



14 March 2011

The Chair-designate of the Open-Ended Meeting of Governmental Experts (MGE) on the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, presents his compliments, and has the honour to write in regard to preparations for the MGE, to be held on 9-13 May 2011 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York.

As the first meeting of its kind within the Programme of Action, the MGE will seek to generate practical and action-oriented discussions among experts regarding shared implementation challenges and opportunities in specific areas. It will be an important opportunity to deepen our dialogue and share experiences on efforts to implement the Programme of Action at national and regional levels.

Your Government is now invited to nominate appropriate national experts to attend this Meeting. Further information on the meeting, its objectives, themes and agenda are provided below.

Themes, Agenda and Programme of Work

In General Assembly Resolution 64/50, Member States agreed the MGE should address key implementation challenges and opportunities relating to the Programme of Action, including ways to enhance cooperation and assistance and assess its effectiveness. On the basis of extensive consultations with Member States over the past six months, the Chair-designate has proposed consideration of key implementation challenges and opportunities relating to the International Tracing Instrument (ITI) as the theme for the MGE. This theme will be examined with regard to the core elements of marking, record-keeping and tracing of small arms and light weapons, as well as consideration of the national and regional frameworks within which ITI implementation is undertaken, and the role of international assistance and capacity building in supporting this.

Based on input received to date, the Chair-designate has prepared the attached draft Agenda and Programme of Work. It is proposed that half the meeting be dedicated to in-depth discussions on marking, record-keeping and cooperation in tracing. Separate sessions are proposed to address the related topics of national frameworks, regional cooperation, and international assistance and capacity building, while the opening session will be used to reach agreement on organisational matters and to sketch out the context and objectives for our discussions, and the final session to address any related matters and to adopt the report of the meeting.

This draft agenda and programme of work will be issued as official UN documents in due course. Comments and suggestions are therefore invited as soon as possible.

To ensure focussed discussions in each session, the Chair-designate is also developing thematic discussion papers covering the issues of marking, record-keeping, cooperation in tracing, national frameworks, regional cooperation and international assistance and capacity-building. These informal papers will provide basic background information and suggest key issues and challenges for consideration at the meeting, including a series of questions which participants will be encouraged to consider in preparation for each session. The purpose of these papers is to stimulate discussion - they are not intended as the basis of any form of outcome document from the meeting.

Format, Presentations, Rules of Procedure

Discussions at the MGE will be practically-oriented and focused on supporting enhanced national and regional implementation of the Programme of Action. Sessions will be structured to facilitate the interactive sharing of information and experiences among experts around priority areas of mutual interest and importance. Each will begin with brief, focused thematic presentations setting out key issues and challenges, followed by targeted national or regional case studies to stimulate further discussion. Specific proposals for the structuring of each session will be circulated in due course.

Adequate preparation will be important to ensure participants derive maximum benefit from discussions at the Meeting. The Chair-designate intends to work with Member States to ensure expert participants are, to the greatest extent possible, prepared to contribute to frank and interactive discussions on each topic, drawing on examples of

best practices, setbacks encountered and lessons learned, from their first-hand experiences. States which have not reported on their implementation of the ITI within the past three years, or have yet to nominate national ITI focal points, are encouraged to consider doing so in advance of the meeting.

Efficient time management will also be crucial. Each session will therefore begin promptly at 10am and 3pm each day. Participants will be encouraged to ensure that interventions are clearly focused on the specific topics under discussion at each session. States wishing to prepare general statements outlining national positions are asked to submit these in writing before the meeting, for posting on the MGE website, rather than delivering them during the Plenary sessions.

The Chair-designate proposes to use the same Rules of Procedure (see A/CONF.192/L.1) used at all previous conferences in the framework of the Programme of Action, *mutatis mutandis*.

Expert Participation

As an expert meeting, it is important that participants have the appropriate knowledge, skills and experience on relevant issues to enable them to contribute substantively to discussions, and that they are in a position to practically apply any lessons learned in the exercise of their domestic professional roles and responsibilities.

Member States are therefore encouraged to consider including in their delegation experts with relevant skills, experience and professional responsibilities. Inclusion of officials with responsibility for regulating the marking of small arms and light weapons and the operation of domestic record-keeping systems; those responsible for conducting and responding to tracing requests, including official ITI points of contact; as well as officials responsible for the overall implementation of the Programme of Action is particularly encouraged.

A limited amount of funding will be available to facilitate attendance by relevant experts from developing states through the Voluntary Sponsorship Programme established by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for the MGE. Governments with an interest in making contributions, and participants wishing to apply for funding, are

encouraged to contact the UNDP (Zachary Taylor, zachary.taylor@undp.org; and Harpreet Panesar, harpreet.panesar@undp.org). Given the limited funding available, preference will be given to participants from developing states that have identified combating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons as a high national priority, and to individuals with relevant experience, technical expertise and professional responsibilities.

While this meeting is primarily one of governmental experts, much relevant expertise is also held by international organisations such as INTERPOL, as well as regional and subregional bodies that play important roles in facilitating implementation by their member states. Considerable expertise also exists in civil society, including Non-Governmental Organisations, and the private sector. As on past occasions, where appropriate, Member States are encouraged to consider including such experts on their national delegations.

Side Events

Side events held at the MGE relevant to its agenda and of likely interest to experts in attendance have the potential significantly to deepen and extend our discussions. A number of practically-focused side events are currently being considered, including workshops and seminars in areas such as marking technologies, practical barriers to successful tracing requests, firearms ballistics forensics, and tools and processes for establishing and maintaining record-keeping systems. Further information on these will be circulated in due course.

The Chair-designate will also host a welcome reception on the opening evening of the meeting, and an informal event for donors and recipient countries to discuss technical assistance projects later in the week.

The Chair-designate takes this opportunity to extend again assurances of his highest consideration.

New Zealand Permanent Mission to the United Nations
NEW YORK

