

**UNITED NATIONS REGIONAL SEMINAR  
ON SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS  
FOR THE SOUTH PACIFIC**

**Nadi, the Republic of the Fiji Islands  
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**Opening statement by Mitsuro Donowaki,  
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It was three years ago in May 2001 that the Australian government hosted a small arms workshop in Brisbane for the Pacific Island Forum (PIF) countries. At least two officials from all of the member countries participated. In addition, Japan was honoured to be invited as the only non-member country, and I, together with my two colleagues, represented the government of Japan at the workshop. This was only two months before the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects was to be convened in New York.

Six years earlier, Japan took the initiative to commence intensive preparatory activities in the United Nations that led to the convening of the United Nations Conference on Small Arms. As the Conference approached, Japan and Australia were closely working together in order to make it a success, and it was at the initiative of Australia that the Brisbane workshop was organized. The workshop should serve as an occasion to coordinate the positions of the PIF countries in preparation for the United Nations Conference. Among the PIF countries, the problem of small arms was already a matter of growing concern in view of the events and developments taking place in their region.

The Brisbane workshop was a remarkable success because participants had the opportunity to be fully briefed about the nature of the problem of small arms and the

United Nations Conference, and also about the recent events and on-going efforts in Bougainville and Solomon Islands. Participants also had the opportunity to develop further their “Common Approach to Weapons Control” in the context of the Nadi Framework. Besides, participants of the workshop were taken to field trips to see for themselves the stockpile management of weapons at nearby military and police armouries.

Impressed by the success and usefulness of the Brisbane workshop, Japan offered to host a follow-up workshop in Tokyo. In fact, hosting such a workshop was in line with the recommendations contained in the Programme of Action adopted at the 2001 United Nations Conference on Small Arms.

The Tokyo workshop was held in January 2003 and a number of issues related to the implementation of the Programme of Action such as the establishment of national points of contact, the strengthening of national laws and regulations related to small arms, the need for effective stockpile management were discussed. In the context of the Nadi Framework for the development of a model legislation on small arms, a further step was taken at the Tokyo workshop to put the model bill to the PIF Regional Security Committee meeting to be held in June 2003.

Unlike the Brisbane workshop, it was not possible at the Tokyo workshop to arrange for a field trip related to small arms. Instead, several governmental officials from the Southeast Asian countries, as well as representatives of civil societies such as Safer Africa (South Africa), Working Group for Weapons Reduction (Cambodia), Small Arms Survey (Geneva), the Japan Center for Conflict Prevention were invited for the purpose of sharing their experiences with the participants from the PIF member countries.

In view of the usefulness of the Brisbane and Tokyo workshops in promoting the regional implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms, Japan

and Australia decided this time to organize another workshop here in Fiji, and we are grateful to the government of the Republic of Fiji in graciously agreeing to host it.

Also, Japan and Australia are grateful to the Department for Disarmament Affairs of the United Nations and its Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific in cooperating with us to make this meeting an official "United Nations Regional Seminar" as the title says. Japan made the trust fund it has with the Department for Disarmament Affairs available to cover the cost of participants from the Pacific islands countries and from the United Nations headquarters.

Australia kindly offered to make a contribution in kind by dispatching a group of experts. Both at the Brisbane workshop and the Tokyo workshop it was the group of Australian experts who greatly contributed to the substantive discussion of the model legislation and the stockpile management.

Japan and Australia are also grateful to New Zealand and the PIF Secretariat for their voluntary cooperation with their expertise this time, as they did at the Brisbane and Tokyo workshops. I should not fail to mention that our appreciation also goes to the Small Arms and Demobilization Unit of the UNDP, represented here by Mr. Peter Batchelor, in making it possible to have one extra day, or the third day, as the "training session" of this regional seminar.

Speaking on behalf of Japan, this regional seminar here in Nadi is very important to Japan because the control of small arms is one of the top priority items Japan has been making dedicated efforts in recent years --- by introducing General Assembly resolutions every year in order to convene the United Nations Conference, and after the Conference adopted the Programme of Action, in order to promote its concrete implementation. You may recall that in July last year Japan's then Permanent Representative to the Conference on Disarmament, Ambassador Kuniko Inoguchi,

chaired the First Biennial Meeting of States on Small Arms in New York, contributing to the upholding of the momentum and facilitating the global implementation of the Programme of Action. As a regional implementation of the Programme of Action, Japan attaches no less importance to this seminar.

The holding of a regional seminar here in Nadi has another importance to Japan, because Japan, as a nation in the Asia Pacific region, has been endeavouring over the years to broaden its ties with the PIF countries. It was only in May last year that Japan hosted the Third Japan-PIF Summit Meeting (PALM 2003) in Okinawa, Japan. In the Joint Action Plan of the Okinawa Initiative announced by the participating leaders of the PALM 2003, Japan made its commitment clear by stating that it will support the PIF members' efforts in respect of the following activities:

- (1) the collection of small arms and light weapons, and
- (2) peace consolidation activities such as rebuilding of infrastructure which would also contribute to job creation, and vocational training for the ex-combatants and involuntarily displaced people.

It may be recalled also that at the Summit, the Joint Statement on Cooperation among Australia, Japan and New Zealand on Development Assistance in the Pacific Region was issued. Among other things, the Joint Statement stressed the importance of post-conflict reconstruction projects in Solomon Islands and Bougainville, Papua New Guinea.

Indeed, some significant developments took place since the Tokyo workshop of January 2003 both in Solomon Islands and Bougainville. At the request of the government of Solomon Islands to the Australian government and the PIF, Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) was dispatched in July 2003 to assist the restoration of law and order, the collection of illegal firearms, and so forth. Like many other countries, Japan immediately expressed its support to RAMSI, and has been cooperating in the

reintegration of ex-combatants into the society and the reconstruction of the country in various ways. By June this year, it is reported that the mission has been successful in restoring law and order with strong public support, and in confiscating almost 4,000 illegal firearms, which have now been destroyed.

In Bougainville also, the Peace Agreement signed in 2001 started to be implemented by now, with the United Nations Observer Mission supervising some 1900 weapons registered, most of which will be destroyed in accordance with the Peace Agreement.

The post-conflict reconstruction projects stressed in the Joint Statement of Australia, Japan and New Zealand are related to another important aspect of the problem of small arms. Strengthening of laws and regulations controlling firearms and their effective stockpile management is important from the standpoint of restricting the illicit flow of small arms at its source, but the collection and destruction of illicit small arms, and the restoration of law and order with good governance is also important from the standpoint of assisting societies already affected by the illicit flow of such small arms. Both are dealt with in the Programme of Action on Small Arms adopted at the 2001 United Nations Conference.

I am convinced that the holding of this Nadi Seminar is extremely timely not only from the viewpoint of advancing further the global fight against illicit trafficking in small arms embodied in the United Nations Programme of Action, but also from the viewpoint of enhancing peace, security and cooperation among nations in this Pacific region. Therefore, I wish to conclude my statement by expressing my hope that this seminar will have fruitful discussions in the next three days.