

UNDP STATEMENT

Preparatory Committee for 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

9-20 January, 2006

Mr Chairman, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen, etc

UNDP is pleased to be able to participate in this Preparatory Committee for the United Nations Conference to Review Progress 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.

As many delegations have already noted, our main purpose during this preparatory committee is to review progress in the implementation of the Programme of Action.

We need to reflect on lessons learned, identify obstacles or challenges that have prevented implementation of the Programme of Action by states, regional and international organisations, and agree on concrete measures, that will help ensure its full implementation. We should work to ensure inclusion of these measures in the final documents of the Review Conference.

UNDP is fully committed to the implementation of the Programme of Action. In this regard, we have provided both financial and technical assistance to more than 40 states (through national and regional programmes) during the last five years. Since 1999 we have allocated more than US\$40 million to support small arms programming at national, regional and global levels.

As a result of its direct experience, and lessons learned, in providing assistance to many states to implement the Programme of Action, UNDP can identify a number of obstacles and challenges, which have prevented, or limited, the implementation of the Programme of Action. It can also identify the measures necessary to ensure the full implementation of the Programme of Action in the coming years.

I will highlight today 3 areas that require further action and attention. Specific commitments relating to these 3 areas should be considered for possible inclusion in the final documents of the Review Conference.

1) Poverty, Underdevelopment and the Illicit Trade

UNDP firmly believes that the small arms issue is both a disarmament AND a development issue. It is a development issue because underdevelopment, or a lack of development, fuels the demand for, and the illicit trade in, small arms and light weapons.

It is also a development issue because the availability and misuse of small arms can have a range of negative development impacts.

It is clear that those countries that are plagued by high levels of armed violence, whether in situations of crime or conflict, and which are at the bottom of UNDP's Human Development Index, are least likely to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015.

For example, 9 out of the 10 lowest Human Development Index countries have experienced armed conflict at some point since 1990, according to the most recent UNDP Human Development Report.

This link between small arms and development, and the negative effects on development, peace and security, and human rights posed by, inter alia, the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, has been strongly reaffirmed in the outcome document of the World Summit (Resolution 60/1), and Resolution 60/L.34 adopted at the 60th UN General Assembly.

The Programme of Action does make some limited references to the link between small arms and development, but this link should be made more explicit in the final documents of the Review Conference.

Based on our experience, UNDP believes that the best way to address the negative impacts of small arms proliferation and misuse on development is to incorporate small arms and related security issues into national development, or poverty reduction frameworks.

The outcome document of the Review Conference could draw on language from resolution L.34 in which States are encouraged to develop "comprehensive armed violence prevention programmes integrated into national development strategies, including poverty reduction strategies"

2) Weapons availability, excessive accumulation and uncontrolled spread

The effective implementation of the Programme of Action, and efforts to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, are undermined by the millions of estimated illicit small arms and light weapons already in circulation, and by the excessive accumulation and uncontrolled spread of these illicit weapons in many regions of the world.

In other words, we must also address the supply side aspects of the illicit trade – i.e. those illicit weapons that are already in circulation, as well as prevent any further diversion of legal weapons into illicit channels, or markets.

This can be done both by strengthening internal control mechanisms such as the management and security of existing stockpiles of state-owned small arms and light

weapons and by implementing comprehensive civilian disarmament strategies, where necessary, as a complement to programmes for the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of ex-combatants.

For example, the outcome document of the Review Conference could include specific measures regarding the provision of technical and financial assistance to assist states to destroy all surplus and/or illicit small arms and light weapons, and to ensure the effective management and security of existing stockpiles.

There could also be specific measures relating to the provision of assistance to ensure the full implementation of the new international tracing instrument, and measures to assist states to regulate small arms and light weapons in longer term post-conflict peacebuilding strategies and programmes.

3) Building national capacities

Based on our experience of supporting small arms programming in more than 40 countries it is clear that a key challenge for many states is the lack of capacity to fully implement the various provisions of the Programme of Action.

It is therefore necessary to match needs with resources (both financial and technical) to help states develop their own capacities to more fully implement the provisions of the Programme of Action, and to address the negative humanitarian and development impacts associated with the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, including the provision of victim assistance.

UNDP is committed to exploring new and creative ways to build national capacities to address small arms issues. In this regard I am happy to announce that UNDP, working in partnership with 2 NGOs, has supported the participation of 11 parliamentarians from Africa, Latin America and Europe at this preparatory committee to build the capacity of national parliaments to support the implementation of the Programme of Action. We believe that parliaments can, and should, play a critical role in addressing issues that impact on the rights of all people to live freely in safety and security – a fundamental condition for the achievement of human development.

UNDP believes that more specific measures related to capacity building, and matching needs with resources, should be considered for inclusion in the outcome document of the Review Conference.

For example the outcome document could draw on language from resolution L.34 which calls on states, and appropriate regional and international organisations in a position to do so, upon the request of the relevant authorities, to seriously consider rendering assistance, including technical and financial assistance where needed, such as small arms funds, in order to support the implementation of measures to prevent, combat, and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons...”.

In conclusion, UNDP will actively participate in the work of this preparatory committee and raise issues that we believe require urgent action to ensure the full implementation of the Programme of Action and that should be considered for possible inclusion in the final documents of the Review Conference.

Let us use the occasion of our meeting here in New York to advance global action on addressing the global scourge of small arms proliferation and misuse. We owe it to the thousands of people who are killed, maimed or terrorised by small arms every day not to fail them.

Thank you

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