

**Letter to Member States from Ambassador Pasi Patokallio,
Chair of the 2005 Biennial Meeting of States on Small Arms**

Ottawa, 1 March 2005

Excellency,

I am writing to you in my capacity as the Chairman designate of the United Nations Second Biennial Meeting of States to Consider 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, to be held from 11 to 15 July 2005 in New York, in order to share with you my thoughts concerning the preparations of this Meeting (hereinafter referred to as BMS2). My reflections are largely based on recent consultations mostly in New York and Geneva.

In organizing BMS2 I will follow the useful precedents set by the Chairperson of BMS1, Ambassador Inoguchi, wherever practicable. However, in the light of the consultations I have had, I believe that there is a need and support for some adjustments to reflect the experience gained from and since BMS 1.

I strongly encourage States to submit their national reports on the implementation of the Programme of Action well in advance in order to pave the way for their full and informed consideration at BMS2. With this in mind, I suggest that States submit their national reports to the UN Department for Disarmament Affairs by 30 April 2005 as indicated in its note verbale (DDAIO6-2005) of 14 February 2005. I very much hope that this time line will be respected.

In my view, the analysis and observations made in the report *Implementing the United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons: Analysis of the Reports Submitted by States in 2003* prepared by UNIDIR in collaboration with the Department for Disarmament Affairs, the UNDP and the Small Arms Survey are most pertinent and provide useful pointers for the preparation of reports to BMS2.

I would also like to draw your attention to the fact that the same four organizations have jointly developed a Reporting Assistance Package to assist States in reporting on their implementation of the Programme of Action. It is available online on the UNDP website, in five language versions, at www.undp.org/bcpr/smallarms/PoA.htm. Should States require further assistance, they can call via e-mail upon a Reporting Help Desk at [poa-reporting \(djundp.org\)](mailto:poa-reporting@djundp.org) or telephone (+41 22 917 8311) or send a fax (+41 22 917 8060).

The thematic debate at BMS 1 proved to be a useful innovation. My consultations have indicated strong support for providing more time for such a debate at BMS2. I intend to do so by allocating the same number of full sessions for general statements and for the thematic debate (four each). In terms of allocating time, this would mean that the general debate would begin right after the opening of BMS2 and the taking of the necessary organizational decisions on Monday morning (11 July) and would continue through the morning session of Wednesday (13 July). The thematic debate would begin with the afternoon session of Wednesday and continue through the morning session of Friday (15 July). The afternoon session of Friday would be devoted to the consideration and adoption of BMS2 's report and concluding statements, if any.

In order to meet this goal, delegations will have to limit their general statements to a maximum of five minutes. This time limit will be strictly enforced by the use of "traffic lights" and by having the sessions start right on time. While recognizing the right of each delegation to prepare its general statement as it wishes, I strongly feel that in such statements delegations should only highlight key points given that their records of implementation are already dealt with more fully in their respective written reports. Furthermore I strongly encourage the practice of only reading a few key paragraphs of the statement and referring to the full text of the statement being circulated in the room for the rest.

Allocation of time between national statements, statements by international organizations and statements by non-governmental organizations and civil society in the context of the general debate will require further consultation.

My intention is to use the structure and themes of the thematic debate already employed at BMS 1. Following precedent, the thematic discussion would thus be structured around the following six thematic clusters:

- i. Weapons collection and destruction
Stockpile management
Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants
- ii. Capacity-building
Resource mobilization
Institution-building
- iii. Marking and tracing
- iv. Linkages (terrorism, organized crime, trafficking in drugs and precious minerals)
- v. Import/export control
Illicit brokering
- vi. Human development
Public awareness and culture of peace
Children, women and the elderly.

As before, international assistance and cooperation would be considered cross-cutting themes with relevance to all six thematic clusters. Allocation of time between the clusters will require further consultation.

Based on my consultations I plan to prepare a list of questions covering all the thematic clusters. These questions are intended to help delegations to focus on particular issues within the various themes. They are in no way intended to restrict the right of delegations to discuss other relevant issues as well. My intention is to circulate the list of questions well before the start of BMS2 in order to help participants to better prepare themselves for the thematic debate.

I am convinced that BMS2 would benefit from active, all-round participation by relevant non-governmental organizations and other civil society actors as many of them have valuable practical expertise and experience of the implementation of the Programme of Action. My consultations on how best to engage this expertise and experience throughout BMS2 are under way. In any event, I would encourage States to include NGO and other civil society representatives as well as parliamentarians in their delegations.

It is my intention to work closely with the Bureau of BMS2 in managing its proceedings. Therefore it would be clearly helpful if the Bureau could be constituted as early as possible. On 7 December 2004, I wrote a letter to the regional groups requesting for nominations. The UN Under Secretary General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Abe, has also kindly reminded those concerned of this unfinished business. I would very much appreciate if those regional groups that have not yet responded would do so promptly so as to enable me to convene the first Bureau meeting well in advance of BMS2, preferably later this month already. After further consultations with States, international organizations and other stakeholders in at least two UN regional meetings (in Algiers and in Beijing) as well as after a further round of informal open-ended consultations in New York and Geneva I plan to inform you again in the form of another letter. Tentatively speaking, you could expect to receive my follow-up letter by the end of May. You are, of course, always welcome to contact me in the meantime either directly or through Mr. Janne Taalas of the Permanent Mission of Finland to the United Nations in New York.

Yours sincerely,

Pasi Patokallio
Ambassador