

Security Council High-Level Meeting on Small Arms, September 26th, 2013, Security Council Chamber

Statement by Ms. Power, Permanent Mission of the United States of America to the United Nations

Madam President, you should know that your Ambassador, Mr. Gary Quinlan, and his team have done a magnificent job this month in the presidency of the Security Council. We are all very grateful to them.

My Government welcomes today's ministerial meeting and is pleased that greater attention is being paid to the danger posed to international stability and human life by the illicit trafficking, stockpiling and use of small arms and light weapons.

On behalf of the United States, I congratulate our friends from Australia for their leadership in bringing this subject to the attention of the Security Council and for promoting action that reaffirms the commitment of the international community to addressing the problem in a consistent, persistent and coordinated way. I also commend the Secretary-General for his recent report on small arms (S/2013/503), which includes a wealth of insights and observations that have informed the Council's unprecedented action this afternoon. I thank International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) Vice-President Beerli for her briefing and for the valuable work that ICRC does each and every day, often at grave risk, around the world.

The urgency and timeliness of the resolution adopted today (resolution 2117 (2013)) is reflected in the recent terrorist attack in Kenya, ongoing violence in the Central African Republic, the devastation caused by recent fighting in Mali and the daily toll of suffering caused by armed criminals, illegal militias, drug cartels, pirates and others with illegitimate access to such weapons. The resolution highlights the special risks that illicit weapons pose to vulnerable groups, including refugees, the internally displaced, women and children and members of civil society, including those who deliver humanitarian assistance to families in desperate need. We are also reminded on a daily basis that the availability of illicit arms is both a cause and the result of violence, as rival groups arm themselves in response to the growing arsenals of the other. Our task, and it is a fully appropriate one for the Security Council, is to encourage States to act together to reverse those cycles of destruction and to invest our energy and resources on behalf of the rule of law.

Of course, we recognize that nations have the right to defend themselves and their citizens and that small arms and light weapons are manufactured legally and traded and retained for legitimate purposes, and we would strongly oppose any effort impinge on the constitutional rights of our citizens to bear arms. Our concerns arise when legal controls break down and, through weakness of governance, corruption or other lawless activity, deadly weapons fall into the wrong hands.

Every State has an obligation to prevent the illegal transfer and accumulation of weapons, and in particular to abide by Security Council resolutions pertaining to the flow of arms into countries in conflict. We each have a responsibility to work as partners in seeking to improve border controls, support United Nations peace operations, promote the sharing of information among law enforcement agencies, and comply with relevant international treaties and agreements.

The many dimensions of that task as reflected in the programmes and policies of my own Government, which has worked for many years to assist States in developing better law-enforcement

capabilities and stockpile-management systems, while also discouraging irresponsible and indiscriminate arms exports. Last year alone, we contributed more than \$149 million to some 35 countries to safely destroy surplus conventional weapons and inform area residents of potential risks from unexploded munitions.

Looking ahead, I urge the Council to maintain its focus on this challenge and to make creative use of the full range of available options, including quick-response mechanisms, in order to save lives by reducing dramatically and permanently the illicit flow of light weapons and small arms.