United Nations General Assembly  
First Committee on Disarmament and International Security  

Statement of the World Forum on Shooting Activities

Mr. Chairman, my name is Torbjörn Lindskog and I am the President of the World Forum on Shooting Activities – the WFSA.

The WFSA is an organization composed of over 50 associations which not only represent the 100's of million hunters, sport shooters, collectors, and firearm users throughout the world, but also the civilian firearms and ammunition manufacturers. As an association of associations, we are in a unique position to speak as the international voice for the firearms and ammunition community, but only in so far as the voices of our members are aligned.

Unfortunately, that is not always the case, and the reason why so many of the associations that compose our membership are their own, separate NGOs in Consultative Status with ECOSOC. Just like the General Assembly, while there are many issues that received full consensus, there are many more that do not receive unanimous support, and while the associations that compose the WFSA are not always aligned, we are all aligned in our belief that consensus is critical.

Unfortunately, there has been a growing trend when it comes to small arms and light weapons initiatives at the UN to abandon the principle of consensus. Nowhere is this more true than at the UN Programme of Action. There, we have witnessed the abandonment of this principle in order to silence dissenting views. This is not the way of achieving a policy objective, and certainly does not instil trust - that what has been agreed to by some will result in the adherence by all.

The silencing of dissenting views through the abandonment of consensus mirrors the same efforts to silence the views of the firearms community as a whole. If the three minutes afforded to all of us today is not proof enough, one only needs to review the speaking times afforded to NGOs from our community at the last PoA meeting. Instead of the voices of associations that have been called upon at the national and regional levels to offer technical and legal expertise on small arms and light weapons being able to focus on those issues, our time has been so limited that only wave-top concerns are able to be addressed.

We have the knowledge, experience and the expertise to help navigate discussions on issues that often sound good on paper, but are misguided in practice, such as the continuing false narratives that all parts and components of a firearm need to be marked, that mandating the marking and maintenance of records on the billions and billions of individual rounds of ammunition produced each year will somehow decrease crime, theft, diversion and misuse, or that technologies such as micro stamping are effective, when we know that such technology is both unreliable and easily thwarted. Yet, in order to share that knowledge an honest effort must be made to actually want to hear it.
We understand that time is limited, especially as we continue to operate in hybrid or all electronic formats, but there are ways to maximize it for everyone's benefit. Instead of focusing efforts at one initiative to incorporate another, to form so-called synergies that would mandate one UN instrument agreed to by everyone incorporate the principles and terms of another that has only been agreed to by some, time could instead be focused on investigating and solving the issue of why there is not universal adherence to principles that have already received consensus.

At the last Programme of Action meeting, this was certainly the case. Experts from the multiple NGOs that are a part of the WFSA were forced to share 9 minutes of total time, yet countless minutes and hours were spent throughout the week attempting to incorporate the terms of the Arms Trade Treaty and Firearms Protocol into the PoA. While it can be argued that some time for NGOs is better than none, it is difficult, if not impossible, to argue that so much time should be spent on attempting to force the terms of initiatives that are not universally agreed to into one that has, or that none could be spent on addressing and resolving the failure of so many to comply with their reporting requirements.

Mr. Chairman, the WFSA and our member associations are here to help. We can assist the UN with our knowledge and expertise. Our experts can answer your questions and help to achieve universal support, but until the principle of consensus returns and the efforts to force the agreements of some into the agreements of all ends, we fear that just like the minority at the PoA, our voices will be silenced.