Statement by the United States of America  
Delivered by Steven R. Costner  
U.S. Department of State  
August 27, 2012  
(check against delivery)

At the Conference to Review Implementation of the *UN Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects*

Madam President,

The United States recognizes the tremendous challenge we face in addressing the problem of illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons (SA/LW). As such we fully support the comprehensive implementation of the UN Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (PoA) and believe this will have a real impact in preventing armed conflict and violence.

Therefore, the United States encourages all Member States to implement the PoA to the fullest extent possible and offers various forms of assistance, upon request. In the six years since the last Review Conference, the United States has continued to support efforts by Member States to enhance physical security and stockpile management (PSSM); build capacity in marking and tracing of SA/LW; and strengthen controls over international transfers of SA/LW. Through the U.S. State Department’s Conventional Weapons Destruction program, we have destroyed approximately 1.6 million surplus, loosely secured, or otherwise at risk SA/LW in 38 countries since 2001. Particularly concerned with the threat to civil aviation posed by man-portable air defense systems (MANPADS), we have destroyed nearly 33,000 of these advanced anti-aircraft systems through cooperative arrangements with 37 countries. The Defense Department’s Defense Threat Reduction Agency also provides assistance in PSSM through assessment visits to arms storage sites and seminars to train military personnel in PSSM best practices.

The U.S. government, through the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives, has also concluded Memoranda of Understanding with over 30 Member States to participate in the eTrace program to enable the timely and accurate tracing of illicit firearms, and invites other States to discuss opportunities for participation. Additionally, the United States has worked closely with regional organizations such as the Organization of American States, the Nairobi-based
Regional Center on Small Arms, and the UN Regional Center for Peace, Disarmament, and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean to enhance the capacity of Member States to implement the PoA and the International Tracing Instrument.

In terms of strengthening strategic trade controls, the State Department provides assistance through the Export Control and Related Border Security (EXBS) program. Through EXBS, the United States bolsters the capabilities of over 60 countries to detect and interdict illicit transfers of strategic items, radioactive materials, and other components of weapons of mass destruction, as well as MANPADS and other conventional arms. EXBS also works to prevent irresponsible transfers of sensitive items by helping partner countries to recognize and reject proposed transactions that would contribute to proliferation. EXBS focuses on capacity-building through legislation development outreach, licensing and regulatory assistance, enforcement training, provision of inspection and detection equipment, and assistance with government-industry outreach and interagency coordination.

Madam President,

While progress has been made, the United States sees a number of areas where the international community can do more to strengthen implementation of the PoA. Overall sharing of best practices at multiple levels, additional consideration of gender-based violence, and more efficient coordination throughout the process would be beneficial. Through our efforts in international cooperation and assistance, we have seen the value added by regional organizations in bringing together communities of practitioners in exchanging information and providing technical assistance. We encourage further work by such entities, both with their Member States as well as with each other, in sharing best practices and lessons learned.

We highlight the need to address gender-based violence within the context of PoA implementation, as well as in UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) and other applicable resolutions. PoA implementation would help prevent gender-based violence by making it more difficult for those who would engage in violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law to obtain SA/LW from the illicit market. Additionally, including gender perspectives in the PoA context would also help reduce gender-based violence. One such approach would be to enhance participation by women in the design and implementation of policies and programs to address illicit SA/LW trafficking. As
President Obama has stated in Executive Order 13595 (signed December 19, 2011), “the United States recognizes that promoting women’s participation in conflict prevention, management, and resolution, as well as in post-conflict relief and recovery, advances peace, national security, economic and social development, and international cooperation.” Actors involved in disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration programs can also work to address more fully the differing needs of women and men, girls and boys.

Additionally, as one of the leading donors in the field of PoA implementation, the United States encourages fellow donors to coordinate more closely with each other. The U.S. delegation looks forward to discussing with delegations how best to avoid duplication of effort and ensure efficient and effective use of scarce resources.

The United States recommends greater structure and predictability to the PoA process. Agreement on a schedule of PoA conferences for the next six years would help governments in this resource-constrained environment to ensure appropriate representation—without such representation we will be holding meetings just for the sake of holding meetings. In developing this schedule, to the extent possible, Member States should aim for greater coordination between various regional and international processes related to preventing the illicit trade in SA/LW, such as the Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Firearms Protocol, which will meet in October. The schedule should also minimize the number of ad hoc meetings and include, to the greatest extent possible, clear and defined mandates for all meetings.

Madam President,

The United States stands ready to assist Member States in implementing the PoA in a comprehensive manner. We are here to work constructively with you and other delegations towards a successful, consensus-based outcome to this conference to review implementation of the 2001 Program of Action.