Statement by Sergio Duarte
High Representative for Disarmament Affairs
on the occasion of the
Global Week of Action Against Gun Violence
(2-8 June 2008)

"Small arms are the dominant tools of criminal violence in non-conflict societies, and the rate of firearms-related homicides in post-conflict societies frequently outnumbers battlefield deaths.

Governments must be able to exercise legitimate authority and provide safety, security and development to their citizens. If they do not, their citizens may seek to guarantee their security through alternative forms of self-protection, retributive justice, or resort to armed violence.

As long as the human security of affected populations remains unanswered, the negative impact of small arms will continue to exist. That is why many States have started to recognize the importance of control measures on small arms. And that is why they have agreed to a number of international instruments as a means to control the tools of violence and as a complement parallel effort to address the structural causes of armed violence and conflict. However, much remains to be done to make those agreements work on the ground - urgently.

I hope that this year's Global Week of Action Against Gun Violence energizes civil society and governments to intensify their efforts in this field. In areas of crisis and in post-conflict situations, effective solutions to excessive circulation of small arms always include basic reduction and control measures. But they also need to focus on alternative, sustainable livelihoods - taking into account gender and age factors. National development plans need to include the element of small arms. And local, practical disarmament initiatives may contribute directly to safer, more secure communities."