

- Encourage other regional organisations, such as the European Union which is currently developing a programme on illicit weapons trafficking⁷, to adopt the OAS convention as a model for increased harmonisation within their own region.
- The United States and Canada to promote the OAS Convention as a model for consideration to the G8 Summit meetings in 1998.

2. Improve the traceability of weapons

Improving the traceability of light weapons is a vital way to combat illicit trafficking as it will enable governments to impose accountability on exports at every link in the chain. Marking weapons at the point of manufacture and the point of import, as agreed in the OAS Convention, represents a policy option which will require co-operation and political will from both supplier and recipient states.

Weapons can be marked at manufacture without great cost, and many of these costs can be passed on to the producer. An effective marking system that enables a weapons to be traced through many transit countries may represent a technological challenge. Whilst developing the CICAD model regulations, OAS countries discussed randomly inserting microchips the size of a pinhead into weapons at the point of manufacture. All weapons would subsequently be imported via designated border posts where customs officials had the technological capacity to scan weapons to ensure tallied with the import license. However, there is an urgent need for further research to ensure that marking of weapons is unique and, more importantly, consistent with marking at the point of import.

Recommendations

- Incorporate measures endorsed by the OAS Convention to mark weapons at the point of manufacture and the point of import into other regional initiatives, especially in the European Union
- Allocate sufficient resources to research and implement marking systems at manufacture and import
- Provide customs officials with adequate training and resources to effectively trace imported weapons
- Investigate the feasibility of tagging ammunition

3. Improve record-keeping

Better control over the legal arms trade, including licensed production, will enable governments to ascertain what is legal and what is illegal. Technical improvements in the tracing of weaponry needs to be reinforced by an effective database either at the regional or, ideally, at the international level. Various offices of the United Nations, regional bodies such as the OAS, and governments all maintain statistics and databases on light weapons issues. However this information is not collated in one place for easy access by governments or the general public.

⁷ "The Programme for Preventing and Combatting Illicit Trafficking in Conventional Arms", A Council Declaration, 9057/97, 26 June 1997.