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ACCION MUNDIAL DE PARLAMENTARIOS
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Shazia Z. Rafi

Dear PGA Members,

We have recently returned from Manila, The Philippines, where PGA successfully hosted the 3rd in a series of Regional Parliamentary Workshops on Small Arms and Light Weapons. As President and Convenor of PGA's Peace and Democracy Programme, we were also pleased to have been able to participate actively in the previous Workshops/Seminars that PGA organized in 2006 in Dakar, Senegal and Tbilisi, Georgia. Further information on all of these Workshops/Seminars may be found on the PGA website at www.pgaction.org

We are writing to you now as we have come to the conclusion that a real opportunity exists for PGA to consolidate itself as *the* parliamentary organization in terms of successful advocating for improved regulation of Small Arms and Light Weapons and the initiative towards an *Arms Trade Treaty* (ATT). With a membership in excess of 1,300 in 112 countries worldwide, PGA is uniquely well positioned to make a significant impact on this issue. PGA has a distinguished track record in this area of disarmament, with a number of our members playing an active and effective role in the negotiation of the *Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty* and the *Chemical Weapons Treaty* in the earlier years of existence of the organization. For these reasons, therefore, we believe we should not let this opportunity pass.

The illicit trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) fuels and needlessly extends conflicts in several regions in the world, in particular in Africa. Inadequate regulation of SALW also allows terrorists easier access to weapons than they would otherwise have. This nefarious trade also impedes/delays emergence of stable, post-conflict societies where normal employment and prosperity for citizens would otherwise have taken hold quicker. There is therefore both a security and a sustainable development component to this issue. And significant research/findings demonstrate that women are disproportionately affected by conflict so if we can better address this issue we are also addressing greater gender equality in the process. Poverty eradication, Sustainable Development and Gender Equality are 3 of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of the United Nations.

With this background in mind, therefore, we wish to strongly urge *each of you individually* to identify 2-3 of the following, straight forward and practical steps (set out below) which you believe you could take within your own respective parliaments before the end of June 2007. We wish to emphasize that these steps are neither labour intensive nor unduly time consuming and have been identified specifically bearing in mind the very busy lives that we parliamentarians have. Having identified 2-3 of the following steps which you believe you could take within the suggested time period, we would be grateful if you could notify us and/or Peter Barcroft at PGA HQ (peter.barcroft@pgaction.org) so that we can provide you with any additional assistance you might need/background documentation. (As some of you are already aware, the PGA Secretariat in New York posts a very helpful *Weekly PGA SALW Update* on the PGA website which we would recommend you to read on a regular basis - http://www.pgaction.org/prog_peac.asp?id=210).

Once you have pursued the steps/course of action you have chosen in consultation with PGA, the final stage would be to notify/inform PGA before the end of August 2007 of when and where the step/s were taken and what results, if any, took place, as a result of having taken a particular initiative/s (i.e. responses from Government officials/changes in

NGO in general consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations

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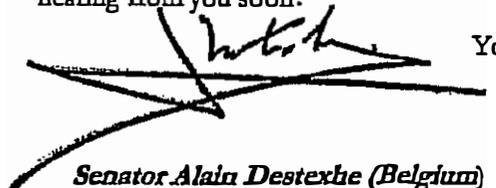
Government policy/stronger Government support for regulation of SALW and/or toward an ATT, new legislation and/or other feedback).

PGA'S SUGGESTED STEPS FOR PGA MEMBERS WORLDWIDE TO TAKE ON SALW/ATT

FEBRUARY-JUNE 2007

- *Raise* questions in Parliament concerning national compliance with the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons, either in plenary session or during the proceedings of relevant Parliament Committees of which you are a member (i.e. Defense, Foreign Affairs, Security, and Human Rights Committees)
- *Convene or Request relevant Parliamentary Committee meetings* to discuss further the issue of national compliance with the UN Programme of Action on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons, with the objective of influencing government and opposition MPs to be more pro-active on this front
- *Raise* the issue of national compliance with the UN Programme of Action bilaterally with relevant senior Government officials and relevant Government Ministries by letter, telephone or meeting, by appointment
- *Ask* your Foreign Minister about the letter that was sent to her/him by the United Nations Department of Disarmament Affairs on 16th January 2007 (via your country's Mission at the United Nations) seeking opinions on the initiative towards an Arms Trade Treaty. (see attached copy). The objective here is to ensure that your Government responds, and responds in a positive way, about this initiative. The deadline for response is the end of April 2007.
- *Advocate* for stronger support by your government towards the Arms Trade Treaty generally, as initiated by the UN General Assembly resolution adopted on December 7, 2006 in New York, recognizing that a comprehensive approach is required to address the complex issue of conventional arms transfers
- *Raise* general awareness of the initiative towards a global Arms Trade Treaty by publishing articles in the national press or by giving interviews in national media outlets (radio/TV)
- *Share* your respective national legislative experiences with other PGA Members (via the PGA Secretariat), with a view to continually enhancing best legislative practices in this area
- *Closely* work with civil society groups in advocating for your country's support for the implementation of the UN-Programme of Action on illicit trade of SALW and towards an Arms Trade Treaty

We thank you all for your very kind attention in this important matter and look forward to hearing from you soon.


Senator Alain Destexhe (Belgium)
President, Parliamentarians for Global Action

Yours sincerely,


Hon. Ibrahim Sorie (Sierra Leone)
Convenor, PGA Peace & Democracy Program