POA Review Conference
August 29, 2012
Statement of Thomas Mason

Madame President, I am Thomas Mason, Executive Secretary, for the Americas, of the World Forum on the Future of Sport Shooting Activities. The WFSA is an ECOSOC NGO, which represents hundreds of millions of hunters and sport shooters. Our members have participated in UN small arms and light weapons meetings since 1995. Indeed, our participation precedes that of most who are present in this room today. We participated in the 2001 Conference, which produced the Programme of Action, and no one knows the POA, its substance or political nuances, better than we do.

It is from this long-term perspective I wish to make my statement.

Madame President, those supporting the POA, the draft Declaration and the draft Implementation Plan, continue to make a fundamental error. Most of the participants at UN conferences, are superb speakers - unfortunately few are good listeners. Madame President for the duration of our involvement with the UN we have asked the UN to formally acknowledge the legitimacy of hunting, sport shooting and the legal civilian possession of firearms. This has never been done.

Madame President, civilians legally own 60% of all the small arms in the world. The UN has never reconciled itself to this fact. Legally owned firearms are not part of the problem. Civilian firearms in the hands of responsible hunters and sport shooters are especially no risk to the general public. There is nothing, I repeat nothing, inherently wrong with the civilian ownership of firearms. Many consider it a fundamental right; none should consider it a problem. Until this change is made in the POA it will remain an unfulfilled promise at best.

We, from what could be called the user segment of civil society, want to offer practical and relevant solutions to real problems. We have the expertise on marking and tracing. We have the suggestions for more efficient customs and import/export rules. We teach and advocate firearms safety. These are just a few things we can offer to a POA that does not reject us.

Madame President, I strongly urge you and the body to correct this fundamental error underlying the POA by acknowledging, through the Conference report, the legitimacy of civilian firearms ownership.

Thank you.

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