

I. INTRODUCTION

The contemporary significance of micro-disarmament is demonstrated by the enormous proliferation of automatic assault rifles, anti-personnel mines and the like. Competent authorities have estimated that billions of dollars are being spent yearly on light weapons, representing nearly one third of the world's total arms trade. Many of those weapons are being bought, from developed countries, by developing countries that can least afford to dissipate their precious and finite assets for such purposes, and the volume of trade in light weapons is far more alarming than the monetary cost might lead one to suspect.³

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On 3 January 1995, the Secretary-General issued his *Supplement to An Agenda for Peace*⁴ in which he reviewed developments since the publication of *An Agenda for Peace*⁵ in June of 1992. In Part III of the *Supplement* entitled "Instruments for Peace and Security", after citing considerable progress in several areas of arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation, the Secretary-General concentrated on what he termed "micro-disarmament"; that is, "practical disarmament in the context of the conflicts the United Nations is actually dealing with and of the weapons, most of them light weapons, that are actually killing people in the hundreds of thousands."⁶

The Secretary-General drew attention to the experience of the United Nations in the assembly, control and disposal of weapons in the context of comprehensive peace settlements in which it has played a peacekeeping role and underscored the equal relevance of micro-disarmament to post-conflict peacebuilding. He highlighted two categories of light weapons: first, small arms, which, he stated, "are probably responsible for most of the deaths in current

³ "Supplement to an Agenda for Peace: Position Paper of the Secretary-General on the Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the United Nations", A/50/60-S/1995/1, 3 January 1995, para. 60.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ UN document A/47/277, 17 June 1992.

⁶ "Supplement to an Agenda for Peace", para. 60.