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**Firearms Regulation: A Brief to the United Nations Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Commission. Sao Paulo, Brazil, December 8, 1997**  
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(The Friends World Committee on Consultation and the World Society on Victimology)

**Executive Summary**

**FIREARMS REGULATION: A BRIEF TO THE  
UNITED NATIONS CRIME PREVENTION  
AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE COMMISSION  
Sao Paulo, Brazil  
December 8, 1997**

Firearms regulation is particularly important in communities. It is particularly important in the safety of children, and in preventing youth violence. In Canada, as in other countries, firearms are used for legitimate purposes but they are also misused. They figure prominently in domestic violence, in suicide, and they threaten the safety of children.

The firearms which are misused come from several sources: legal firearms, firearms which are taken or stolen from their lawful owners, firearms which are bought legally and sold illegally, and firearms which are illegally imported. While those intent on criminal activities may find other sources of firearms, easy access to legal firearms plays a role in impulsive acts, domestic violence, suicides, accidents, and crimes, particularly those involving youth. Proper screening reduces the likelihood that firearms will be misused by their owners. Safe storage reduces accidents involving children, theft, and impulsive use. Effective tracking systems help reduce the trafficking of legal firearms and assist police in taking preventative action and enforcing the law.

Canada has recently introduced a new regulatory framework, which like many other countries, requires licensing firearms owners, systems to track firearms, safe storage of all firearms, and import/export controls. These elements closely parallel the regulatory approach to the civilian use of firearms outlined in the resolution of the UN Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice. The new Canadian law also regulates the sale of ammunition. Sales of military style weapons and some small handguns are prohibited because the risk they pose to public safety outweighs their utility. However, there are limits to how much a country can do on its own and international cooperation is essential to help solve these problems.

In Canada, these measures have been supported by more than 250 diverse community and non-governmental organizations. Non-governmental organizations with expertise in community safety, human rights, and crime prevention have played a critical role in developing and implementing these measures around the world. All citizens of the world have a fundamental right to be safe from the threat of firearm violence. The UN

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