



**Synergy Conference for Regional Organizations
on the Implementation of the UN Programme of Action on SALW
Brussels, 27-29 May 2008**

Opening Remarks

by

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

One. The World Food Programme stated recently that in Darfur, in 2008 alone, 60 of its trucks have been hijacked, with 39 trucks still missing – and, most horrifyingly, with 26 drivers unaccounted for. Small arms *always* play a central role as enablers of such violence.

Two. Firearm-related deaths in some Latin American cities during the 1990s were higher than those in conflict zones such as Angola and Sierra Leone.

Three. The man who has been labeled the world's most notorious arms broker, was recently arrested in a sting operation in South-East Asia. Why would an Eastern European trafficker want to close a deal on arming South American rebels from *that* location?

Three examples from three regions, showing that the issue of small arms is very much a global one. Global, yes, but every region is affected and therefore every region must act.

Excellences,
Distingués invités,
Mesdames et Messieurs,

C'est avec grand plaisir et gratitude que, au nom des Nations Unies, je vous adresse à tous mes chaleureuses salutations.

C'est un grand honneur pour assister cet événement important et pour pouvoir parler à cette ouverture aujourd'hui. Je salue tout particulièrement l'effort des organisateurs et leur personnel – c'est grâce aux leurs préparations efficaces et patientes que cette conférence peut intervenir.

Je félicite notamment les représentants d'organisations régionales ainsi que celui de la société civile pour nous rejoindre ici aujourd'hui - dans l'esprit de synergie régionale et de l'engagement internationale, une fois de plus, de combattre ensemble, avec détermination, le fléau de la prolifération illicite d'armes légères et à petit calibre.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I started out with illustrating the urgency of tackling the small arms issue, anywhere in the world. But how to go about?

In 2001, the Member States of the United Nations have endorsed the Programme of Action – the 'PoA' – which provides the normative framework for a coordinated and concerted, international response to the growing problem of small arms and light weapons. The instrument has paved the way for increased attention to key areas, such as brokering and tracing; it formulates concrete suggestions for improved national legislation and controls and for international cooperation and assistance; and it laid the foundation for national, regional and global action and has become a valuable tool for States, international organizations and civil society.

While significant progress has been made in the implementation of the programme, much remains to be done.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This year, from 14 to 18 July in New York, we will convene the Third Biennial Meeting of States (BMS) to consider the implementation of the UN PoA. For the first time, States will also consider the implementation of the International Tracing Instrument at this meeting. Ambassador Cekuolis, Chair-designate of the BMS, will inform you of the state of preparations.

Let me share with you **three actions on which the United Nations will take the lead in strengthening the PoA.**

Firstly, to **organize information** on the Programme of Action. The PoA is a wonderful document from a normative point of view, but it is rather weak on process. It does not contain targets, goals or cut-off dates. It fails to formulate what steps are needed to implement the agreed action. And it did not foresee an 'implementation support unit' being set up within the UN or in any other body. Therefore, no-one felt responsible for the administration, the coordination, the management of information on the small arms issue.

The United Nations secretariat can help organize implementation by offering to become the central clearing house for information on the Programme of Action. That is why we are now developing a web-based information management tool for the PoA, which we call the PoA Implementation Support System. We will launch it at the BMS, so that from this summer onwards, everyone working on the PoA has electronic access to all information regarding the small arms process. We will have country profiles for every single state. Updated lists of all national contact points, who will be linked in an information exchange network. States needing

assistance and cooperation will have their projects posted on it. Donors will know where to look for projects to fund, which can be sorted in any way: by theme, by amount requested, or by region – which is of particular interest for most of you present today. In short: this will be a contribution the UN can make to take the word 'action' in the PoA more serious.

Secondly: it would be good to **professionalize regional work** on the Programme of Action. A Biennial Meeting of States is held in even years, and regional and sub-regional conferences should then be organized in uneven years. To translate the BMS into implications for the region. To take stock of implementation. To foster and galvanize regional action and stimulate peer pressure within the region. And to prepare, regionally, for national reporting a year later, at the next BMS.

For such regional and sub-regional meetings to be successful, light forms of coordination will be needed. One cannot have all regions organize a conference in, say, March. The UN's Office for Disarmament Affairs stands ready to coordinate where needed. Also, it will develop a funding strategy, so that regional and sub-regional organizations who so wish, can be assisted in organizing such meetings successfully.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This is why this Synergy Conference for Regional Organizations is such a timely initiative. The regions and regional organizations are instrumental to the implementation of the Programme of Action and can contribute decisively to the success of the BMS. But they have to meet now and then in order to orchestrate their work in a most effective manner. And that links to my third proposal: that **regional organizations build on the initiative of this synergy conference** and will continue coming together to discuss how best to carry forward the regional perspective of the Programme of Action, to identify gaps in implementation and needs for cooperation. This can be done through future synergy conferences, and through meetings in the margins of the Biennial Meetings of States.

Distinguished colleagues,

I am convinced that the forthcoming days will provide a clear understanding of existing gaps as well as regional opportunities in the implementation process, and will enable you to contribute to the success of the meeting in July. The United Nations secretariat is convinced that the regional dimension of the PoA can be successfully fleshed out further and is working on concrete proposals to that end.

Let me end that remarks like these tend to focus on process, making conferences like this one seem to be mere bureaucratic exercises. And in a way they are. But it is always good to realize we are not doing our work for the benefit of ourselves, institutions, or processes – we do it to make life safer and more secure for those people living in fear, in danger and in deprivation.

Invités distingués, je vous remercie de votre attention et vous souhaite une réunion fructueuse.

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