

The issue of small arms proliferation should be dealt with in the context of human security (i.e., the pervasive human insecurity, distrust of the justice system, etc.). The involvement of civil society on small arm issues is imperative.

Attention should be paid to the demand side of the small arms market as opposed to the current emphasis on the supply.

Obstacles to Canadian initiatives at the OAS should be also considered, they include:

- The traditional security language/culture, which automatically categorises proliferation as a nuclear weapons issue, still exists.
- The OAS environment continues to be state-centric. The traditional notion of sovereignty held by some Latin American governments poses challenges for Canada's human security objectives.
- Some Latin American governments perceive the involvement of civil society in the political process as problematic. Moreover, civil society and NGOs mean different things in different countries. In Colombia, for instance, the perception of civil society is not particularly positive.

Canadian Initiatives

Canadian and other NGOs were encouraged to mount an awareness raising campaign along the lines of the campaign to ban landmines. Civil society has not mustered as much momentum on small arms as it did on landmines. There is a need to signal that Canadian civil society is interested in the small arms issues and supports Canadian initiatives.

The NGOs present deliberated their strategy for the OAS General Assembly in Windsor and beyond. Due to the lack of time to organise and shift focus from implementation of existing instruments to ratification of a new declaration, the NGOs (mostly Canadian) decided to use the Windsor General Assembly as an awareness raising opportunity for public education and some messaging to international Ministers and journalists (through "tent" displays, roundtable). Nevertheless, government officials assured the NGO community that the process of adopting a new instrument on the transfer of small arms and light weapons is only beginning. The proposed Declaration for the Windsor General Assembly is the first step of a longer process. After the issue will have been posted at the General Assembly, the OAS governments will elaborate on the Canadian proposal. Canadian NGOs were encouraged to contribute ideas as the new instrument develops.

Other Canadian initiatives could include a bilateral assistance programme to provide legal, technical, security sector and media/journalism advice/expertise and help with de-mining and disarmament.