Nations, of a binding treaty on the transfer of conventional weapons, as a self-standing initiative with effective mechanisms for enforcement and monitoring. My delegation hopes this worthy idea will soon be widely welcomed by capitals.

Secondly, my delegation is pleased to note the number of interventions in these days focusing – as we see in the Plan of Action - on the need to address not only the easy availability of arms, but also the demand for arms, an evident requirement if states sincerely wish to avoid the diversion of small arms and light weapons towards the illegal market. If we think of the human cost of small arms and light weapons, and the links, sometimes subtle, sometimes evident, between them and the slow progress in sustainable development, actions aimed at reducing the demand for small arms and light weapons surely merit much greater attention. Working to address demand will require solid research on the dynamics of conflicts, crime and violence. With the 2006 Review Conference, states should grasp the opportunity to acknowledge the links between disarmament, development and humanitarian concerns, and commit themselves to strategies and programmes to reduce the demand for arms and armed violence.

Finally, linked to better accords and reducing demand, is the scandalous impact of this trade on the weakest in society, especially children. The Holy See attaches great importance to the special needs of children affected by armed conflicts, their reunification with their family, their reintegration into society and their appropriate rehabilitation. Provisions for disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration already pay attention to the needs of child soldiers; this could be extended beyond peace accords, where it is already common, and considered for insertion in peace-keeping and peace-building projects, as well as in development programmes, using a community-based approach.

Therefore, in order to achieve these aims, the active participation of all actors is needed: governments which bear the primary responsibility for the success of this Review Conference, international organisations, and NGOs which have already given a strong impetus to this process.

It is my delegation's hope that the outcome of the 2006 Conference will look with wisdom towards the future and provide a follow up which is both adequate and effective.

Thank you, Mr President.