Conference on Illicit Small Arms at the United Nations: Myths and Realities

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

New York, 27 August – 7 September 2012

**MYTH:** The Conference aims to ban ownership of firearms.

**FACTS:**
The Review Conference focuses on the existing Programme of Action on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. It is not about banning firearms or any other type of small arms or prohibiting people from owning legal weapons.

The Review Conference will not be negotiating any treaty to prohibit citizens of any country from possessing firearms or to interfere with the legal trade in small arms and lights weapons.

The Review Conference only reviews progress made in the implementation of the Programme of Action which was adopted in 2001 to combat the illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons.

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**MYTH:** The UN Programme of Action on small arms bans or restricts small arms trade among countries, and prohibits people from owning firearms.

**FACTS:**

The UN Programme of Action on small arms does not prescribe or suggest any action against the legal trade, manufacture, possession or ownership of weapons. The Programme of Action rather encourages States to put in place mechanisms, of their own choice, to curtail the illicit trade of small arms.

Each sovereign State determines its own laws and regulations for the manufacture, sale and possession of firearms by its citizens. The United Nations has no jurisdiction over such matters.
The UN Programme of Action is about the illicit trade in the weapons mentioned, and how to control, curb and prevent it. The programme was agreed to in 2001 by all Member States of the United Nations.

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**MYTH:** The Review Conference and the Conference on an arms trade treaty (ATT) are attempts by the United Nations to ban gun ownership by civilians.

**FACTS:**

The Review Conference of the Programme of Action and the recently concluded ATT Conference are separate, distinct processes.

The Review Conference reviews the already existing UN Programme of Action, a non-legally binding instrument, and deals only with small arms and light weapons.

The Arms Trade Treaty does not yet exist. It was discussed throughout July 2012 and focused on setting common standards for how States could regulate the international trade of all types of conventional arms. No consensus was achieved on a draft Treaty text.

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**MYTH:** The United Nations will take away guns owned by civilians.

**FACTS:**

There is no plan, no mandate, and no ambition to do so. In the Programme of Action, States committed themselves to tightening their controls over the import, export and transfers of SALW, because without such controls it is easier for weapons to be diverted from the legal trade into the illegal market, and into the hands of warlords, drug traffickers and criminal cartels. The UN is committed to these goals formulated by its Member States.

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