

that it would be discriminatory. The military capability of countries relying on arms imports would be public, but this would not be true of countries that are self-sufficient or only partially dependent on imports. To offset this criticism it has been suggested that registration of arms transfers be coupled with registration of national military capabilities.

Linkage with Control Efforts

When the idea of a register has been part of a larger package advocating controls on arms transfers, developing countries have tended to resist the idea. They have argued that the superpowers and other heavily armed industrial countries should first undertake restraints and reductions after which discussions on more comprehensive controls could begin. They maintain that unless limitations are tied to production as well, control of military transfers will adversely affect countries dependent on imports while not affecting the military capabilities of producer nations.

Industry representatives have also expressed concern about the implied connection between the idea of a register and eventual control or limitation of arms exports.

A similar objection has also been raised with respect to nuclear disarmament. Debate in the UN on the issue of arms transfers has always included statements by countries expressing concern that emphasis on these issues might detract from the more serious issue of nuclear disarmament.

Secrecy

Questions have been raised concerning the willingness of states to agree to reporting on their arms transfers. There are likely to be instances where countries will want to keep transfers secret, nor could such covert action be discovered without measures of verification that go beyond the current capabilities of the UN.

Definitions

Arms producers have raised concerns about the difficulty of arriving at a satisfactory definition of arms that will not be so limited as to render the exercise useless nor so broad that it unnecessarily hampers exports and industry in general. They emphasize that there is a broad category of goods that have both civilian and military purposes and that this distinction becomes even more difficult at the component and subcomponent level. The existence of an arms register may therefore hamper sales of goods that have civilian uses.