

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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LETTER DATED 1 FEBRUARY 2006 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF AUSTRALIA TO THE CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE CONFERENCE CONCERNING THE MAN PORTABLE AIR DEFENCE SYSTEMS (MANPADS)

I write in response to your invitation to Conference on Disarmament delegations to propose issues for discussion during the CD's 2006 session.

The Australian delegation wishes to propose Man Portable Air Defence Systems, in particular ways and means to prevent their illicit manufacture, transfer and use, as an issue for the 2006 session of the CD.

MANPADS are a legitimate weapon for states to possess in meeting their defence needs. But their transfer to and use by non-state actors threatens international peace and security. Experience has shown that non-state actors can obtain these weapons easily and cheaply. And they have been used against some 40 civilian aircraft leading to some 600 deaths since the mid-1970s, according to some estimates.

The international community has taken some significant steps to address the threat from illicit access to and use of MANPADS. These steps include national legislative and administrative action, bilateral agreements leading to the destruction of surplus weapons and internationally agreed measures to ensure secure storage and transfer of MANPADS. Australia, for example, has launched an initiative to encourage Asia-Pacific and other states to implement effective controls over the manufacture, storage and transfer of MANPADS.

Significantly, an international consensus on the need to address the illicit transfer of MANPADS already exists. Just last year, the 60th session of the UN General Assembly, adopted by consensus resolution 60/77 on the *Prevention of the illicit transfer and unauthorized access to and use of man portable air defence systems*.

In proposing MANPADS as an issue for discussion in the CD, we aim to build on this consensus. It is the hope of the Australian delegation that by including MANPADS during its 2006 session,

the CD will identify and develop measures to prevent the proliferation of MANPADS to non-state actors through their illicit manufacture, transfer and use.

I would be grateful if this letter could be circulated as an official document of the Conference on Disarmament.

(Signed) Michael Smith
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Australia
to the Conference on Disarmament