Statement by the United States of America on International Cooperation and Assistance  
United States Department of State  
March 20, 2012  
Delivered by Steven R. Costner

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

Madam Chairwoman,

The United States acknowledges the important role of international cooperation and assistance in implementing the UN Program of Action and stands ready to cooperate with Member States in doing so.

The United States believes the focus in moving forward in this area should be on increasing transparency and coordination among donors States, those States that need assistance, and relevant multilateral organizations. In this regard, we welcome the work of the UN and regional organizations in helping Member States identify and prioritize assistance needs. The Program of Action Implementation Support System’s “Matching Needs with Resources” report is a good starting point, and we support its continued development. Likewise, we welcome the recent efforts by the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council’s Ad Hoc Working Group on Small Arms and Light Weapons (SA/LW) at NATO to bring together donors and States needing assistance to discuss and record the total range of projects and needs in that region. We also urge States requiring assistance to prioritize their needs and to be transparent in their requests to different States and organizations. At times when States have made numerous requests to multiple donor States for a wide range of needs, it has been difficult to prioritize those proposed projects and to ascertain whether they are already being addressed or considered by other donors.

We also welcome the establishment by more Member States of national focal points for the Program of Action given their critical role in matching assistance requirements with donor resources. The United States urges Member States to work with the UN Office of Disarmament Affairs to ensure information on focal points is up to date given the challenges identified by the Small Arms Survey on the implementation of the Program of Action.
The United States also encourages donor States to consider the extent to which assistance projects can build national capacity in addition to having immediate effects. Capacity building may take more time, which may not always be available, but would ensure that States receiving assistance can sustain SA/LW programs using national resources over the long run. In turn, States receiving assistance must have the political will to take ownership and allocate national resources to sustain programs established with international assistance.

Finally, the United States reiterates the role that regional organizations may play in enhancing international cooperation and assistance. Regional organizations may facilitate exchanges by practitioners so States may learn from each other. Regional organizations may also play a helpful role in supporting Member States’ efforts to identify regional best practices in combating illicit SA/LW trafficking. In some cases, it may be useful for regional organizations to support coordination amongst donor countries. Given the funding constraints faced by many donors in this global economic environment, donor States may have a greater need for coordination by pooling resources, particularly when funding large-scale projects.

Once again, the United States remains committed to the full implementation of the Program of Action and stands ready to cooperate with other Member States in doing so.

Thank you.