

Wednesday, 14 June 2006 - Strasbourg

Small arms (debate)

Ana Maria Gomes, on behalf of the PSE Group . - Mr President, small arms and light weapons are weapons of mass destruction in the developing world. It is estimated that they kill half a million people each year. Their long-term impact on sustainable development is undeniable. Fighting them means finding creative ways to bridge the gap between security sector reform and development assistance.

The latest reports by the UN Institute for Disarmament Research on European action on small arms and light weapons stresses that the EU should create more synergies between the relevant CFSP and Community instruments. Also, fighting the scourge of illegal brokering should be a priority. This Parliament has repeatedly expressed its disappointment at the lack of specific legislation in many EU countries, despite the adoption of Common Position 2002/203/CFSP.

Finally, the EU can play a decisive role in making sure that the review conference on the UN programme of action on small arms and light weapons is successful, and a follow-up conference must therefore be organised. We are counting on the Austrian Presidency to steer that process.

Success would mean agreement on a global set of principles on arms transfers which, as a minimum, should ensure that all transfers are authorised through a permit or licence, that existing obligations and relevant international law are respected, that arms embargoes imposed by the UN Security Council are respected and enforced, and that the issuing of permits or licences should take into account the risk of exported arms being used in serious violations of human rights or international humanitarian law, including the risk that such arms might be diverted into the wrong hands such as those of terrorists and that this may affect regional or internal security and stability.

The UN review conference should, of course, start work on a legally-binding international arms trade treaty as soon as its work is complete. I am very honoured to be a member of Parliament's delegation to that review conference.