

RevCon IANSA presentations 30 June 2006

1. Vision for 2012

Note: RP to add response to OD

Rebecca Peters, director of IANSA, UK, to be delivered in English

Mr. Chairman, Members
of the Bureau,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It feels like it was yesterday that I was addressing this same assembly, in July 2001, during the conference that adopted the UN Programme of Action on small arms and light weapons. Today, five years later, we are again gathered here to reflect on progress and challenges, and to set the course for action in the next phase of the UN process on small arms control.

Five years ago governments adopted the UN Programme of Action after some very tough discussions. I would like to take a minute to look back at what has been achieved in the five years of implementation, given that it is the PoA which has brought us together at this conference. I think we can all be proud: a lot of ground has been covered, and space has been created to discuss a range of issues. Most States have set up institutions to examine the multiple facets of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. Many countries have undertaken reviews of their national legislation, and some 70% of States have also reported on their national firearms legislation at the two Biennial Meeting of States, firmly embedding this issue into the UN process. Small arms control is increasingly being implemented as part of development programming and poverty reduction plans. Numerous regional agreements have been drafted and adopted to control arms transfers, brokering activities, or to set criteria for regulating access to guns by civilians. Weapons collection and destruction programmes have been implemented, and linkages are being made between small arms control and security sector reform.

Civil society too can be proud of its contribution to this process. IANSA has grown into a network representing over 700 NGOs in 100 countries. We have assisted governments and international organisations in their implementation efforts, have carried out research to document the human cost of small arms, have tested approaches and interventions to reduce gun violence and are constantly incorporating the lessons we learned into our work. We have also played an important role in developing basic principles to guide international arms transfers, an issue on which we hope to see progress during this conference.

However, if the Programme of Action is what brings us here today, our responsibility goes far beyond this document. We are accountable to our countries and organisations, but most of all we are accountable to the millions of people who are affected daily by gun violence, those who have died, and those who will die, and the

many more who survive gun violence and have to learn to live with its legacy of trauma, pain, physical scarring and economic hardship. It is on their behalf that we are gathered here today. That is an immense responsibility. Let us not forget the human face of gun violence because these are the people, at the end of the day, whose fate we have in our hands.

It is very humbling for me to be speaking during this session alongside people who have actually survived gun violence. Listening to their voices and hearing their stories always reminds me of our ultimate goal. I think this is particularly important during this conference when we can get frustrated at the slow pace of progress, the difficulty of finding common ground and of setting priorities. You will listen to the stories of Xavier, and of Shelley, and of other survivors of gun violence, and I hope that you will be reminded of what the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects actually means. This is a real problem, not an academic exercise. And it is in our power to do something about it.

IANSA has identified five areas that we feel need to be prioritised, which my colleagues will explore in further detail. The four thematic areas are transfer controls, national firearms legislation, linkages to development, and assistance to survivors of armed violence. The fifth area relates to follow on mechanisms. This is, in fact, the third reason we are gathered here: we need to look ahead and set the programme of work for the next six years of action on the issue of small arms. Follow on mechanisms are not a boring procedural issue. They are what will enable us to fulfil our vision of what the state of the world should be like in 2012 when it comes to controlling small arms and light weapons.

IANSA's vision for 2012 is quite clear. We want to see a world where fewer people will die, and be hurt and traumatised by ill-gotten weapons. We want to see a world where survivors of gun violence will be taken care of and given a real chance to reconstruct their lives. We want to see a world where adequate controls will exist on the sale, use, possession, stockpiling and transfer of small arms and light weapons. We want to see a world where armed insecurity will be systematically included in development programming and understood to be a premise to sustainable development.

Can we achieve this by 2012? Yes, we can. The Secretary General stated in his opening speech that the United Nations stood ready to support states in this endeavour. Well, so does civil society. IANSA's 700 members stand ready to work alongside governments and international organisations to further implement the Programme of Action and the recommendations to be issued by this Review Conference. Although it is your responsibility to ensure that action is taken, we are ready to offer you our expertise and energy to make this vision a reality. There is a lot to do, but I believe that if we, as civil society work together with governments, we will be able to turn the tide on gun violence.

Thank you.