

UN General Assembly – First Committee
October 12, 2016
Statement of Herbert Keusgen
President - World Forum on Shooting Activities
WFSA

Thank you, I am Herbert Keusgen, President of the World Forum on Shooting Activities, an ECOSOC NGO with 50 member associations representing hundreds of millions of law-abiding hunters, sport shooters and collectors. We also have within our membership most of the manufacturers of civilian firearms and ammunition.

For twenty years the civilian firearms community has attempted to engage the UN and do two things – to cooperate and to offer our expertise and experience. I regret to say there is a reluctance on the part of the UN to accept this offer. Almost three years we offered to work with the Department of Disarmament Affairs. Unfortunately, we have heard nothing from them.

Mr. Chairman, it was apparent at the Arms Trade Treaty conference in Cancun last year that the instrument was becoming a “small arms” treaty. The world’s legal firearms owners are especially concerned about this direction of the ATT. The civilian market has nothing to do with the trade in military arms to governments that was the original focus of the ATT.

The firearms I am talking about were not manufactured as weapons of war. These civilian firearms were used, at the Brazil Olympic Games by 390 athletes from 97 nations in 15 different disciplines. Forty-five medals were awarded to shooters from 18 countries.

Our community supports realistic measures against the illegal use of firearms. But these measures should generally be imposed by domestic regulation and not international fiat.

Let us talk about the economic benefits of hunting. In Europe there are about 6.7 million hunters who provide, an economic benefit of about 16 billion Euros and about 103,000 jobs.

In the US 900,000 jobs are supported by hunting and shooting with a benefit of about 48 billion dollars. We also spend roughly 800 million dollars for conservation purposes.

Hunting and its economic returns are very important to sustainable development. Two examples are the CAMPFIRE program in Zimbabwe and the LIFE program in Namibia.

CAMPFIRE considers wildlife a natural resource to be harvested. About 770,000 rural families get monies from CAMPFIRE. The similar Namibian program, is a major contributor to the economy at 300 million dollars per year.

It's ironic that discussions of Sustainable Development Goals do not mention these facts.

I must comment Mr. Chairman on the proposals for the regulation and tracing of ammunition. Speaking for the industry, these are simply not practical proposals. This is not a political statement, but a statement of objective fact from those with firsthand knowledge.

Mr. Chairman, we hope that the UN will not continue to ignore the legal rights of legal firearms owners. We are not your enemy. We support the United Nations in its efforts to prevent human right abuses. We are ready to assist you if you give us a chance to do so.

Our goal is cooperation, not confrontation.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.

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