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Arms Control Letting Thousands Die

The International Coalition for Women in Shooting and Hunting (WiSH) has expressed disappointment at claims that increased arms control will address the humanitarian crisis in Congo.

WiSH Chairwoman Ms Samara McPhedran explained that “On the very same day as the revelation that the vast majority of deaths in Congo arise from easily preventable illness and disease rather than violence, anti-gun lobbyists insisted that the way to reduce the massive death toll lies with arms control, rather than desperately needed international aid and reintegration of ex-combatants into society.”

Major fighting ended in 2002, but an estimated 38 000 people are now dying each month - most from treatable causes. The leading killers are malaria, diarrhea, respiratory infections and malnutrition, with up to 20 percent of children malnourished.

“The indirect results of conflict are far greater than the direct effects. Hopes that arms control will end all violence and automatically reduce civilian deaths are not borne out in Congo. The human cost of infrastructure destruction far exceeds the damage done by a machete or bullet.”

“Focusing on arms control cannot rebuild roads, cannot treat malaria or diarrhea, and will not prevent the majority of deaths in Congo. The key to reducing the horrific death toll, and the disproportionate vulnerability of women and children, lies with restoring and securing infrastructure, and delivering medical aid,” said Ms McPhedran.

Reference: 2006: Critical year for achieving arms control treaty, Media Release, <http://www.reliefweb.int>

Contact:

Ms Samara McPhedran – (+61) 415 963 189

Chair, International Coalition for Women in Shooting and Hunting (WiSH)

www.ic-wish.org

WOMEN ON TARGET FOR POSITIVE CHANGE