

THE OTTAWA GROUP

8th October 1999

Held at:

The Simons Foundation, Vancouver, Canada

In Attendance:

Chris Smith, Michael Hallowes, Geraldine O'Callaghan, Christophe Carle, Paddy Rawlinson, Douglas Ross, Vivienne Chin, Yvon Dandurand, Mark Gaillard, Wendy Cukier, Steve Lee, Jen Smith, Jim Hayes (by telephone)

Although this document has been agreed as a true representation of the meeting held by The Ottawa Group, the views contained herewith do not necessarily reflect those of the entire group. In addition the group members acted in an individual capacity and their views do not necessarily reflect the policies of the departments they represent.

Since the last meeting of the Ottawa Group in August 1998 we have witnessed an extraordinary process of consensus building around the need to address the inter-related threats posed by the proliferation and transfer of firearms, small arms and light weapons. The group recognises the role played by NGOs and their efforts to convince the "like-minded" governments that this is perhaps the most important issue on the current international security agenda. These efforts have been met by several governments with a sympathetic ear and a demonstrable commitment to ensure that necessary measures will be taken in the near future. It is instructive to compare the reaction of governments in this area to their responses to other major security issues, such as the need to control the transfer of major conventional weapons and nuclear arms control regimes.

In a remarkably short space of time we now have two major initiatives designed to provide the architecture to begin to address the interrelated problems of firearms trafficking and light weapons proliferation. Work on the UN Firearms Protocol proceeds apace, and the forthcoming UN 2001 Conference to address light weapons proliferation will set in motion efforts to further those currently underway by the Economic and Social Council (UN) (ECOSOC). In addition, there are several developments at the regional level. The European Union (EU) has made significant strides in the area of small arms control, with the agreement of an EU Code of Conduct, on arms exports, the EU programme on illicit trafficking and comprehensive joint action on small arms. The Organisation of American States Convention (OAS) on illicit trafficking is widely recognised as a landmark achievement, though implementation is proving difficult. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) moratorium is still in its infancy but has the potential to address the light weapons issue in West Africa, pending successful capacity building. Other initiatives include those underway by NATO, OCSE and SADC.

Above all, however, we may currently be witnessing a major transformation in thinking about the interrelationship between security and development. Efforts to give substance to concepts relating to human security reflect a major commitment on the part of some western governments to view security as being fundamental to development. For nearly half a century the development