

The end of the Cold War affected both the nature of the disarmament challenges facing the international community and the United Nations' capacity to deal with such problems. The 1990s have been marked by a host of ethnic, religious and other local conflicts in which the primary instruments of war are conventional, notably small arms and light weapons. The end of the Cold War has also required and enabled increased United Nations involvement in such conflict-stricken areas, as mediator, peacekeeper and peacebuilder. As a result, and in parallel with ongoing and in some cases considerably increased activities relating to weapons of mass destruction,⁷ United Nations disarmament related work has also increasingly focussed on:

- a) issues of conventional arms, including conventional arms transfers, the register of conventional arms, the proliferation of small arms, the illicit arms trade, and antipersonnel land mines; and
- b) practical disarmament measures, as indicated by the subject title of UNDC's Working Group III (consolidation of peace through practical disarmament measures).⁸

In the debates and resolutions surrounding the post-Cold War review and rationalization of the UN disarmament machinery, Member States consistently stressed the need for the multilateral arms control fora to respond effectively to changes in the international situation.⁹

As pointed out in the Secretary-General's report entitled "General and complete disarmament: consolidation of peace through practical disarmament measures,"¹⁰ several Member States are now dealing with the challenges of post-conflict disarming of factions, demobilization and reintegration into society. There is a pressing need for the work of United Nations' disarmament fora to be grounded in this reality and to produce recommendations relevant to it. Addressing DDRPs -- an area where progress is most urgent and practicable -- is consistent with the tradition of balancing the multilateral arms control agenda in an effort to adequately address the concerns of the international community and the challenges facing Member States.

⁷ The work of the United Nations Special Commission in Iraq (UNSCOM) has placed the United Nations at the forefront of multilateral verification efforts in relation to weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems. See for example, "Verification in All Its Aspects, including the Role of the United Nations in the Field of Verification", A/50/377, 22 September 1995.

⁸ Other examples of the practical focus which is now possible would be the move from the negotiation of the Chemical Weapons Treaty to its implementation and the focus of the United States and Russia on the challenges of weapons dismantlement and destruction under START agreements I and II.

⁹ See, for example, resolution 48/87 of 16 December 1993.

¹⁰ A/52/289, 19 August 1997.