



**PARLIAMENTARY FORUM ON
SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS**

**Final Declaration
Third Annual Meeting of Representatives
Parliamentary Forum on Small Arms and Light Weapons
Mexican Senate
19-21 October 2005**

Gathered in the Mexican Senate during the 19th to 21st of October 2005, Representatives from the Parliaments of Argentina, Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, Uruguay, Ghana, Kenya, Somalia, Sierra Leone, Uganda, Germany, Spain, Finland, Sweden, and the European Parliament, celebrated, as envisaged in the Founding Declaration of the Forum, its Third Annual Meeting of Representatives;

The Representatives,

Considering that since the Parliamentary Exchange Initiative, which constitutes the antecedent and origin of the Forum, the Forum has embraced as one of its guiding principles and objectives, the enlargement of the Forum, so as to include Parliaments and other participants from Latin America, Africa and Europe;

Acknowledging explicitly the fundamental work of organizations from the Civil Society on the issues of small arms and light weapons, in regard of which it has been stressed that joint actions between Parliaments and Civil Society representatives on those issues should be promoted, particularly in consideration of that the Forum is, precisely, an expression of the possibilities for co-operation that exist between Parliaments and Civil Society on these issues;

Emphasising that the Forum has taken instrumental steps towards its institutionalization and well-functioning, reflected by its enlargement, its continued and timely international projection, as well as the manifest commitment of the Forum – while realizing its activities – to address, adhere to and develop the disarmament agenda on small arms and light weapons;

Adopted the following

Decisions

Arms Trade Treaty

The Forum and its Representatives acknowledged the initiative referred to as the Arms Trade Treaty as a key initiative in the prevention and control of the irresponsible commerce in firearms, emphasising that the full respect for international law and its timely codification and development related to disarmament issues is a guiding principle, fundamental for the strive for peace, respect for human rights, and sustainable development. The Forum therefore assumes as its task the development of activities during the up-coming year, relating to both capacity-building and sensitisation, in support of the initiation of negotiations on such a Treaty as of the 2006 Conference to Review Progress made in the Implementation of the 2001 United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in all its aspects.

The Forum also recommended, in that spirit, that a meeting between governmental representatives be held for the purpose of concerting support for the initiation of negotiations. That meeting could be held in a Latin American country, with the support of the European Union, and be open to all countries that participate in the United Nations process.

The Representatives affirmed that the contribution that the parliamentary and inter-parliamentary work can bring to the discussion on the Arms Trade Treaty, should be recognised and manifested. For the purpose of reaching this goal, the Representatives and Members of the Forum should consider carrying out activities in their respective Parliaments, in order that those governments, who have not done so, announce their support to the Treaty, thus securing and urging that the governmental institutions internalize this position of support. The Members of the Forum should further perform leadership in this regard assuming, *inter alia*, the task of informing other parliamentarians in their respective Parliaments about the Treaty initiative, as well as publicly announcing their support to the initiative.

The Representatives agreed that Parliamentarians should also forward legislative recommendations to their Governments, in order that Governments promote, support, sign and implement already elaborated and adopted international treaties concerning the control of small arms and light weapons, both regional ones and those within the frame of the United Nations. The Representatives underscored that these recommendations will support the initiative of the Arms Trade Treaty, for example in regards of marking and tracing of firearms, including ammunition; whereby these measures also should be legally binding, founded on the principles of transparency and control, and be accompanied by mechanisms for their effective implementation and monitoring.

In virtue of the referred, the Representatives urge – with the support and follow-up by the Forum and its Members – Governments to include Parliamentarians as well as representatives from Civil Society which are engaged in the subjects, in the official inter-governmental meetings where the issues concerning the control of small arms and light weapons are addressed, thereby following and broadening the example given – specifically during the United Nations conferences – by various countries whose Parliamentarians are represented in the Forum.

Armed Violence and Youths

The Forum and its Representatives recognised that the involvement of children and youths in armed groups, outside as well as within conflict situations, is a severe problem, affecting the human development of all regions and societies in the world, requiring a determined and firm parliamentary action.

The Forum and the Representatives also underlined the necessity to manage this problem from a violence prevention approach, directed towards the root causes of the problem and towards finding responses that can strengthen the integrity of children and youths, as such preventing the recruitment to armed groups. Starting from this conviction, the Representatives and the Members of the Forum should consider initiating actions in their respective Parliaments in support of the adoption of policies, and the employment of measures, amongst others legislative measures, that allows the exploration of a worthy rehabilitation and reinsertion of the members of the referred groups, with the view of creating a lasting culture of peace.

The Representatives decided that the Forum should assist the Representatives and its Members in the development of such tasks. To this end, mapping will be conducted as to the possibility of, for example, creating and supporting where there already are in place, seminars between Parliamentarians, parliamentary advisors, and civil society representatives, as well as with authorities and governments. With the same purpose, the Forum should facilitate the exchange of information between Parliamentarians, and collect data on parliamentary initiatives, in this field.

Civilian Possession of Firearms

On having at mind the Representatives that the Members of the Forum since the initiation of the parliamentary exchange, have advocated for integral control and disarmament policies in regards of small arms and light weapons, that take into account all the aspects related to such policies, one of which is civilian possession of firearms, the Forum and its Representatives acknowledge that a high level of such possession can have negative impacts on the social cohesion of communities and societies in all regions of the world. The Representatives consider that the regulation of civilian possession, through the prohibition of certain firearms, certain users, and certain usages, as well as through the search for public support for control and prevention initiatives, are subjects that require decisive parliamentary action. For this purpose, it is indispensable to confront the feelings of insecurity in the societies and the corresponding public demand for firearms.

In consideration of the aforementioned and that the proposals of the Forum, its Members and other Parliamentarians steadily gain international importance, the Forum and its Representatives urge Governments to include civilian possession as a theme for debate during the 2006 Conference to Review Progress made in the Implementation of the 2001 United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in all its aspects. Furthermore, the Forum shall support the Representatives and its members who have an interest in the issue, together with civil society organizations and interested governments, in the articulation of civilian possession as an element that should be part of the United Nations process related to small arms and light weapons; for the purposes of which special support should be offered to this theme during the meetings concerning the preparation and follow-up to the referred conference.

The Representatives found that, as especially noteworthy examples of parliamentary work concerning control over civilian possession of firearms, warrants mentioning of the Nicaraguan Law for Control and Regulation of Arms, Ammunition, Explosives and Related Materials, which entered into force the 25th of February 2005; and the referendum envisaged in the Brazilian Disarmament Statute to be held the 23rd of October 2005, in which referendum will be decided if the selling of firearms to civilians – except in certain cases – shall be prohibited in Brazil, underscoring the Representatives that the referendum sets a precedent.

Establishment of a Parliamentary Observatory

The Representatives resolved to fully embrace the idea to compile and diffuse information about the parliamentary work in the field of small arms and light weapons. For that end, the Representatives decided to establish – under the responsibility of the Board of the Forum and the Secretariat as executing organ, and in adherence to the instruction detailed in the background paper number VIb of the present Meeting –, a Parliamentary Observatory on Small Arms and Light Weapons, which Observatory will have as its principal objective to report and inform on parliamentary activities concerning the control of small arms and light weapons. The Secretariat shall have the responsibility to explore the possibilities of funding and give recommendations on the terms of reference for the Observatory. The Representatives emphasised that it is critical that the Observatory does not duplicate the work of others, but on the contrary engages with precisely reporting and informing on the parliamentary work in the field; in regards of which the Members of the Forum should seek ways of supporting the Observatory, following the understanding that the Observatory will be strengthened to the extent that the Members of the Forum approaches the Observatory and makes use of its services.

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The Representatives decided to adopt the new Statutes presented by the Board of the Forum, and to commend the Board for its efforts on elaborating the Statutes. The Representatives and Members of the Forum agreed that the Statutes clarifies the functioning of the Forum, especially in regards of the field of action of the Forum and the functioning of the Secretariat, thus furnishing the Forum with the institutional faculties that will allow the Forum to realize its undertakings adequately.

The Representatives appointed MP Daisy Tourné, Uruguay, and MP Raül Romeva, EU-Parliament, as new members of the Board of the Forum. Gratitude was expressed to MP Elías Castillo, Panama, and MP Gerardo Villanueva, Costa Rica, now leaving their posts in the Board, for their efforts and devotion to the Forum and its objectives during the period of their mandate.

The Representatives, Members of the Forum and other participants at the Meeting welcomed the prospect of being hosted by the European Parliament for the next Annual Meeting.

In the same spirit, the Representatives, Members of the Forum and other participants at the Meeting agreed to express their gratitude to the Senate of Mexico, and particularly the Senator and Vice-President of the Forum, Gral. Ramón Mota Sánchez, for the impeccable hospitality with which the participants in the Meeting have been attended, as well as congratulate the Secretariat

of the Forum for the services given during the Third Annual Meeting of Representatives of the Parliamentary Forum on Small Arms and Light Weapons.