

**The United Nations Register of Conventional Arms:
Options and Proposals for Enhancement and Further Development**

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Introduction

In December 1991 the United Nations General Assembly passed by a vote of 150-0 a resolution entitled Transparency in Armaments, establishing for the first time in history a Register of Conventional Arms. The first reports were due on 30 April 1993 and by September 1993 eighty-two countries had submitted reports. Seen by some as just another UN exercise, the first year's data surprised many by making transparent through voluntarily submitted data more than 90% of the major conventional arms exported and imported in the world in 1992.

The Transparency in Armaments resolution also established a review process, featuring a group of experts to be formed in 1994 to evaluate the first two years of operation of the Register and consider its further development. That Group, consisting of experts from 23 countries, has held its first session and developed a draft outline for its report, which is due to the UN Secretary General by August 1994. This research report is designed to assist those charged with evaluating the first years of operation and further developing the Register into an instrument which can effectively promote international peace and security.

The report begins with a brief history of the Register, establishing its role in the larger context of the family of efforts designed to stem proliferation of weapons, enhance conflict prevention and resolution, and promote conversion from a military to a civilian economy. This is followed by a review of the first year of operation of the Register and its current status. The Register is then evaluated in terms of how well it addresses the trends in the international arms trade which have emerged in the post-Cold War and post-Gulf War international system. The report then systematically evaluates the various concepts which could enhance the Register and transform it into a useful instrument of cooperative security. The report concludes with some concrete proposals and an outline of future research.