

Widad Akrawi, IANSA & Defend International

Culture of Peace

Thank you Mr Chairman,
Peace be with you,

This year is an opportunity to “build the defences of peace in the minds of people” as 2010 marks the International Year of Rapprochement of Cultures.

Peace lies at the core of the Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons. The United Nations declared in this PoA that they are “determined to reduce the human suffering caused by the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects and to enhance the respect for life and the dignity of the human person through the promotion of a culture of peace.”

Experience tells us that one of the essential elements to achieve peace, in addition to justice, equality and tolerance, is to get small arms under control – in other words, to implement the PoA. Since its adoption, civil society peace activists have led efforts at the national, regional and international level to emphasize that the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, and ammunition is a matter of life and death.

Mr Chairman, armed violence and peace cannot coexist. We need to overcome the challenges and seek practical solutions. We must replace the culture of war with the culture of peace.

The quality of life in our world does not depend on conflict, but on our response to it. Policy-makers continue to discover that they cannot solve today’s problems with yesterday’s mindset.

Mr Chairman, the UN has another Programme of Action – it’s called the Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace, adopted unanimously by the General Assembly in 1999. This other

Programme of Action outlines actions to promote international peace and security including measures to eliminate the illicit production and traffic of small arms and light weapons. This reinforces the fact that peace is at the heart of the Programme of Action on the illicit trade of small arms.

A culture of peace is the key element in attaining the goals and objectives of the Programme of Action in the twenty-first century.

We have to consciously build the elements of a world based on a culture of peace and disarmament. This is a task for everyone. It is multidimensional in scope, requiring meaningful participation of people at all levels.

Although peace can be negotiated by governments, it is ultimately the responsibility of the people themselves to make it last. All of us have a role to play to create a world in which peace can flourish.

Everyone here is involved in creating the world I am dreaming of. I stress to you all, don't give up on your efforts, and continue to look for new solutions and new ways of thinking.

We will succeed at the end. The proliferation of peace is possible supported by the UN small arms process.

Peace be with you.

Thank you Mr Chairman.