

**OPEN DEBATE OF THE
SECURITY COUNCIL:
SMALL ARMS**

STATEMENT

BY

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TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Mr. President,

We welcome the report of the Secretary General on small arms and commend you for organizing this timely and important open debate. We hope that it constitutes the resumption of the leadership role of the Council on this topic.. The enormous socio-economic costs caused by small arms and small light weapons are one of the big obstacles to the efforts of many countries to reach the Millennium Development Goals, and the topic thus has very wide ramifications. Small arms and light weapons are widely used in inter-state and intra-state conflicts by government armies, paramilitaries and rebel forces. In situations outside of armed conflicts, they are the weapons of choice of organized crime groups and criminal gangs. The numbers speak for themselves: Small arms and light weapons kill at least 300,000 people a year - in both conflict and non-conflict situations - and are responsible for 60 to 90 percent of direct conflict deaths. 640 million small arms and light weapons which are frequently exchanged between various conflicts, are already in circulation. Another eight million new weapons enter the market every year. With all the attention paid to weapons of mass destruction, the weapons with the most lethal impact are small arms.

Mr. President

The proliferation of small arms and light weapons can be regarded as a cluster of related problems stretching from the illicit trade and transfer of weapons to production, ammunition and brokering. We believe that strict domestic brokering legislation is a prerequisite for effective international cooperation in this area and have adopted such legislation in 1999. But better control should not be limited to brokering activities – it should also encompass the physical transfer of SALW. Such control of arms transfers should be based on international standards, which prohibit in particular the transfer of SALW to end-users who do not respect international human rights and humanitarian law. We therefore support all efforts geared toward an international framework for authentication, reconciliation and standardisation of

end-user certificates. The improvement of end-user certificates of man-portable air defence systems (MAN-PADS) could set an important precedent in this regard.

Mr. President

The adoption of an international instrument on marking and tracing was an important step towards achieving a comprehensive regime in the global fight against the spread of SALW. The use of the new politically-binding international tracing instrument (ITI) should, however, not be limited to Member States. If ITI was incorporated into the mandates of future peacekeeping missions, it could significantly reduce the number of SALW available in conflict and post-conflict situations. Although ITI includes provisions for marking new weapons production, government stocks and imports, it does not cover the marking or tracing of ammunition. This shortfall contradicts the main purpose of the *Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects*, which, as its name suggests, is to address the issue of illicit trade of SALW in all its aspects. We therefore believe that the question of ammunition must also be addressed over time. Here the safeguarding of ammunition warehouses and the destruction of surplus stockpiles should be among the priorities of relevant peacekeeping missions and an initial part of any peacebuilding efforts.

Mr. President,

The link between small arms, violence and lack of development is undeniable. Moreover, the direct and indirect human, social and economic costs of armed violence are tremendous. Halting the spread of SALW would therefore make an important contribution to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. In this regard, Liechtenstein supports multilateral initiatives beyond the UN framework and commends those States that have adopted the *Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development*. Given our belief that effective arms embargos depend upon the removal of arms from circulation within the embargoed

state, and that the problem of SALW cannot be solved by arms control measures alone, we will further support activities in the field of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants.

I thank you.