Statement to the Fifth Biennial Meeting of States to Consider Implementation of the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons (BMS5)  
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Statement Delivered by Dr. Ted R. Bromund  
Contact: E-Mail theodore.bromund@heritage.org, Phone (202) 608-6082

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to offer written remarks to be placed in the record of this meeting. My name is Dr. Ted R. Bromund. I am a senior research fellow at The Heritage Foundation, a leading conservative think tank based in Washington, D.C., with hundreds of thousands of individual members.

The Programme of Action is a classic U.N. institution. It has achieved little, yet it survives, and, indeed, seeks to expand into areas beyond its scope. Its meetings feature the same empty pledges that have done much to discredit the United Nations as a whole.

U.N. member states have committed to report every two years on their implementation of the Programme. Today, only 88 of the U.N.'s 193 member states meet that minimal requirement. The Programme claims to coordinate foreign aid between donor and recipient nations. But after the 2012 Review Conference, only 26 nations requested a total of only $21.18 million in assistance.

Too many states see the Programme merely as a way to obtain more foreign aid or to cover for their own arms trafficking, or — worst of all — as a means to promote the disarmament of their own populations. In states that are appallingly misgoverned, the disarmament of civilians can be the prelude to genocide, because an unarmed population is a population that cannot resist.

The main obstacle in the world today to peace, human rights, and economic development is not the legal civilian ownership of firearms. It is not even the illicit traffic in firearms. It is the failure of too many U.N. member states to live up to the standards set out in the Preamble of the U.N. Charter.

The Programme has also been discredited by efforts to expand its remit. By bringing the Arms Trade Treaty, the International Small Arms Control Standards, and other unrelated conventions and activities into the PoA's orbit, these instruments would together become the mutually supporting centerpiece of a program of civilian disarmament. These efforts have no legal or moral basis, and they will not succeed.

The Programme of Action has had over a decade to justify its existence. It has failed to do so. It has become a self-perpetuating institution that refuses to recognize that much of the illicit trade in firearms is a natural response to the existence of the world's misgoverned nations.

I therefore call on the democracies at this meeting to reject the naive and dangerous beliefs on which the Programme is founded, to bring it to an end, and to dedicate themselves to more useful work.