Resolution on small arms and light weapons, with a view to the 2006 Review Conference on the United Nations Programme of action on illicit trade in Small Arms and and towards the establishment of an international arms trade Treaty

2006/2536(RSP) - 15/06/2006 - Text adopted by Parliament, topical subjects

The European Parliament adopted a resolution on small arms and light weapons, with a view to the 2006 Review Conference on the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects, and towards the establishment of an International Arms Trade Treaty. It welcomed the growing international support for a legally binding International Arms Trade Treaty to ban transfers which risk undermining human rights or international humanitarian law, which threaten the stability of countries or regions or which are likely to contribute to the outbreak or escalation of armed conflict. It also reaffirmed its concern about the ongoing proliferation of SALW, which cause unnecessary human suffering, exacerbate armed conflict and instability, facilitate terrorism, undermine the rule of law and contribute to grave violations of human rights.

Parliament called on the State Parties to the 2006 UN Programme of Action Review Conference to agree a set of global principles on arms transfers, including a requirement not to transfer weapons that are likely to contribute to human rights violations or crimes against humanity or that foster regional or national instability and armed conflict. It urged the international community to start negotiations on an International Arms Trade Treaty within the United Nations directly after the 2006 UN Programme of Action Review Conference in order to establish a legally binding instrument to regulate arms transfers. States participating in the 2006 Review Conference must address the humanitarian and development dimension of the UN Programme of Action, emphasising the importance of the interrelationship between trafficking, proliferation and misuse of SALW and development, poverty reduction and humanitarian assistance. Parliament also urged States to make violations of arms embargoes (including financial or logistical support) a criminal offence under national law.

Parliament took the view that national laws should be enforced to regulate private military and security services operating overseas and that, where such laws do not exist, they should be developed in order to improve regulation and accountability over this growing security sector.

It strongly recommended that governments:

- prohibit the unauthorised civilian possession and use of SALW and automatic and semi-automatic rifles and machine guns;

- develop information and exchange programmes between states that wish to cooperate on issues relating to controlling civilian possession of SALW;

- address the issue of reducing the excessive and undesirable demand for SALW within society and therefore promote programmes and measures aimed at reducing that demand, preventing and reducing urban or rural violence and insecurity and focusing on groups that are specifically affected by SALW violence.

Finally, Parliament urged States, in particular, to develop national legislation for the screening and licensing of SALW and automatic and semi-automatic machine guns and to prevent gun acquisition by people who have a record for violence or trafficking.