

Third 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 delivered by Finnian Cheshire, Deputy Permanent Representative of New Zealand to the United Nations, 19 June 2018

May I take this opportunity, Mr Chair, to thank you for your leadership of this important Review Conference and for the transparent and consultative approach you have adopted throughout the extensive preparatory period leading up to it.

New Zealand has been a strong supporter of the Programme of Action since its adoption in 2001. It remains the only comprehensive global framework seeking to control small arms - those weapons which, in daily usage, wreak so much havoc and death in so many parts of the globe. As the Secretary-General noted in his recent "Agenda for Disarmament", the use of a firearm results, on average, in a violent death somewhere around the globe every 15 minutes.

The Programme of Action stands, then, as an essential effort by the international community to exert some control on these weapons throughout all stages of their life cycle: from manufacture to disposal. New Zealand remains committed to ensuring the PoA's continued relevance to contemporary security circumstances and to efforts to improve its implementation at national, regional and global levels.

This Review Conference offers us an opportunity to exchange views on how the PoA can have a more significant impact on efforts to combat the illicit trade in small arms, and also light weapons, and we look forward to hearing the views of all delegations here as to how this could be achieved.

We look forward to views, too, on how we may be able to take advantage of those changes in the international landscape which have been positive over the period since the last PoA Review Conference 6 years ago.

In this regard, we acknowledge in particular the adoption, and then entry into force in 2014, of the Arms Trade Treaty which has given us a valuable tool to advance the objectives laid out in the PoA with the added benefit that its framework is a legally-binding one. Implementation and universalisation of the ATT is essential if we are really to address the devastating impact that illicit arms transfers have on international security and development.

I am pleased to note at this point, that New Zealand has recently passed legislation enhancing our compliance with the Arms Trade Treaty by enacting new brokering legislation which will come into force on 1 February 2019.

The other major positive development in the international context relevant to the PoA since 2012 has been the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals in 2016 – particularly the framing of SDG Target 16.4 which aims for a significant reduction in illicit financial and arms flows by 2030.

In terms of PoA implementation, New Zealand's focus as regards both these developments will, above all, remain a regional one. For the Pacific, transnational security, including the trade in and trafficking of small arms and light weapons, is an issue of ongoing concern.

We continue to work closely with our Pacific Partners on initiatives to advance controls on small arms in ways that reflect conditions in our region. We have looked to advance uptake of the ATT in the Pacific including through the production of model implementing legislation and in preparing a model "export control list".

With most welcome support from Australia, New Zealand hosted a Pacific Conference on Conventional Weapons Treaties earlier this year. At that Conference, Pacific participants acknowledged the merits of a region-wide approach to support the adoption and implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty and to highlight its role in advancing security for sustainable development.

Participants also noted that the Pacific region has important interests to pursue within the PoA process and that this 3rd Review Conference would be useful in order to reinvigorate collective efforts to combat the illicit trade in small arms. Less positively, Mr Chair, as many delegations here have highlighted, despite widespread support for the PoA, implementation of it has been uneven. At least in part this has been due to a lack of co-ordinated technical assistance arising from resource constraints. Accordingly, New Zealand welcomes the UN Secretary-General's decision, as outlined in his Agenda for Disarmament, to establish a dedicated facility through the Peacebuilding Fund to support Government action to tackle the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

I am pleased to announce today that New Zealand will be lending support to the Secretary-General's decision by making a NZ \$100,000 contribution to this new trust facility.

We are confident that under the SG's watch, this new facility will be able to achieve better coordination of international assistance for combating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

Mr Chair,

My Government welcomes this opportunity to renew its commitment to the PoA. We fully support its aspirations and also the intentions set out in your draft Outcomes Document.

That said, our willingness to commit to the PoA is not a willingness to consider the PoA as immutable and set in stone. A key benefit of the PoA's not being a legally-binding instrument is its ability to live and breathe - and therefore to respond and adapt to new and emerging concerns.

New technologies offer both opportunities and risks and we agree that it is vital that we look at ways to address the implications of these. It is also essential that we recognise the importance of equitable representation of men, women, girls and boys in the development and implementation of strategies to combat the illicit trade of small arms and light weapons. We recognise, too, the differing impacts these weapons have on men, women, girls and boys; as well as the need to address all forms of gender-based violence.

Nor can we overlook the contributions civil society can and does make to implementation of the PoA. Many of the achievements made to date under the Programme's framework would not have been possible without active engagement and cooperation between governments and civil society.

In concluding, Mr Chair, I would not wish New Zealand's strong support for both the aspirations underlying the PoA when it was adopted in 2001, and for what it has been able to achieve in the period since then, to be misunderstood as satisfaction with the scope and framing, for all time, of the Programme. We understand that this Review Conference has not been mandated to consider the extent to which the PoA remains fit for purpose. But in our view this will need to be done at some point if the PoA is to continue meeting the needs and responding to the security circumstances of all the members of our international community.

I assure you of the New Zealand delegation's commitment to work positively and constructively with you, with all other delegations, and with civil society, as we work towards a positive and constructive outcome for this Review Conference.

Thank you.

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