

Gun lobby sole representative of civil society on Canadian delegation at UN

June 17, 2010- The world's governments are meeting at the UN in New York this week to discuss the implementation of a global strategy to combat the illegal gun trade. Small arms or firearms are used to kill more than 300,000 people each year worldwide and to injure many more. Many of the victims are civilians, including women and children. Violence fuelled by small arms fuels conflict and crime, undermines good governance, threatens human rights and impedes development. Virtually every illegal gun begins as a legal gun, and for more than a decade, governments around the world have been working on collaborative strategies to reduce the diversion of small arms to illegal markets. Governments and Non-Governmental Organizations are meeting at the United Nations in New York to review progress on international obligations at the Biennial Meeting of States on the UN Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. In the past, Canada was viewed as a driving force behind global efforts to combat the illegal gun trade. Not only are illegal weapons a problem in conflict zones, but illegal guns fuel violence in Canada.

For the first time ever, the only representative of "civil society" on the Canadian delegation is representing the gun lobby. In the past, both anti-violence NGOs, such as Project Ploughshares and gun owners associations were represented on the Canadian delegation.

The participation of Steven Torino on the Canadian delegation was publicized on the gun lobby message board "Canadian Gun Nutz" yesterday by the Executive Director of the Canadian Shooting Sports Association. He wrote: *"CILA's Tony Bernardo and CSSA's Steve Torino are currently in New York attending the UN Biennial Meeting of States on Small Arms and Light Weapons; Tony as part of the NGOs and Steve, as a member of the Canadian Government Delegation. In other words, we have our reps on the inside and outside of the process. They will be making a full report when they return next week."*¹ Torino's participation has been confirmed from sources at the UN.

All countries, including Canada, report to the summit on their progress in implementing the UN Programme of Action (PoA) which was agreed to in 2001. Under the PoA, our government has committed itself to keep its citizens safe from gunfire and ensure that Canada is not responsible for causing gun violence in other countries. Our PoA responsibilities include:

- Imposing strict regulation on arms brokers who are Canadian citizens, or are operating in Canadian territory
- Marking all Canadian produced guns at the point of manufacture, and marking all guns imported to or exported from Canada to enable tracing
- Managing arms stockpiles and ensuring safe disposal of surplus weapons
- Liaising with states in need of assistance in solving the gun violence epidemic

In addition, some maintain that the existing licensing and registration system is key to fulfilling our obligations to combat the illegal gun trade. Canada is supposed to have a national commission on small arms to provide advice and support to the government in implementing its international obligations.

Wendy Cukier, President, Coalition for Gun Control said: *"Canadians want action to prevent gun violence. Canadians want their government to take a strong stand on the fight against the illicit trade in small arms. The Canadian Government has already caved to pressure from the gun lobby and postponed once again the regulations on marking firearms, essential to fulfil our international obligations. Canada's three major policing organizations – the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, the Canadian Association of Police Boards and the Canadian Police Association all called on the Conservative Government to pass these regulations because of the threat posed by the illegal gun trade. Canada has failed to ratify the OAS Inter-American Convention Against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms which it signed on to in 1997. Bill C-391, currently before parliament, threatens to dismantle gun control in Canada undermining efforts to prevent gun violence and combat the illegal gun trade. Canada used to be leading the way on the international effort to combat the illicit trade in small arms, but its position is steadily slipping."*

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¹ from <http://www.canadiangunnutz.com/forum/showthread.php?p=4543603#post4543603>