

pitted domestic gun control lobbies, and sports shooting and self defence lobbies against each other as they represent their respective interests and constituents.

Initially, the two spheres of arms control and criminal justice (which included public health) followed separate paths in their efforts to address the issues of firearms and SALW.<sup>4</sup> However, over time, particularly within the NGO context, the two groupings have merged to form a coalition dealing with SALW and firearms writ large.<sup>5</sup> This merging is an attempt to emulate, in part, the success of the anti-personnel land mines campaign, which successfully used NGOs from diverse roles and agendas as advocacy groups to publicize the problem and pressure governments to take action.

There is apparent momentum (both prescriptive and declaratory) within the international context towards addressing the myriad concerns pertaining to SALW and firearms.<sup>6</sup> However, there are also numerous political and practical obstacles which must first be satisfactorily addressed before substantive progress can be made.<sup>7</sup> Whether an incremental and selective approach to addressing the issues at hand would be more successful than a broad all-encompassing approach is subject to debate. Over time, one need not exclude the other. The benefit of addressing a distinctive SALW issue is that sometimes specific incremental solutions can be more easily adopted than broad based ones. As well, there are SALW concerns that have not been sufficiently analyzed to determine their scope, the reality of their impact, and the practicality of proposed solutions to mitigate that impact. Unproven solutions or non-solutions exist on all sides of the debate. There has been insufficient impartial operational or applied

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<sup>4</sup> From a UN perspective these separate paths can best be demonstrated by the issues dealt with in the First Committee in New York on arms control and through the UN Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice in Vienna. The first is more concerned with conflict and disarmament from an international security perspective while the second deals primarily with criminal issues.

<sup>5</sup> An International NGO Consultation on Small Arms Action was held in August 1998 in Canada and formalized a loose coalition of NGOs (arms control, humanitarian and domestic gun control). A 14 October conference in Brussels formalized an NGO grouping called "Action Network On Small Arms" [IANSAs] consisting of a facilitating committee a secretarial and a continuation committee. For further details see the web site for the Preparatory Committee for a Global Campaign on Small Arms and Light Weapons [www.prepcom.org](http://www.prepcom.org). Prepcom, through its membership list, is an excellent source for accessing other sites concerned with SALW and firearms control issues.

<sup>6</sup> The UN is the one organization where SALW issues have been addressed most frequently. In Oct 1998 several draft resolutions were tabled in the UNGA/First Committee addressing elements of the SALW issue; one was on consolidation of peace through practical disarmament measures, a second was on small arms and a third on illicit trafficking. For details on this and other disarmament issues see the NGO Committee on Disarmament at: <http://www.peacenet.org/disarm/dt.html>

<sup>7</sup> One concrete example of a concluded agreement is The Organization of American States (OAS) Convention Against Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition and Explosives and Other Related Material. Signed in November 1997, the OAS Convention is a regional effort to control the illicit manufacturing and trafficking in firearms, ammunition and explosives.