

and in fact will be extended to cover any proposal to export automatic firearms. All other controls provided for under the EIPA remain unchanged.

As Secretary of State for External Affairs, I am responsible for developing

and implementing Canada's arms control and disarmament policies. I am also responsible for issuing permits under the EIPA. I will continue to ensure that all of our military exports — including any as a result of the proposed amend-

ments to the Act — are fully consistent with our arms control and disarmament policies and do not contribute to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction or to excessive build-ups of conventional arms. ■

UN Group of Experts Calls for Arms Transfer Register

The UN Group of Experts on Arms Transfer Transparency wound up its final meeting on July 5 with agreement on a report that calls for greater transparency in the international arms trade and recommends the establishment of a UN arms transfer register as soon as possible. Under such a register, states would voluntarily report their arms exports and imports each year to the UN, which would make the information publicly available.

The Experts recommend that the register be set up on a universal and non-discriminatory basis, including both arms suppliers and arms recipients. States should report transfers according to agreed categories, so that the information provided can readily be compared.

The Experts also call on states to make all their military activities as open as practicable, and suggest that the arms transfer register could usefully be supplemented by measures to promote transparency in other areas such as military holdings and procurement and military doctrines. They encourage states to pursue regional and sub-regional, as well as global, transparency measures.

The Group's report devotes a section to the illicit arms trade, defined as trade contrary to national or international law. The objective in this case is not the promotion of transparency but rather eradication through tighter control. In general, the Experts urge states to have in place the legal and administrative machinery necessary to effectively regulate and monitor their arms transfers. This is particularly important with respect to preventing illicit trade, as are measures to control borders, to combat bribery and corruption, and to share with other countries information about trafficking and detection of illicit arms.

Canada was delighted with the Group's report. As the Secretary of State for External Affairs told the UN General Assembly in September 1990, Canada believes it is important to make arms transfers and procurement as transparent as is prudent and practical. The establishment of a global arms transfer register has been a major goal of Canada's post-Gulf-War action plan to stop excessive build-ups of conventional arms.

As noted by the Experts, an arms transfer register has the potential to build confidence among states, to promote restraint in arms transfers and to assist the identification of trends in the arms trade.

Increased transparency in military matters between members of NATO and the former Warsaw Treaty Organization has helped considerably to reduce tensions and create conditions conducive to arms control and disarmament in Europe. The regular, voluntary sharing of information about arms transfers is likely to promote similar confidence in military capabilities and intentions on both a global and a regional scale. It may encourage cooperation in other areas affecting military security, and should reduce the likelihood of arms races and wars based on misperceptions about military capabilities.

Arms transfer transparency could also help to provide states with advance

warning of situations where arms are being acquired to excess. This could discourage further transfers to the country involved and lead to measures to deal with potential hostilities before they become actual.

An exchange of information on arms transfers would also provide a better database for policy projections and research. Questions about the effects of arms transfers on national economies and regional stability have been the subject of international debate since the early 1970s. A register could contribute to this debate by providing reliable information for further study and monitoring.

Canada is now working with other countries to draft a General Assembly resolution that establishes a UN register. Canada is proposing that the resolution promote transparency in arms procurement and holdings as well as in transfers. We are also suggesting that the resolution establish a mechanism whereby states can consult about the operation of the register and exchange views on the data provided to it.

Canada was represented on the UN Experts' Group by Mr. Ernie Regehr, Lecturer in Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of Waterloo and Research Coordinator of the non-governmental organization Project Ploughshares. The Group's report will be published by the UN later this year. ■

What is Transparency?

The UN Experts' Group defines transparency as "involving the systematic provision of information on specific aspects of activities in the military field under informal or formal international arrangements." Transparency is related to openness, which involves a general national policy of making information about military matters public. Transparency reflects the willingness of all states participating in transparency measures to practice openness in the areas covered by those measures.