

## 1. Arms Transfers

proposal for a universal register of arms transfers under the auspices of the United Nations, and will work for its early adoption. Such a register would alert the international community to an attempt by a state to build up holdings of conventional weapons beyond a reasonable level. Information should be provided by all states on a regular basis after transfers have taken place. We also urge greater openness about overall holdings of conventional weapons. We believe the provision of such data, and a procedure for seeking clarification, would be a valuable confidence- and security-building measure.

The principle of *consultation* should now be strengthened through the rapid implementation of recent initiatives for discussions among leading exporters with the aim of agreeing on a common approach to the guidelines which are applied in the transfer of conventional weapons....

The principle of *action* requires all of us to take steps to prevent the building up of disproportionate arsenals. To that end all countries should refrain from arms transfers which would be destabilizing or would exacerbate existing tensions. Special restraint should be exercised in the transfer of advanced technology weapons....<sup>1</sup>

After a number of unsuccessful resolutions in the UN General Assembly, a 1988 Colombian initiative, co-sponsored by Canada, requested the Secretary-General to seek the views of members on the question of international arms transfers, and thereafter to carry out a study, with the assistance of governmental experts, on means of promoting transparency in international arms transfers. As a consequence of this resolution, the Secretary-General established the Group of Governmental Experts on Arms Transfer Transparency, which submitted its report to the Secretary-General during the fall 1991 session of the General Assembly.

Amongst other things, the UN Study proposed that a "UN system be set up without delay to collect, process and publish official standardized information on international arms transfers on a regular basis as supplied to the UN by Member States on their arms exports and imports." Emphasizing that Member States should make all of their military activities as open as possible, and should ensure that they have in place the legal and administrative machinery for the effective monitoring of arms transfers, the Study argued that such a register, operated on a universal and non-discriminatory basis, "would promote restraint in international arms transfers and would provide countries with an indication of a build-up of arms manifestly excessive and destabilizing."<sup>2</sup> The study formed the basis for a resolution adopted by the UN General Assembly on 9 December 1991. Entitled "Transparency in Armaments," the resolution authorized the establishment of a

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<sup>1</sup> London Economic Summit 1991. *Declaration on Conventional Arms Transfers and NBC Non-Proliferation*, 15-17 July 1991.

<sup>2</sup> United Nations Department for Disarmament Affairs. *Study on Ways and Means of Promoting Transparency in International Transfers of Conventional Arms*. New York, 1991: 94.