



## Misión Permanente de Costa Rica ante las Naciones Unidas

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Statement by **H.E. Mr. Luis Alberto Cordero**,  
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of Costa Rica

On the occasion of the United Nations 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  
27 June, 2006  
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Mr. President,

The Government of the Republic of Costa Rica congratulates you on your election as Chairman of the Review Conference of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects. You can count on the support of the Delegation of Costa Rica in discharging this difficult task in order to achieve the objectives set for this Conference. At the same time, I would also like to congratulate the rest of the members of the Bureau.

Mr. President,

We are here to answer a fundamental question: how far have we come in five years?

In 2001 our countries made important commitments through this Programme of Action. The Central American states agreed on the Code of Conduct Regarding the Transfer of Arms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Material. Costa Rica is pleased to support this progressive document and we have continued to reaffirm those commitments over the years. We are fully committed with the Declaration of Antigua, Guatemala, recently adopted by the Latin American and Caribbean states, that reflects the concern and the expectation of the Region. This solid text demonstrates positive support and common positions by the participating members regarding the Programme of Action. It is important to highlight that our region counts on a cohesive and firm position to confront the serious arms problems we face today.

In May of this year, Costa Rica participated in the writing of the draft Nairobi Guidelines on arms transfer control, incorporating strong language for transfer controls based on the United Nations Charter; existing obligations, and issues to take into account.

Finally, this month in Switzerland, forty-two countries, including Costa Rica, reaffirmed their promise to “stem the proliferation, illegal trafficking and misuse of small arms and light weapons and ammunition.”

The Geneva Declaration also included strong language on the need to, quote, “uphold full respect for human rights, promote the peaceful settlement of conflicts based on justice and the rule of law, and address a climate of impunity.”

Besides all this encouraging initiatives, we necessarily and unfortunately have to concur that the problem we faced in 2001 has not gone away. This very day one-thousand people will die from gun violence. The legions of child soldiers who wield weapons number in the tens of thousands. And in many of those situations, there is still a “climate of impunity” that fuels the atrocities. We definitely have a lot of work to do.

Mr. President,

As we join here for two weeks to review our progress and plot our course, Costa Rica would like to suggest a few steps forward that we can take together.

1- Our first step must be a greater incorporation of respect for human rights in the core language of this Programme of Action. We must not be doubtful to include in the Programme of Action what our nations were convinced to include in this organization’s founding document.

2- Secondly, if we are serious about our mission: this Review Conference must call on States to establish and reinforce regulations on the transfer of small and light weapons.

Just as we cannot be vocal on governmental wrongs but silent on human rights, we cannot be critical of the illegal trade of weapons but unconcerned with the legal trade that contributes to it. Common core global principles based on existing legal obligations and transparency are critical for us to tackle this out of control problem arms problem and its impacts. Costa Rica respectfully urges Member States to agree on strong global principles for arms transfer controls in the outcome document of this Review Conference.

Further, my Delegation promotes and calls for a legally binding conventional arms trade treaty and emphasizes the importance to continue these negotiations in the First Committee of the General Assembly beyond this current Programme of Action process.

We are of the view that there is a need to strengthen regulations on civilian acquisition and possession of small arms and light weapons. Measures could include limits on the types and numbers of arms that civilians are allowed to acquire and possess, as well as strict requirements for licensing, authorization and registration.

There are multiple actors which participate in the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and all of them, including non-state actors must fall within the scope of our concern. The illicit trade of weapons is often linked to several criminal conducts; therefore any attempt to control such trade has to include a crime prevention component. Certainly, no participating actor should be excluded from our consideration.

Mr. President,

Ammunition fuels small arms and light weapons. It is important that we include ammunition on the agenda for this conference, especially considering the challenge presented to the security of our societies by the increasing amount of ammunition being produced. Marking and tracing controls need to be reinforced and strengthened. We are convinced that a legally binding instrument in this regard is the best way to proceed.

In order to achieve the objectives of the Conference, better international cooperation is an urgent necessity. By sharing technical, financial and technological resources, we can encourage every nation to establish and maintain a national weapons registry. Costa Rica supports the establishment of a permanent fund, under United Nations auspices and made up of voluntary contributions, to facilitate the complete implementation of every aspect of the Programme of Action.

Regarding the follow-up of the Conference, my Delegation strongly believes in the need to review the Programme of Action every five years and to consider on a biennial basis the national, regional and global implementation, including the challenges that Member States face in this regard.

Delegations may also wish to consider the expansion of the agenda to include all conventional arms, for these are just as deadly as pistols and rifles.

Finally, I am pleased to announce that, within a year, Costa Rica will convene a high-level international summit on the Consensus of Costa Rica. The consensus we hope to achieve will urge developed nations and international organizations to forgive a nation's debt not only because of the economic situation of the country, but also because that country has chosen to shift resources from weapons and troops to education and healthcare. We hope it is agreed that the international financial community rewards not just those who use resources prudently, as has been the case until now, but those who use

resources morally. The Costa Rica Consensus will be a bold incentive for peace that will go hand-in-hand with the Programme of Action.

Mr. President,

In summary, as President Oscar Arias stated in Conference on Armed Violence and Development held in Geneva earlier this month, quote “All of us should be proud of this process, proud of how far we have come, but it is time to move forward from principles to practice.”

If we are truly concerned about armed violence, we must establish common criteria for arms transfers that are objective, balanced, uniform, transparent, multilaterally agreed upon, and based on existing legal obligations and express prohibitions. Only if we establish these criteria, as soon as possible, will the outlook at our meeting five years from now be any brighter than the outlook we have today.

Our delegation reiterates its complete willingness to participate actively and constructively in these meetings, working towards the common goal of overcoming the arms problems we currently face.

Thank you