United Nations General Assembly – 63rd Session
First Committee
October 27, 2008

Statement of
C. Edward Rowe, President

The World Forum on the Future of
Sport Shooting Activities

Mr. Chairman, I first want to thank you, the First Committee and the staff of the Office for Disarmament Affairs for the opportunity to address this august body. For several years now the First Committee has extended to NGOs the courtesy of this venue. This precedent is to be commended – it adds value to the UN process and we sincerely hope the delegates will benefit from the knowledge and perspective we impart.

Mr. Chairman, the World Forum on the Future of Sport Shooting Activities (WFSA) is an ECOSOC NGO in roster status. We are an association of associations representing major hunting and sport shooting groups and commercial associations throughout the world. We have members in such diverse locations as Australia, South Africa, Japan and the UK. We speak for hundreds of millions of legitimate firearms owners and users world-wide.

Mr. Chairman, today I should like to briefly describe how we relate to the primary UN initiatives regarding firearms, describe some of our own efforts and finally comment on future UN endeavors.

Mr. Chairman, regarding the two primary UN efforts relating to small arms, the Program of Action (POA) and the UN Firearms Protocol, the WFSA remains engaged on both fronts. We have actively participated in all the meetings leading up to the Program of Action’s adoption in 2001 and the 2001 Conference itself. We have attended the Biennial Meetings of States and numerous workshops. We have hosted our own workshops and events in order to inform UN decision makers. In regard to the UN Firearms Protocol, we participated in Open Ended Working Group meetings starting in the late 1990s leading to the adoption of the Protocol in
2001. Last week we participated in the Conference of Parties to the Protocol in Vienna. In all of these venues we have tried both to represent the interests of our members, legitimate firearms owners and users, and to offer constructive pro-active information and expertise.

We look forward to working with both the Office of Disarmament Affairs and the UN Office on Drugs and Crime. We will be particularly supportive of efforts of both offices which focus on substantial technical questions in the areas of marking and tracing and the areas of imports and exports.

Mr. Chairman, in regard to our own efforts we shall continue to participate in matters which affect the environment, economic development and sport. We recently made contact with the office of the UN Secretary-General’s Special Representative for Sports. We consider legitimate hunting and sport shooting an integral part of the world of sport and we seek to develop a greater awareness of it.

Mr. Chairman, I should now like to address the future UN efforts. We look forward to participating in any Program of Action intercessional meetings and in any technically oriented conferences on the Firearms Protocol.

More important, Mr. Chairman, there is a UN effort for an Arms Trade Treaty. We were present for the meetings of the UN Group of Government Experts on the Feasibility of an Arms Trade Treaty. We compliment the Report of the Group for its acknowledgement and recognition of the legitimacy of the rights of firearms owners and we also note with favor its observations vis-à-vis the complexity of the issue.

Should the General Assembly support the establishment of an Open Ended Working Group on an Arms Trade Treaty, we have several observations. First, Mr. Chairman, it is essential that the Open Ended Working Group's efforts be transparent — that is, has open meetings. As I mentioned, we were present at the meetings of the Open Ended Working Group which produced the UN Firearms Protocol. Almost all of the meetings were open. The participation of NGOs added to the substance of the deliberations which led to the adoption of the Protocol.

We would also note that there needs to be an immense amount of intellectual discussion of the very concepts underlying an ATT before we proceed.

Mr. Chairman, let me add one final substantive comment. Ammunition stockpiles have frequently been mentioned as needing further regulatory effort. Mr. Chairman, a few necessary points need to be made regarding this. First, civilian ammunition stockpiles must be differentiated from military stockpiles. There are two major reasons for this necessary differentiation. Civilian small arms ammunition does not pose a threat of exploding as do military warheads and other such military explosive devices. Secondly, and most important, the Committee and the UN need to realize that any record keeping scheme vis-à-vis sporting ammunition is very problematic and impractical. This is due to the sheer volume of the amount of ammunition (billion upon billions of rounds) which is produced each year. In addition the
hundreds of millions of hunters and sport shooters buying those billions and billions of rounds would create a book keeping nightmare doomed to failure.

Mr. Chairman, let me again reiterate that the World Forum will continue to protect the interests of its members while at the same time offering its goodwill, expertise and assistance to you. Thank you.