



AUSTRALIA



AUSTRALIAN MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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Fourth Biennial Meeting of States 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

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International Cooperation and Assistance

**Statement by Ms Neryl Lewis
Crisis Prevention, Stabilisation & Recovery Group
AusAID**

(Check against delivery)

Thank you Mr Chair

I am conscious that our time is limited and my delegation is very eager to hear the thoughts of others on this issue.

However, I would like briefly to provide some perspectives on my own region, the Pacific, and, in particular, some of the key challenges in implementing the Programme of Action.

Over the years countries in our region have felt, to varying degrees, the destabilising effect of small arms and light weapons proliferation and accumulation. Per capita, our region has suffered significantly as a result of illicit small arms and light weapon trade and distribution. Although small arms and light weapons are not typically associated with the islands of the South Pacific, the mere presence of a few small arms, or even rumours of their presence, is enough to displace families and communities and, in turn, fuel their demand for small arms and light weapons.

Mr Chair

My delegation would particularly like to highlight the need to provide practical assistance to states at the regional and national level. From our perspective, dialogue and international cooperation should be devolved from a global level. Direct technical and practical assistance should be provided at regional and country levels to address states' specific needs and to match resources. The recent regional meetings on armed violence and development is a good example of this devolved approach.

Australia's work with regional partners and civil society to reduce the supply of weapons into and within fragile societies is complemented by the broader objectives of the aid program - poverty reduction and sustainable development - that contribute to reducing the demand for weapons in these societies.

A practical example of how donors can assist developing states at the country level is the work Australia is currently undertaking in East Timor, together with Small Arms Survey and ActionAid Australia, to undertake a comprehensive armed violence baseline assessment to inform and provide critical ground work on security sector reform. We are concluding an arrangement with the Small Arms Survey and other partners to undertake a similar assessment in Nepal.

Australia was pleased to provide funding for UNIDIR's Pacific case study on international assistance for implementing the Programme of Action. The aim of the study was to help facilitate the matching of needs to resources for the effective implementation of the Programme of Action. We are also pleased to have provided further support for UNIDIR to undertake analysis on achieving greater efficiency in UN Programme of Action reporting, in particular to identify sectors that may be a challenge to the implementation of the Programme of Action and suggest strategic means to reinforce the effectiveness of the Programme of Action's implementation.

While Australia supports efforts to develop mechanisms to coordinate technical assistance, we consider it critical to focus our efforts on providing practical assistance to countries to implement the Programme of Action. Heavy reliance on web based tools will not necessarily be useful for developing states with limited or irregular access to the internet, such as in the Pacific region. Additionally states will also need significant skilled personnel, and capacity building, financial and resource support in order to take steps to implement the Programme of Action.

Mr Chair

The illicit manufacture, transfer and circulation of small arms and light weapons pose a serious threat to peace and security at the individual, local, national, regional and

international levels. Australia welcomes and strongly supports the ongoing attention member states continue to give this issue and remains committed to maintaining our focus on this critical cross-cutting issue.