

stockpile security and reducing surplus weapons

Briefing 3

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Stockpiling Security and Reducing Surplus Weapons

by Owen Greene

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Executive Summary

Developing international norms and standards

Measures to enhance the security and management of legal stocks of small arms and to reduce 'surplus' weapons are clearly essential components of an effective international action programme to combat illicit trafficking and prevent and reduce the proliferation of small arms. Many of the weapons of concern are lost from official stockpiles through theft, corruption or neglect. Moreover, the existence of large quantities of 'surplus' small arms is a major factor in the excessive availability and flows of these weapons.

The primary responsibility for measures to address these problems lies with governments. Regional and international organisations involved in any way with managing and disposing of small arms also have important responsibilities to take action. Nevertheless, this is a global issue, and the entire international community should play a role in developing policies on the management of stockpiles and the disposal or destruction of surplus weapons. This briefing outlines the dimensions of the issues, drawing on recent experience, and identifies ways in which an international action programme could usefully be developed to address them.

There is already wide acceptance that international norms and standards on stockpile management and surplus weapons need to be established and developed. The United Nations General Assembly overwhelmingly endorsed the 1997 report of the UN Panel of Experts on Small Arms and the 1999 report of the UN Group of Governmental Experts on Small Arms, both of which made strong recommendations on the subject. In brief, these reports recommended all States to:

- take measures to ensure that there are adequate safeguards to prevent the loss of weapons from official or authorised stocks (particularly from storage facilities);
- expeditiously destroy all confiscated or collected small arms;
- promote the destruction of surplus weapons; and
- assist other States, at their request, in efforts to carry out the above recommendations.

A number of national and regional initiatives have been taken to ensure or promote destruction or other responsible disposal of surplus small arms and to ensure the security of officially-held weapons. These include programmes in Southern Africa, initiatives through the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council, and advanced efforts to develop norms and standards in the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE).

In relation to stockpile security and surplus weapons, the main objectives of the Conference on the Illicit trade in *Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects*, to be convened by the UN in 2001, should be to:

- consolidate and strengthen international norms and standards relating to the security of small arms stocks and the management and disposal of surplus weapons;
 - establish and strengthen international programmes and mechanisms to promote and co-ordinate the implementation of such norms and standards; and
 - establish follow-up processes of regular international reviews of the adequacy and operation of such standards and programmes, and which provide a framework to negotiate further agreements on these issues as necessary and appropriate.
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Executive Summary

Management and security of official stocks of small arms

The UN 2001 Conference should consolidate and elaborate the implications of the fundamental international principle that States and other relevant authorities have a responsibility to ensure that authorised stocks of small arms are adequately safeguarded against loss through theft, corruption or neglect. This includes stocks held by armed forces, police, para-militaries, arms manufacturers and dealers and security companies, as well as private citizens.

To this end, the UN 2001 Conference should aim to achieve agreement on a number of specific commitments, relating to: national reviews of current practices; ensuring adequate and detailed standards and procedures relating to the management and security of their small arms stocks; establishing effective systems for management and accountability; ensuring good record-keeping and regular stocktaking; ensuring that losses are properly reported and investigated; ensuring that action is taken to rectify weaknesses; reviewing official holdings regularly to ensure timely identification and disposal of surplus weapons; ensuring high standards in non-state bodies authorised to hold small arms; encouraging states to request assistance as soon as it is needed; and ensuring that relevant international organisations also use good practices.

To promote implementation of the above commitments, the UN 2001 Conference should: establish international programmes to promote good practice; establish international specialist training programmes; and establish a UN system for emergency assistance with arms stockpile security. An international mechanism should also be established involving: exchanges of information and good practice; arrangements to enhance and co-ordinate provision of appropriate international assistance; arrangements to encourage and help States to notify losses or thefts of small arms; and systems for receiving and making appropriate use of such information on thefts or losses. The UN Secretary-General should be requested to conduct a UN study on the ways and means of establishing such a mechanism.

Destruction and other responsible disposal of surplus stocks of small arms

The UN 2001 Conference should consolidate and elaborate the implications of the international principle that all States and other relevant authorities holding surplus small arms are strongly encouraged to destroy them, and that the utmost restraint should be exercised with respect to any transfers of such weapons. Further, confiscated or collected unauthorised (or inadequately marked) small arms should be expeditiously destroyed (subject to the legal constraints associated with preparing for criminal prosecutions).

To this end, the UN 2001 Conference should aim to achieve agreement on a number of specific commitments, relating to: conducting regular reviews of national small arms holdings; identifying and disposing of surplus arms; adopting a norm for the destruction of surplus small arms; promoting transparency and awareness of surplus arms destruction processes; acting with great restraint in authorising transfers of surplus small arms; requiring responsible disposal of small arms that are rendered surplus by transfers; ensuring destruction of all confiscated, collected or inadequately marked small arms; ensuring responsible disposal of surplus parts and components and ammunition; requesting early assistance where necessary for implementation of commitments; and providing assistance in response to such requests.

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Destruction and other responsible disposal of surplus stocks of small arms

To promote implementation of the above commitments, the UN 2001 Conference should; establish international programmes to promote good practice, identify needs, and mobilise resources. It should also establish an international mechanism involving: a panel of international experts to review and identify effective techniques for the destruction of surplus arms; consider the establishment of resource centres to facilitate the provision of technical support and advice in mastering and using the above techniques; information exchange arrangements to promote appropriate transparency and facilitate reviews of progress in destroying or disposing of surplus arms; arrangements to facilitate use of international observers to monitor destruction or disposal; and arrangements to mobilise resources to meet the needs of States and other authorities requiring assistance in the destruction or disposal of surplus small arms.

Follow-on mechanisms

The UN 2001 Conference should establish procedures for regular international review of progress in implementing each of the commitments, programmes and measures outlined above. It should also establish procedures for regular review of the adequacy of such commitments and programmes and for their further development as appropriate.

Stockpile Security and Reducing Surplus Weapons

Introduction

Small arms proliferation and misuse contribute to human suffering and insecurity throughout much of the world, and in many areas small arms escalate, intensify and prolong conflicts and exacerbate banditry, crime and social violence. Many of the weapons of concern are lost from official stockpiles. Moreover, the existence of large quantities of 'surplus' small arms is a major factor in the excessive availability and flows of such weapons.¹

Measures to ensure arms stockpile security and reduce surplus arms are therefore a priority. The primary responsibility for such measures lies with governments. Regional and international organisations involved in any way with managing and disposing of small arms also have important responsibilities to take action. However, this is a global issue, and the entire international community needs to contribute to efforts to develop policies on the management of stockpiles and the disposal and destruction of surplus weapons.

Next year, the United Nations (UN) will convene a conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects. This 'UN 2001 Conference' should aim to establish an International Action Programme on the illicit trafficking, proliferation and misuse of small arms and light weapons, as discussed in Briefing No 1 of this series.²

This international action programme should aim to establish international norms, agreements and mechanisms to promote, re-inforce, co-ordinate and complement national and regional efforts to combat illicit arms trafficking and prevent and reduce small arms proliferation and misuse. In view of the variety and complexity of factors contributing to these problems, such an international action programme must be integrated and appropriately comprehensive in scope. Many issues need to be addressed, including: preventing and combating illicit manufacture, transfer, possession and misuse of small arms; strengthening controls on legal manufacture, transfer and accumulation of small arms; reducing excessive and destabilising availability of such weapons in areas where their proliferation and misuse is already a problem; and promoting a secure and just environment for citizens and peaceful development.

Measures to enhance the security and management of legal stocks of small arms and to reduce 'surplus' weapons are clearly essential components of an effective international action programme to combat illicit trafficking and prevent and reduce the proliferation of small arms. This briefing aims to identify and discuss ways in which these aspects of an international action programme could usefully be developed, and how the UN 2001 Conference should contribute.

The Problem

Vast quantities of small arms and light weapons are held by armed forces, police and other state bodies, and in the majority of countries these are the primary stocks of semi-automatic weapons and other military-oriented equipment. It is not surprising therefore, that they are generally a key target for criminals, bandits and armed opposition forces wishing to obtain such arms.

In most regions, many of the weapons illicitly trafficked have come from authorised holders of weapons, including the armed forces, police, and other armed agencies of the state. Many governments like to pretend, even to themselves, that rigorous security is maintained over all of their state weapons stocks. In fact, losses from official small arms and ammunition stores through theft, corruption or neglect appear to be a problem in most countries. This is particularly the case in war-torn or conflict-prone regions.³

Stockpile Security and Reducing Surplus Weapons

Most of the small arms in official or authorised stocks are held in designated storage areas. The maintenance of secure arms depots requires specially designed facilities, substantial resources and well-trained personnel. Many official arms stores lack one or more of these elements, and are highly vulnerable to weapons losses. Even professional and well-resourced armed forces regularly misplace or lose small arms or ammunition from storage areas. Inadequate or infrequent stocktaking means that such losses sometimes go unnoticed for years. The remainder of officially held small arms are carried by personnel or stored with operational units. Security of these holdings is even harder to ensure than in specially established arms storage facilities.

Losses from official arms stocks

Arms stockpile security is a particular problem in war-torn and conflict-prone areas, and in countries undergoing profound political turmoil or transition. Rebel army groups and bandits typically obtain their arms and ammunition through seizures from police and army units or stores, as illustrated during the 1990s in conflicts in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Ethiopia, Congo-Brazzaville, Assam, and the Transcaucasus. At times of weakness or desperation, commanders sometimes even open their weapons stores to sections of the civilian population, to intensify the challenges faced by armed rivals and to disperse stocks that might otherwise be captured. This occurred for example during the civil wars in El Salvador, Nicaragua and Tajikistan.

Albania provides one of several examples of losses from official stockpiles during political instability. Hundreds of thousands of semi-automatic and other weapons were seized from Albanian police and army stores in the turmoil after the collapse of pyramid-selling schemes in 1997. Among the losses were some 600,000 Kalashnikov automatic rifles, 200,000 Simonov guns, 1,000,000 mines, 20-30,000 special '10th of July' production rifles, hundreds of tons of explosives, thousands of artillery shells, and thousands of other automatic weapons, light and heavy machine guns and grenade-launchers.⁴ The fact that, as a matter of strategic policy, the Albanian state had spread its military holdings in many thousands (reportedly up to 700,000) of small bunkers around the country made defence against such seizures almost impossible. Once out of direct official control, weapons are very difficult to retrieve. In the case of Albania, most of the lost weapons flowed into criminal and illicit trafficking networks and to the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia and Kosovo.

The problems are not confined to areas of conflict and turmoil. Many developing states and states in economic transition maintain very large holdings of small arms, light weapons and ammunition, but lack the resources or systems to prevent losses through theft, corruption or neglect. The problems of stockpile security in much of the former Soviet Union are widely recognised, for example, but also appear to be rife throughout much of Asia, Africa and Latin America. Reliable information remains scarce, not least because many weapons losses remain undiscovered due to inadequate stocktaking or go unreported by the armed forces, police or other armed agencies involved.

It appears that whenever authorities have chosen to look closely into the matter, they have discovered serious problems. Sweden, for example, has a high reputation for the efficiency and professionalism of its armed and police forces, including attention to stockpile security. In the late 1990s, the Swedish authorities carried out a detailed review of its stockpile management and security situation and identified significant problems, including vulnerability of dispersed stocks (for example at police stations) to criminal attack and inadequate stocktaking. Sweden has subsequently embarked upon a re-organisation programme, including concentrating weapons stocks at larger, more secure, facilities and implementing systems for regular checking of inventories. In most states, it appears that less attention and resources are devoted to arms stockpile security and management in police and para-military forces than in the regular military forces.

Stockpile Security and Reducing Surplus Weapons

Further, the existence of large quantities of 'surplus' arms and ammunition contributes greatly to small arms proliferation.⁵ In this context, the term 'surplus' weapons refers to all small arms held by the armed forces, police and other authorised agencies that are surplus to their requirements. For example, large stocks of arms and ammunition are frequently rendered surplus during security force restructuring or re-equipment programmes or as a result of peace agreements.

Stocks of surplus small arms are particularly prone to being inadequately safeguarded or irresponsibly dumped or transferred. There are incentives to dispose of such relatively low-value weapons as quickly as possible. Often the main demand for such weapons is from private dealers or brokers, or from relatively impoverished armed services in conflict-prone areas. Alternatively, if surplus weapons are retained in stock, there is a tendency to devote inadequate resources to ensure safe storage of arms that are regarded as obsolete or unnecessary. Losses sometimes remain undiscovered for long periods. Thorough investigations may not be regarded as a high priority, particularly if the stolen weapons have not been used in local disturbances and appear to have left the country.

In some countries, the armed services lack effective systems for determining appropriate levels of weapons reserves. There is a tendency to retain reserves far in excess of not only their reasonable requirements but also of their capacity to store securely. It is also important to recognise that military and police doctrines, and standard operating procedures involving wide dispersal of stocks of small arms, intensify the challenges of ensuring stockpile security. In these and other respects, stockpile security is intimately related to stockpile management and doctrine.

Risks from surplus arms

With the end of the Cold War and the break-up of the Soviet Union, vast quantities of arms became surplus to requirements for national security, including tens of millions of small arms. Some of these were responsibly destroyed. But a large proportion were released for export or sale to brokers, with many finding their way for use in armed conflicts or banditry in sub-Saharan Africa, Central and South Asia, the Balkans, and elsewhere. Large quantities of such weapons were exported to poorer allies; for example, several NATO countries 'cascaded' surplus weapons to Greece and Turkey. These transfers then rendered surplus the older existing weapons stocks, which in turn were released into wider circulation, some flowing into conflict areas such as the Balkans and Transcaucasus.

The generation of surplus weapons is a natural consequence of changing security requirements, defence restructuring and re-equipment programmes, and is by no means chiefly linked with the end of the Cold War. All countries periodically have to dispose of significant quantities of surplus small arms, including ammunition. Often inadequate resources are provided to ensure that they are disposed of responsibly. Relevant officials are essentially instructed to dispose of them as quickly as possible, without expense and if possible at a small profit. Even where national authorities decide to retain the weapons for other state purposes, problems may arise. For example, army re-equipment programmes in India generally involve transfers of surplus military small arms to police forces. But stockpile security in the police is generally weaker than in the army, increasing the risk that the weapons will be lost. In addition, there is also the knock-on problem of disposing of police weapons made surplus by the transfer of new arms.

Stockpile Security and Reducing Surplus Weapons

Risks from surplus arms *(continued)*

In practice, many armed forces appear to be unprofessional in their approach to excess arms holdings, and confused about whether older weapons are surplus or need to be held in reserve. In the confusion, stocks held officially in reserve are often neglected and vulnerable to loss. All weapons held in reserve are at risk of loss or theft, and require costly management and security systems. If adequate resources for security are not available, it is better to regard the weapons as surplus and to destroy or otherwise responsibly dispose of them. Experiences in Mozambique, Angola, and many other conflict-prone countries indicate that if this is not done, the weapons may be lost from state control and can add to security threats.

The security of stocks of small arms legally in the possession of civilians must also be addressed in this context. In some societies, civilians are authorised to hold substantial numbers of small arms and ammunition. Similarly, arms manufacturers typically hold stocks of weapons prior to transfer or sale. Regulations need to be in place that ensure that such holdings are secure, whilst compliance with such regulations needs to be adequately enforced.

Finally, there is the closely linked question of the management of confiscated illicit or unauthorised arms, and weapons gathered in weapons collection programmes. Almost by definition these are surplus weapons. But instead of being destroyed, they are often inadequately stored, and subsequently lost or recycled to undesirable uses.

Progress towards international norms and standards

Weapons stockpile management and security, and the disposal of surplus arms, are therefore major issues of concern for the UN 2001 Conference. There is already wide international acceptance that international norms and standards on these matters need to be established and developed. The UN General Assembly overwhelmingly endorsed the 1997 report of the UN Panel of Experts on Small Arms and the 1999 report of the UN Group of Governmental Experts on Small Arms, both of which made strong recommendations on these (and other) issues.⁶

In brief, these reports, endorsed by the UN General Assembly, recommended all States to:

- take measures to ensure adequate safeguards to prevent loss of weapons from official or authorised stocks (particularly from storage facilities);
- expeditiously destroy all confiscated or collected small arms;
- promote the destruction of surplus weapons; and
- assist other States, at their request, in their efforts to carry out the above recommendations.

In addition, these reports recommended that the UN and relevant international and regional organisations promote and support implementation of the above measures. In this context, these organisations have a particular role where they are involved in the implementation of peace agreements or in assisting war-torn societies facing urgent problems of small arms proliferation.

Regional organisations have also developed policies and programmes relating to stockpile security and disposal of small arms, which are contributing to the detailed elaboration of norms and standards in these areas, as well as focusing attention on the need to tackle bad practices.

Stockpile Security and Reducing Surplus Weapons

Progress towards international norms and standards

For example, in 1999 the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC) established an ad-hoc working group on small arms and light weapons. After a series of meetings and workshops, this group developed a series of proposals for activities within the EAPC and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) Partnership for Peace programme, including a strong emphasis on assistance and co-operation in training; identifying and disseminating best practices to enhance arms stockpile management and security; and promoting disposal and destruction of surplus arms.⁷ These proposals were accepted, and a number of activities in this area have been pursued during 2000. The OSCE is also in the process of developing norms and standards in this area, for inclusion in an OSCE document on small arms and light weapons, to be agreed at the OSCE Summit in November 2000.

In Southern Africa, measures to enhance stockpile security and destruction and responsible disposal of small arms are an integral part of the Southern Africa Regional Action Programme on Light Arms and Illicit Arms Trafficking, endorsed at the European Union-Southern African Development Community (EU-SADC) Ministerial Meeting in November 1998.⁸ Similarly, there are substantial provisions in the 'Protocol on Small Arms' that has been developed among SADC countries during 2000.⁹

Initiatives and good practices

As awareness of the problems of stockpile security and surplus weapons has increased, there have been several national initiatives to ensure good practice, in addition to regional initiatives such as those in NATO/EAPC, OSCE and SADC outlined above. For example, in February 1999, South Africa announced its decision to destroy all surplus small arms in its possession, which included some 260,000 automatic rifles and several hundred tons of ammunition. Numerous countries, including several EU and NATO countries, have reviewed their policies relating to the disposal of surplus arms, and have given higher priority to the destruction of such weapons. Many countries, including China, have adopted policies involving expeditious destruction of all confiscated and collected small arms. Mozambique, Mali, Cambodia and Liberia all have programmes involving the destruction of excessive small arms, implemented with the assistance of the donor community. Likewise, Switzerland, the Netherlands and Canada have sponsored international workshops to promote small arms stockpile security. In general, however, fewer initiatives have been taken relating to stockpile security than promoting destruction of surplus small arms.

Objectives for the UN 2001 Conference

The objectives for the UN 2001 Conference relating to stockpile security and reduction of surplus weapons should, in principle, be much the same as for other key dimensions of the international action programme. The Conference should aim to achieve agreements at a high political level that:

- consolidate and strengthen international norms and standards relating to the security of small arms stocks and the management and disposal of surplus weapons;
- establish and strengthen international programmes and mechanisms to promote and co-ordinate implementation of such norms and standards; and
- establish follow-up processes involving regular international reviews of the adequacy and operation of such standards and programmes, and provide a framework to negotiate further agreements on these issues as necessary and appropriate.

In this context, it is necessary to elaborate on the substance of what could usefully be agreed. The following sections highlight some key elements of possible agreement on these issues at the UN 2001 Conference.

Stockpile Security and Reducing Surplus Weapons

Management and security of small arms stocks

The fundamental international principle to be established relating to the security of authorised stocks of small arms is that the relevant authorities have a responsibility to ensure that such stocks are adequately safeguarded against loss through theft, corruption or neglect. States' armed forces, police, and other armed agencies hold the vast majority of authorised stocks of small arms and light weapons, their parts and components and ammunition. Moreover, all non-governmental bodies authorised to hold such weapons (such as private arms dealers, manufacturers, or security companies) should be subject to regulation by States.

Nevertheless, the UN and other international and regional organisations also have direct responsibilities to promote and ensure arms stockpile security. This is particularly the case where they are conducting peacekeeping or peace support operations; facilitating disarmament, demobilisation and re-integration programmes; or co-operating in weapons collection or destruction projects.

The above fundamental principle has already been endorsed by the UN General Assembly, as part of its endorsement of the 1997 and 1999 reports of UN Groups of Experts on Small Arms. However, in practice this represents relatively weak international commitment since many governments do not consider themselves to be bound by UN General Assembly resolutions. Explicit high level political commitment to this principle by all participating States should be achieved at the UN 2001 Conference. Moreover, the obligations implied by acceptance of this principle need to be elaborated through specific international agreements, and mechanisms need to be developed to promote their implementation.

Developing specific commitments

The UN 2001 Conference should aim to achieve agreement on specific commitments aimed at promoting and ensuring security of small arms stocks. A number of potentially useful commitments are listed below, to contribute to debate. They are not listed in any specific order, but several are interdependent.

Review current practices

All States shall, within three years and at regular intervals thereafter, comprehensively review the systems and policies for small arms stockpile management and security maintained by their armed forces, police and other bodies authorised to maintain small arms stocks. The aim of these reviews is to ensure the adequacy of such systems, and identify problems and opportunities for improvement of stockpile security.

Establish effective systems for management and accountability

All States shall ensure that the armed forces, police and every other body authorised to hold small arms have clearly established officials and bodies responsible for the management and security of their weapons stocks, with sufficient resources and authority to meet their responsibilities adequately.

Ensure adequate and detailed standards and procedures

All States shall ensure that the armed forces, police and every other body authorised to hold small arms establish adequate and detailed standards and procedures relating to the management and security of their small arms stocks. These standards and procedures should, *inter alia*, relate to: appropriate locations for stockpiles; physical security measures; control of access to stocks; inventory management and accounting control; staff training; security of transport of small arms; security, accounting and control of small arms held by operational units and authorised personnel; and procedures and sanctions in the event of thefts or losses.

Stockpile Security and Reducing Surplus Weapons

Management and security of small arms stocks

Ensure good record-keeping and regular stocktaking

All States shall ensure that accurate records of the numbers, types and locations are maintained for all small arms under the control of armed forces, police, other state agencies, and any non-governmental group authorised to hold such weapons (such as manufacturers, dealers or security companies). States shall ensure that thorough stocktaking programmes are regularly carried out to ensure that any losses or other stockpile security problems are identified in a timely way.

Ensure that losses are properly reported and investigated

All States shall ensure that bodies responsible for stockpile management and security shall immediately notify any losses or other serious irregularities to appropriate national authorities and that these shall be properly investigated.

Ensure weaknesses are rectified

Where safeguards are identified to be inadequate, States shall ensure that measures are taken to rectify the situation, if necessary by relocating or destroying insecure small arms stocks.

Regularly review holdings, to ensure timely identification and disposal of surplus weapons

All States shall ensure that there are regular reviews of requirements for any holdings of small arms. Any holdings of such weapons that are surplus to reasonable requirements should be explicitly identified as such, and disposed of accordingly (see below).

Request assistance if needed

States that identify problems with safeguards on small arms stocks, but which lack the capacity or resources to rectify the problems, should request assistance from other States or regional or international organisations that are in a position to provide it. Where sources of such assistance cannot rapidly be identified, the State shall notify the UN Secretary-General and request support in mobilising appropriate assistance.

Ensure high standards in non-state bodies

All States shall ensure that all citizens or non-state bodies that are authorised to hold small arms are under an obligation to maintain accurate and readily accessible records of their holdings and adequate safeguards against their theft or loss. States shall ensure that compliance with such obligations is regularly reviewed and enforced.

Relevant international organisations should use good practices

The UN and all regional and international organisations responsible for operations involving responsibility for armed forces or small arms stockpiles shall ensure that they comply with the above obligations, as appropriate.

Establishing and developing international programmes and mechanisms

It is important for the UN 2001 Conference to establish international programmes and mechanisms to promote implementation of the above commitments. These could usefully include the following:

Programmes to promote good practice

The United Nations, regional organisations and other appropriate bodies are encouraged to arrange programmes of workshops on maintaining and enhancing the security of stocks of small arms (i.e. small arms, light weapons, their parts and components and ammunition). The aims of such workshops would include: raising awareness among policy-makers and responsible officials; exchanging information and experience; identifying and disseminating good practice; clarifying needs for technical assistance; and helping to mobilise technical and other resources to meet such needs.

Stockpile Security and Reducing Surplus Weapons

Management and security of small arms stocks

International specialist training programmes

International programmes for specialist training on small arms stockpile management and security should be developed. To contribute to this, the UN and other appropriate international or regional organisations should consider establishing and developing training facilities and programmes in this area.

Mechanism to promote implementation of international standards

The United Nations shall establish an international mechanism to promote implementation of commitments to ensure security of small arms stocks. Elements of this mechanism should include:

- *Exchanges of information and good practice* on safeguarding small arms stocks. All States would be requested to provide information to the UN relating to their systems and procedures for ensuring adequate security for their small arms stocks, together with relevant national contact points.
- Resources and exchanges of information to *enhance and co-ordinate provision of appropriate assistance* to ensure adequate security of small arms stockpiles.
- Arrangements to *encourage and help States to notify losses or thefts* of significant quantities of small arms to other national and international bodies concerned with preventing and combating illicit trafficking in small arms.
- Systems for receiving and *making appropriate use of such information on thefts or losses*, developed in consultation, *inter alia*, with Interpol.

The United Nations Secretary-General should be requested to *conduct a UN study* on the ways and means of establishing such a mechanism, with the assistance of a UN group of governmental experts.

System for emergency assistance with arms stockpile security

The United Nations should consider ways and means to provide emergency assistance with safeguarding storage facilities containing small arms and other materials of concern in countries or regions where the security of such facilities is under threat. Such assistance shall be provided with the consent of the State or States concerned.

The fundamental principles to be internationally established relating to surplus stocks of small arms (i.e. small arms, light weapons, their parts and components and ammunition) are that all States holding surplus small arms should where possible seek to destroy them, and that the utmost restraint should be exercised with respect to any transfers of such weapons. Further, confiscated or collected unauthorised (or inadequately marked) small arms should be expeditiously destroyed (subject to the legal constraints associated with preparing for criminal prosecutions).

It is above all the responsibility of States to implement these principles. However, the UN and other regional and international organisations also have a responsibility to promote and support their implementation. They should also implement these principles where they have responsibility for confiscated or collected surplus arms in the context of peacekeeping, peace support operations, or other peace missions; facilitating disarmament, demobilisation and re-integration programmes; or co-operating in weapons collection or destruction projects.

As noted above, these fundamental principles have already been endorsed by the UN General Assembly. A key objective of the UN 2001 Conference is to establish high political commitment to these principles, and to agree specific obligations, programmes and mechanisms to promote their implementation.

Destruction and other responsible disposal of surplus stocks of small arms

Stockpile Security and Reducing Surplus Weapons

Destruction and other responsible disposal of surplus stocks of small arms

Developing specific commitments

A number of potentially useful commitments to promote destruction and responsible disposal of surplus weapons are listed below, in order to contribute to the debate. As will be clear, they are generally linked and mutually reinforcing.

Conduct regular reviews of small arms holdings, to identify and dispose of surplus arms

All States shall regularly review the stocks of small arms held by armed forces, police and other authorised bodies. They shall ensure that stocks of small arms surplus to requirements are clearly identified, and that programmes for responsible and expeditious disposal of such stocks are established and implemented. They shall ensure that such stocks are adequately safeguarded until disposal.

Norm of destruction of surplus small arms

All States should normally destroy surplus small arms, using internationally accepted and effective procedures (as identified by the mechanism outlined in the next sub-section). Surplus weapons retained for other purposes (such as museum exhibits or collectors items) should be permanently disabled and decommissioned.

Promote transparency and awareness of surplus arms destruction process

All States are encouraged to make arrangements that promote the transparency of the process of destruction of surplus weapons, including providing information on numbers and types of small arms that are to be destroyed (or have been destroyed) and the location and timing of such destruction (subject to security concerns). Wherever appropriate, States are encouraged to carry out public destruction events or at least to invite observers to monitor the process, in the interests of awareness raising and confidence building.

High restraint in transfers of surplus small arms

Where States judge that there are strong reasons for doing so, surplus small arms may be transferred. But States should exercise the utmost restraint in authorising such transfers, particularly to areas of on-going conflict, and take all possible measures to prevent the diversion of arms transfers to such areas or to illicit markets.

Require responsible disposal of small arms that are rendered surplus by transfers

Before authorising transfers of small arms, States should ensure that the recipient State has established effective plans for responsible disposal of any arms and ammunition that the transfer will render surplus to requirements.

Request assistance where necessary for implementation of commitments

States that lack adequate technical or other resources to implement the above commitments should request assistance. Where appropriate assistance is not readily available, the State should notify the UN Secretary-General and request support in mobilising appropriate assistance.

Mobilise assistance in response to requests

All States and appropriate international or regional organisations in a position to do so should provide assistance in the destruction or other responsible disposal of surplus stocks of small arms, at the request of the State concerned.

Destroy all confiscated, collected or inadequately marked small arms

All confiscated or collected unauthorised small arms, or inadequately marked weapons, should be destroyed expeditiously (subject to any legal constraints associated with the preparation of criminal prosecutions).

Stockpile Security and Reducing Surplus Weapons

Destruction and other responsible disposal of surplus stocks of small arms

Ensure responsible disposal of surplus parts and components and ammunition

All of the above commitments on responsible disposal of surplus arms apply to the entire category of small arms: small arms and light weapons, their parts and components and ammunition. Destruction of ammunition (including cartridges, shells, missiles, and grenades) typically requires specialist expertise or facilities. Due provision needs to be made for this to ensure timely and effective implementation of the above obligations as they relate to such systems and materials.

Establishing and developing international programmes and mechanisms

To promote and co-ordinate implementation of the above commitments, a number of international programmes and mechanisms should be established and developed. These could usefully include the following:

Programmes to promote good practice, identify needs, and mobilise resources

The United Nations and other appropriate international and regional organisations should organise a programme of workshops to promote implementation of the above commitments. The aims of these workshops would be to: promote awareness; identify and disseminate good practice; facilitate exchanges of information and experience; clarify techniques of destruction; clarify needs for technical and other assistance; and help to mobilise technical and other resources to meet such needs.

Establish an international mechanism

An international mechanism and resource centre should be established (perhaps under the auspices of the UN), to promote and facilitate the effective and efficient destruction of stocks of surplus arms. This mechanism would include the following components:

- A mechanism involving a *panel of international experts to review and identify effective techniques for the destruction of surplus arms*, including specialist techniques and resources required, for example, for the safe destruction of ammunition;
- Procedures and resource centres to facilitate the *provision of technical support and advice* in mastering and using the above techniques;
- *Information exchange arrangements* relating to the destruction or other responsible disposal of surplus small arms, to promote appropriate *transparency* and facilitate *reviews of progress* in destroying or disposing of surplus arms;
- Arrangements to facilitate use of *international observers* to monitor destruction of surplus or confiscated small arms; and
- Arrangements to *mobilise resources* to meet the needs of States and other authorities requiring assistance in the destruction or disposal of surplus small arms.

Regional organisations should be encouraged to contribute to this mechanism and to complement and re-inforce it through the development of regional resources and arrangements.

Stockpile Security and Reducing Surplus Weapons

Follow-on mechanisms

The UN 2001 Conference should establish procedures for regular international review of progress in implementing each of the commitments, programmes and measures outlined above. It should also establish procedures for regular review of the adequacy of such commitments and programmes and for their further development as appropriate.

Preventing the diversion of arms to illicit markets and end-users is a key concern for all States. The opportunity, during the UN 2001 Conference, to take concrete action within the framework of the international action programme, should therefore not be missed. The establishment of international standards and programmes on the management and security of stockpiles of small arms, and of international norms on the disposal and destruction of surplus weapons would be far-reaching achievements. Their implementation would take the international community closer to achieving a reduction in the proliferation of small arms.

Endnotes

- ¹ Henceforth in this briefing, unless otherwise stated, the term 'small arms' will be used as shorthand for 'small arms and light weapons and their parts and components, including ammunition'.
 - ² Owen Greene with Elizabeth Clegg, Sarah Meek and Geraldine O'Callaghan, *Framework Briefing: The UN 2001 Conference – setting the agenda*; Biting the Bullet Project Briefing No 1; BASIC, International Alert and Saferworld, London, February 2000.
 - ³ See, for example, Report of the Group of Governmental Experts on Small Arms, UN Document A/54/258, 19 August 1999; and Report of the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms, UN Document A/52/298, 27 August 1997.
 - ⁴ Data source: Lt Col. Besim Malaj, Chief of Ammunition Branch of the General Staff of the Albanian Army, 18 June 1998.
 - ⁵ Op cit.
 - ⁶ Ibid.
 - ⁷ Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council, 'EAPC/PIF and the Challenge of Small Arms and Light Weapons', NATO/EAPC Unclassified document EAPC(D)(1999)23, 4 November 1999.
 - ⁸ *Southern Africa Regional Action Programme on Light Weapons and Illicit Arms Trafficking*, Saferworld/ISS, London, May 1998; Joint Communiqué on the Ministerial Conference between the European Union and the Southern African Development Community, Vienna, Austria, 3-4 November 1998.
 - ⁹ The text of this Protocol, and the content of the implementation programme associated with it, was developed in early 2000 and is awaiting formal adoption by SADC.
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