

At the 3rd Americas Regional Workshop on Firearm Regulation for the Purposes of Crime Prevention and Public Safety in Sao Paulo, Brazil, 8-12 December 1997, it was quite obvious that the issue was taken primarily through the criminal trafficking and international smuggling approach (the supply side of the equation as the disarmament people would say in contrast to the demand side considered in Arusha), and far less was discussed from the public health and public safety perspective of firearms injury prevention and domestic control approach than in Ljubljana.

That could be due to the newly negotiated multinational convention to curb cross-border gun smuggling throughout the Western Hemisphere by the Organisation of American States with a provision that bars the transfer of weapons from one country to another unless they are marked or licensed, that retained much of the interest in the Americas. Also the model regulations for the control of the international movement of firearms, their parts and components and ammunition approved at the OAS in Lima on November 4 1997, also attracted attention to trafficking and probably diverted from domestic and health/safety firearm related issues and preventive strategies.

At the Sao Paulo workshop there were fifty-four experts in firearm-related fields of police work, the army, customs and national security, Justice and Interior from 17 nations in the Americas<sup>ix</sup> and from the Guardia Civil of Spain at the last five-day event, plus a representative from INTERPOL and WHO/OMS, as well as six representatives of NGOs. The NGOs were equally distributed on both sides of the issue.

The NGO representatives invited to make statements at the opening session of the 3<sup>rd</sup> workshop were Mr. Philip Alpers from New Zealand for the International Fellowship of Reconciliation (IFOR) and Pr. Wendu Cukier from Canada for The Friends World Committee for Consultation (Quakers) and the World Society of Victimology. Mr. Alpers mentioned the work of Sir Thomas Thorp's "Review of Firearms Control in New Zealand". He also expressed concern at the recent National Rifle Association Institute on Legislative Action (NRA-ILA), local protest mail campaign, directed at United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan in New York, that primarily concern the *clientèle* of the US based NRA. He finally cautioned the delegates against the "Eddie Eagle" gun marketing programme promoted by the NRA. Professor Cukier, (brief here enclosed, because oriented towards public health concerns) outlined recent research on the relationship between the availability of firearms and their subsequent use in crime, suicide, unintentional injury and death. She highlighted the urgency of initiatives to regulate firearms, discussed Canada's concerns at illicit cross-border trafficking of firearms and the limits of national efforts when neighbouring regions lacked controls, and urged delegates to take a public health approach to the prevention of firearm-related injury.

On Thursday December 11, the representative of the American Shooting Sports Council, Mr. Richard Feldman, who also represents the gun industry with Ms. Georgia Nichols a proprietor of the Mossberg firearms company, also attended under NGO accreditation from the US-based Congress on Racial Equality/CORE. Mr. Feldman, the firearms industry representative made a dissenting statement at Sao Paulo, but defended himself against any « obstructionism » by agreeing with the current OAS convention on smuggling and trafficking of firearms. Next, Mr. Ma Tomson from the National Rifle Association, who represents 3 million gun owners (of the 260 million US citizens), used veiled threats but clearly menaced the United Nations of reprisals if it failed to abandon its current direction: "Let me conclude by again emphasising the UN must concentrate its efforts on international aspects of this issue. Interference with domestic firearms law in the US can do nothing but harm the UN in the long term."

Finally, Ms. Geraldine O'Callaghan from the UK for the British American Security Information Council (BASIC) and Verification Technology Information Centre (VERTIC), presented BASIC's recommendations on how to approach light weapons proliferation by controlling light weapons nationally as well as internationally. « It will be difficult if not impossible, to control the illicit international market in light weapons without also monitoring and controlling domestic access to weapons. » And a promising strategy to do so recommended by BASIC, is to « limit ammunition supplies », because it has a shorter shelf-life than the weapons in which it is used, it is rapidly consumed in conflicts, it is unattractive for smuggling since it has high weight for relatively low dollar value, it is difficult to produce.