Remarks at United Nations Event on Argentina’s National Program for the Voluntary Surrender of Firearms

By

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Panel Discussion

National Program for the Voluntary Surrender of Firearms

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Today, thanks to the Permanent Mission of Argentina to the United Nations, we will focus on an Argentine initiative that was yesterday honoured by the World Future Council and the Inter-Parliamentary Union as a recipient of one of its 2013 Future Policy Awards. I welcome this opportunity to commend such an enlightened initiative, which shows clearly how national policies can harmonize with multilateral norms.

Argentina’s National Program for the Voluntary Surrender of Firearms represents an important instrument in the toolbox of small arms controls, which includes a range of measures such as marking and tracing, stockpile management, destruction, legislative reform and the training of law enforcement personnel. The 2001 UN Programme of Action on Small Arms calls on States to implement such voluntary weapons collection programmes.

These programmes are increasingly used outside of traditional post-conflict frameworks to improve citizen security and reduce armed violence. Such programmes have been implemented in Australia, Argentina, Brazil, Cambodia and South Africa.

Argentina has collected and destroyed more than 149,000 firearms turned in voluntarily by its citizens. It has made use of fixed mobile collection sites, social media and toll-free telephone lines to get out the message. Weapons are exchanged with no questions asked in exchange for monetary compensation established at rates below illicit market prices.

I wish to commend our host, Ambassador Maria Cristina Perceval, who in her former capacity as Argentine Senator authored two bills in 2005 relating directly to our subject today: the Regulación de la Tenencia de Armas (Regulation on Gun Possession) and Plan de Desarme (National Action Plan on Disarmament for light weapons).

I am also pleased to recognize the cooperation between the UN’s Regional Center for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, and the government of Argentina, in the implementation of small arms controls. Since 2012, the Regional Centre has worked the government to implement multilateral standards in this field and it has verified the destruction of over 6,000 surplus and obsolete weapons held by the government.

Our cooperation includes supporting the Ministry of Security in the adoption of internationally agreed standard operating procedures, deactivation of ceremonial weapons, and protocols for marking weapons and ammunition in police stockpiles. Argentina is leading the way in implementing these standards in the region.

The partnership with Argentina is unique in that it is fully funded by Argentina. It is a
model that should be replicated throughout the region.

I would also like to note that Argentina has a long history of working with civil society in this field. Groups such as “Asociación de Políticas Publicas”, have been at the forefront of security issues at a national and regional level. Buenos Aires is home to the Nonproliferation for Global Security Foundation—one of the leading foundations dedicated to the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Also located in Buenos Aires is the recently consolidated Latin American and Caribbean Leadership Network for Nuclear Disarmament and Non-proliferation, which actively promotes nuclear disarmament and arms control.

Argentina’s contributions in these fields have not been limited to isolated initiatives—

- It is also a main sponsor of the biennial General Assembly Resolution on "Information on confidence-building measures".

- From 1999 to 2001, Argentina and Chile developed a common standardized methodology for measuring and analysing defence expenditures in the two countries.

- During its presidency of the Security Council in 2005, Argentina planted the idea that led this year to the Council’s first resolution on small arms.

- Argentina was also one of the seven co-authors of the Arms Trade Treaty resolution, and it led the ATT process from its inception through the 2012 July Conference.

- It has also participated in all seven Groups of Governmental Experts on UN Conventional Arms Register and chaired 5 of them.

- Argentina has also long been a strong supporter of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, in particular through the Brazilian–Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials.

So I am very pleased today to recognize Argentina’s enlightened policy initiatives, its impressive credentials as a champion of disarmament and conventional arms control, and its efforts to ensure that national policies are consistent with multilateral norms. I warmly congratulate the Government of Argentina upon the news that its weapons collection programme has earned a 2013 Future Policy Award. I hope this will inspire such initiatives throughout the world, which would surely be better off as a result.