

**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
30 June 2006**

**Statement by Gary Mauser
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Mr President, distinguished delegates,

I am Professor Gary Mauser, Simon Fraser University, in British Columbia, Canada. I am representing the National Firearms Association. For 20 years, as part of my academic program with SFU's Institute for Canadian Urban Research Studies, I have studied Canadian firearms legislation. I will briefly report on my findings.

Mr. President, Canada has gone through big changes in the past 15 years. In the 1990s Canada introduced a program to license firearms owners and register sporting rifles and shotguns. Previous firearms legislation had primarily focused on the criminal misuse of firearms as well as controlling handguns and fully automatic firearms.

The former government insisted on introducing this costly system despite contrary advice from the New Zealand government and from experienced Canadian civil servants. The new government, which has recently been elected after a campaign where gun control was central, has now decided to abandon the firearm registry.

It has been demonstrated that the Canadian licensing and registration system is not cost-effective and has not reduced crime. Research shows that 71% of firearm licences were found to have errors, and over 250,000 guns were registered with the same serial numbers as stolen guns. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police have said they have no faith in the information: and barely more than half of the guns (or gun owners) are included in the registry. The Auditor General of Canada has estimated that the registry has cost taxpayers more than one billion dollars, even though it was originally budgeted to cost only two million dollars. Reviewing the Canadian gun control program, she called it the worst case of cost overrun she has ever seen.

A few statistics demonstrate the ineffectiveness of the Canadian firearm registration system. Since 1998, when firearms were required to be registered, the homicide rate has increased by more than 3%. Despite the outrageous cost of the registry, the percentage of gun homicides has remained fixed at 27%. So with family homicides, where the percentage involving firearms has remained at 23%. Nor did the firearm registry change the proportion of homicide victims who are female (32%) since 1998.

The firearm registry has not saved any lives. While gun homicide numbers are indeed down, the proportion of domestic homicides involving guns has not declined, nor has the homicide rate declined. Instead it has increased. This suggests that crime rates are driven by sociological factors (such as the percentage of youth in the total population, and social conditions) rather than availability of just one method of murder.

Public opinion has reversed. In 1995, surveys showed large majorities supporting the registry; current polls show majorities (as high as 84%) wishing to abandon it as ineffective.

Mr. President, the central question is whether this approach to firearm regulation is defective in conception. To answer this question, I examined the success of legislation in a variety of English-speaking countries, some developed, some semi-developed, some undeveloped – including the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, the Republic of Ireland, and Jamaica.

I could find no evidence that blanket gun regulations, even firearm prohibitions, contributed to a reduction of criminal violence in any of these countries. Firearm prohibitions failed to reduce criminal violence in both Jamaica and the Republic of Ireland. My results offer no support for those who advocate blanket gun laws.

I conclude by asking the General Assembly to reject the siren song of the anti-gun NGOs, Mr. President. The campaign to impose blanket prohibitive gun regulations is contrary to a growing body of research showing that in a wide variety of countries, arms prohibition does not contribute to lowering criminal violence.

There is a danger the UN will lose further trust and credibility around the globe, and ultimately take part in the prolongation of poverty, misery and the lack of prospect of entire peoples, by mistakenly directing its attention towards private gun ownership.

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