



## BITING THE BULLET

INTERNATIONAL ALERT | SAFERWORLD | UNIVERSITY OF BRADFORD

### PRESS RELEASE

**EMBARGO: 00:01hrs Monday 19 June 2006**

#### **States failing to deliver on promises to control small arms: Tough criteria for arms transfers needed at UN conference.**

Thousands of people around the world are killed or injured by guns each week. The spread and misuse of small arms and light weapons (SALW) fuels conflict, facilitates violent crime and human rights abuses and undermines development.

A report published by Biting the Bullet (1) concludes that states are failing to fully implement promises to tackle small arms. The report, "Reviewing action on small arms: assessing the first five years of the UN Programme of Action (PoA)", comes as states prepare to meet in New York to review progress in the implementation of the PoA aimed at combating illicit trafficking in small arms (2).

The report evaluates the performance of over **180** countries and finds that implementation of the PoA leaves a lot to be desired.

The findings show that:

- Only **90** states (**less than half**) have mechanisms to co-ordinate action on SALW within government.
- Only **37** states involve civil society in their national co-ordination of action on SALW.
- Only **68** states have reviewed their legislation since the PoA was agreed in 2001, and only **37** states have specific controls over SALW brokering activities.

Progress has been particularly slow amongst states in North Africa, the Middle East and much of Asia.

There remains no global agreement on what states' responsibilities are under international law when it comes to trading in SALW. As a result, weapons continue to be transferred to places where they might fuel conflict or be used in human rights abuses. Despite the requirement in the PoA that states are to control SALW transfers according to their obligations under international law, up to **80** states have not adopted any national regulations to control the export of SALW. Many of the regulations that are in place are full of weaknesses and loopholes because there are no common rules.

**"If states really want to address the carnage caused by small arms, they should agree tough rules for controlling international arms sales. This is long overdue and the Review Conference is the place to take this crucial step"**, said Paul Eavis, Director of Saferworld.

The Biting the Bullet project is calling upon the Review conference to:

- **Agree** global standards on arms transfers reflecting states' existing responsibilities under international law.
- **Emphasise** the link between small arms and development by integrating armed violence prevention activities to poverty reduction projects.
- **Increase** international cooperation and financial assistance for SALW control initiatives.

The full report can be downloaded at:

<http://www.saferworld.org.uk/publications.php?id=191>

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### **Note to editors:**

Biting the Bullet have prepared a number of supplementary press briefings:

Global implementation of the PoA June 2006

<http://www.saferworld.org.uk/publications.php?id=195>

Implementation of the PoA in Africa June 2006

<http://www.saferworld.org.uk/publications.php?id=198>

Implementation of the PoA in Europe June 2006

<http://www.saferworld.org.uk/publications.php?id=194>

Implementation of the PoA in South Asia June 2006

<http://www.saferworld.org.uk/publications.php?id=197>

International weapons transfers and the PoA June 2006

<http://www.saferworld.org.uk/publications.php?id=199>

Development dimension of the PoA June 2006

<http://www.saferworld.org.uk/publications.php?id=193>

Capacity to implement the PoA June 2006

<http://www.saferworld.org.uk/publications.php?id=196>

(1) The Biting the Bullet project comprises of: **Saferworld**, an international NGO working to increase human security and prevent armed violence; **International Alert**, an independent peacebuilding organisation working in over twenty countries and territories around the world; and the **Centre for International Co-operation**

**and Security (CICS)**, a centre for academic and applied research with extensive expertise in small arms and related issues, based at the Department of Peace Studies at the University of Bradford.

(2) The UN Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons In All Its Aspects (PoA) was agreed in July 2001. The PoA establishes an international framework for action to tackle the illicit trade in SALW.