Thematic Debate on 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 – Preventing, combating and eradicating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects at the national, regional, and global levels.

United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons – Preparatory Committee Meetings

12 February 2024

Statement by Demi Della-Porta, First Secretary, Permanent Mission of Australia to the United Nations

Check against delivery.

Thank you President

Allow me to congratulate you on your nomination as Cahir of this Preparatory Committee. Australia is pleased to support your nomination as President designate of RevCon4 and assurance you of our full support, including through our nomination to serve as a Vice-President of the Conference. We welcome this preparatory meeting to help lay the foundations for achieving tangible outcomes at the Review Conference.
Our commitment to reducing the threat posed by small arms and light weapons is enduring. Last year marked the tenth anniversary of the landmark UN Security Council Resolution 2117, the very first resolution on small arms and light weapons adopted by the Security Council. Australia was proud to have introduced that resolution during our Presidency of the Council in 2013. UNSCR 2117 highlighted the grave threat illicit small arms and light weapons pose to civilians, peacekeepers, humanitarian workers, and civil society organisations. In 2013, Australia also chaired the final UN conference which ultimately led to adoption of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) – an essential piece of the international arms regulation architecture aimed at preventing the diversion of conventional arms.

Despite our collective efforts, the challenges posed by small arms and light weapons continue. These weapons are intrinsically linked to terrorism and conflict-related sexual violence; they impede peacebuilding efforts.

President,

Criminals utilise gaps in regulations to traffic arms and to flagrantly disregard border controls. We know gun control laws work – that firearm-related harm can be significantly reduced by taking steps to regulate lawful firearm ownership and track firearm movements.
Australia has some of the strongest firearms laws and systems in the world, along with highly developed border controls. We acknowledge that continuous improvement is required to keep the community safe. In December last year, Prime Minister Albanese announced Australia’s commitment to establishing a National Firearms Register (NFR). The establishment of the National Firearms Register is the most significant uplift to Australia’s firearms management system in almost 30 years and is expected to be fully operational within four years. This timeframe reflects the complexity of Australia’s federated system. The unanimous commitment from across eight state law-enforcement agencies was a history-defining achievement for Australian policy makers.

The National Firearms Register will be a national system to draw and provide information to and from existing firearms registries, portals, and management systems to enable a national near real-time view on firearm ownership and movements, and any associated risks. It will improve police risk assessment and decision making by providing frontline officers with the critical information they need on firearms, parts, and owners, including linking firearms information with other relevant police and government information.

We are proud to be a global leader in firearms regulation and encourage States to continue to develop their own firearm registries, management practices, and regulations.
President,

Notwithstanding the challenges posed by the proliferation of SALW, we are encouraged by outcomes of note in recent times. The hard-won consensus outcome of the Eighth Biennial Meeting of States on the Programme of Action (PoA) on Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons places us in good stead to achieve further progress at the Review Conference in June. And the UN General Assembly’s adoption on 4 December of the Global Framework for Through-life Conventional Ammunition Management is a positive step forward for arms control, especially in light of the difficult strategic landscape. Synergies between the Global Framework and the PoA should be explored at the Review Conference.

Australia remains committed to addressing the threats posed by illicit small arms and light weapons and looks forward to further discussions on these important matters.

Thank you.