



**Report of “The First Meeting of Arab National Focal Points
On Small Arms and Light Weapons”
League of Arab States**

Cairo, 26-27 December 2005

(Unofficial Translation)

Introduction

1. The First Meeting of Arab National Focal Points (NFP) on Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) was held from 26 to 27 December 2005 at the League of Arab States (LAS). The meeting was organized by the Regional Focal Point (RFP) at the Multilateral Relations Department, LAS.
2. The Meeting was attended by 27 experts and officials from NFP representing 17 Arab States: Jordan, UAE, Tunisia, Algeria, Djibouti, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Iraq, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Kuwait, Lebanon, Egypt, Morocco and Yemen in addition to a representative from the General Secretariat of the Council of Arab Interior Ministers.

Opening Session

3. Mr. Wael Al-Assad - Director, Multilateral Relations Department at the LAS inaugurated the meeting. In his statement he referred to the importance that the Secretary General attached to the issue of disarmament in general, and small arms in particular and the emphasis he puts on the follow-up of the implementation of the United Nations Program of Action (UN-PoA). He stressed the importance of the meeting, being the Arab meeting that precedes the convening of the Preparatory Committee of the Review Conference to be held in January 2006, underlining the importance of submitting an Arab vision and a common Arab position during the meeting of the Preparatory Committee and the Review Conference in New York.
4. The meeting adopted its agenda. Chairmen of the sessions were selected as follows:
 - First Session : Brigadier-General Haidar Salmay - Head of the Syrian Delegation
 - Second Session : Mr. Ahed Sweidat - Head of the Jordanian Delegation
 - Third Session : Mr. Ghallab Abdel Haq - Head of the Moroccan Delegation
 - Fourth Session : Brig.-General Dr. Abdel Wahab Ali Al-Roumi - Head of the Kuwaiti Delegation
 - Fifth Session : First Secretary Omar Amer-Head of the Egyptian Delegation

First Session: At The Regional Level

5. The working paper of the League of Arab States entitled "The Role of the Regional Focal Point at the LAS" was presented by Mr. Fadi Achaia. It dealt with the efforts exerted for establishing this focal point, its objectives and challenges confronting it. He was followed by Dr. Tewfik Abu Oshba, who presented the paper of the General Secretariat of the Council of

Arab Interior Ministers entitled "Efforts of the Council of Arab Interior Ministers in Combating Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons" in which he focused on relevant items of the Arab strategy for combating terrorism, the Arab Convention on Combating Terrorism and the "Arab Model Law on Weapons, Ammunitions, Explosives and Hazardous Material".

6. There was in-depth discussion of both working papers, particularly the one related to the "Arab Model Law on Weapons, Ammunitions, Explosives and Hazardous Material". The meeting unanimously agreed on its importance especially that it was adopted by the Council of Arab Interior Ministers in January 2002.

Second Session: International and Regional Developments

7. Dr. Mohamed Ezz-el din Abdel Moneim presented a working paper entitled "The Impact of Recent Developments on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons" which focused on three themes:
 - The framework in which SALW are dealt with
 - The nature of our commitment
 - What is the problem and how to tackle it?

The meeting discussed the nature of the UN-PoA, which is not a legal instrument but is morally and politically binding. Realities of the balance of power and the role of the Security Council in disarmament issues should be taken into consideration by acting seriously and on a large scale. Moreover, the agenda on disarmament should be implemented in its entirety. Obligations should not be imposed on importing countries only but on exporting ones as well. Arab countries should be represented in all international fora even if it is a small workshop.

8. A number of delegations raised the issue on the importance of monitoring borders especially that a number of States suffer from this problem due to their geographical features. Therefore, this problem should be examined and solutions should be found.

Third Session: National focal points: Activities and Challenges

9. Brigadier General Haidar Salmy (Syria) presented a working paper on "Challenges that Confront National Focal Points and Proposed Solutions."
Colonel Youssef Ibn Medkhen (Algeria) also delivered a statement on "National Focal Points: their Role, Activities and Relations with Other Institutions."
10. After the presentation of the two papers the meeting emphasized the following points:
 - The importance of linking illicit trade to organized crime;
 - The importance of urging Arab States which have not yet established NFP to do so;
 - The importance of establishing NFP and submitting National reports to the General Secretariat on the efforts exerted by Arab States to combat illicit trade in SALW;
 - The importance of activating the role of Arab media in combating illicit trade in SALW, as some states believed that the media did not play an adequately powerful and positive role so far;
 - The importance of cooperation with the civil society to disseminate information on the problems of SALW.

Fourth Session: The National Level – Best Practices

11. Mr. Ahed Sweidat (Jordan) presented a working paper on "The Best Practices Regarding Small Arms and Light Weapons". The Meeting also reviewed the working paper presented by First Lieutenant Eng. Moussa Mohamed Al-Hazimi (Saudi Arabia) on "Measures taken by the State to Implement the UN-PoA on Small Arms and Light Weapons".

This was followed by an elaborate discussion, which focused on the role of security agencies. It was mentioned that restrictive measures in issuing permits may have adverse effects on illegal proliferation of arms.

Fifth Session: Review Conference of the UN-PoA for 2006

12. In his paper on "The 2006 Review Conference of the U.N. Program of Action to combat the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in all its Aspects: Arab coordination with respect to issues under consideration," Counselor Wael Al-Assad emphasized the most important issues to be examined at the Review Conference for 2006. He also mentioned that the objective of this Conference is to examine the progress achieved in the implementation of the PoA and not to add new ideas. He also stressed the importance of coordination among Arab States at this Conference.

Sixth Session (Closing Session)

13. After exhaustive discussion of the themes and working papers, the participants adopted the following recommendation:

RECOMMENDATIONS

I. At the National Level

1. The importance of establishing national focal points in countries that have not yet done so, in implementation of the LAS Council Resolution No. 6447 and to inform LAS of the action taken as early as possible. And for Arab States which have not established National Coordination Agencies to take the necessary measures to do so.
2. To call upon NFP to prepare their annual reports on the implementation of the UN-PoA and send it to the UN not later than the end of April 2006. And to provide a copy to the RFP -Multilateral Relations Department at the LAS- as soon as possible, with the aim of preparing a report on the progress achieved at the regional level to be presented to the forthcoming Review Conference. This report will emphasize the progress achieved in the Arab Region as a whole in this field.
3. To actively participate in the Preparatory Committees and the forthcoming Review Conference in 2006 in New York.
4. To encourage NFP to present reports to the RFP at LAS on their achievements during the past five years, and to provide it with the relevant laws, regulations and legislations on the issue of SALW to lay the foundation for a database that provides Arab States with information on the achievements of other countries and to benefit from expertise available in the region.

5. To stress the importance of media discourse in raising awareness and enhancing knowledge of Arab societies regarding the hazards of illicit trade in SALW, while designing and carrying out awareness information campaigns that would take into consideration the circumstance and specific conditions of each country.
6. To encourage NFP, that wish to do so, to make use of, and coordinate with relevant civil society organizations to draw up appropriate policies in this field, in view of their active role and effective impact on grassroots and local communities, with a view to raising awareness and creating an anti-weapon carrying culture.

II. At the Regional Level

7. To support the RFP programs on SALW, to enable it to follow up issues at different levels, and to provide Arab States and NFP with the services they need.
8. The RFP will organize, at the request of concerned countries, regional or national workshops and seminars in related fields according to LAS Council Resolution No. 6447.
9. To emphasize the importance of designing a special page on the LAS web site to be devoted to follow up the issues of SALW and publish information on related developments and events at National, Regional and International levels.
10. The RFP will establish an Arab database and an Arab Regional Information Network.
11. Request the General Secretariat of LAS to consider the possibility of incorporating the issue of SALW into its different activities, particularly those pertaining to development and specially those related to women and children, being the most affected groups.
12. The RFP and NFP should coordinate to conduct, within available resources, studies and research on various aspects of SALW besides combating illicit trade and non-proliferation thereof, and in the translation of most important documents and books in this field into Arabic for distribution to national focal points.
13. Request the General Secretariat to promote cooperation and coordination with international institutions and to urge them to provide financial and technical assistance required for the training programs of national cadres, and to support national and regional efforts in the Arab Region.
14. Intensify efforts and strengthen coordination among Arab States to promote cooperation between NFP including exchange of information and experience and support efforts aiming at preventing illicit trade in SALW.
15. Entrust the Arab RFP to establish contacts with other RFP to brief them on efforts exerted by Arab States to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in SALW in all its aspects, exchange of expertise and coordinate with them, whenever possible.
16. To emphasize the importance of the participation of experts and specialists in relevant workshops held by the United Nations to safeguard Arab interests and common positions.

17. The RFP will convene an annual meeting for all Arab NFP, or at the request of one NFP, with the aim of coordinating activities and exchanging expertise, assessing regional and international developments in this field, and considering the best ways to cope with these developments.

III. At the International Level

18. To take note of and welcome the progress achieved at the regional and international levels in the field of combating and eradicating the illicit trade in SALW in all its aspects.
 19. To call upon NFP to coordinate their positions prior to and during the Preparatory Committees and Review Conference on the UN-PoA to be held in New York from 27 June to 7 July 2006 and submit joint working papers whenever possible.
 20. To stress the importance of complying with the UN-PoA of 2001 to prevent, combat and eradicate illicit trade in SALW in all its aspects, being the basic reference, especially that it was adopted after a long process of negotiation, and to stress the importance of refraining from re-opening negotiations on any part of the UN-PoA to avoid regression of international effort in this field.
 21. To emphasize the fact that the objective of the Review Conference to be held in New York from 27 June to 7 July 2006 is limited to reviewing the progress achieved in the implementation of the UN-PoA. It should also be noted that the initiatives and proposals that aim at broadening the scope of discussion to include issues beyond the scope of the UN-PoA will re-open negotiation on the whole document.
 22. To maintain and abide by the common Arab position adopted by the Arab States at the UN Conference on "Illicit trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in all its Aspects" in 2001, which was approved by the conference and incorporated in paragraphs 9, 10, 11, 12 and 17 of the PoA especially with regard to the necessity of maintaining international priorities in the area of disarmament, i.e. eliminating nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, and the right to self-determination for all peoples, and the right to individual and collective self-defense, and the need to tackle the root causes of armed conflicts.
-