

DRAFT OAS CONVENTION ON ILLICIT TRAFFIC IN FIREARMS

Mexico took the lead, within the Rio Group of Latin American States, on a new OAS *Convention on Illicit Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives and Other Related Materials*. The initiative gained political momentum when U.S. President Clinton, in a summit meeting with Mexican President Zedillo and CARICOM countries agreed to the creation of a hemispheric instrument on firearms trafficking. The OAS instrument will be the first international convention to address firearms trafficking, although the Denver Summit of the Eight also included a commitment to a global instrument on the subject matter.

Four rounds of negotiations at the OAS have moved the text considerably, from a quasi-political statement of ambitious intentions to a legally binding instrument that contains effective and practicable provisions for tightening the net on arms traffickers. Many provisions are patterned on the 1998 Vienna *Convention on Illicit Trafficking in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances*, and on the recently negotiated OAS *Convention on Corruption*.

The draft includes provisions for a reciprocal system of import, export and transit authorizations, marking and tracing of firearms, information sharing, law enforcement training and various other forms of mutual assistance and cooperation. Possible provisions on extradition are still under discussion.

Negotiations on the convention are expected to be concluded in October of 1997, with a signing ceremony tentatively scheduled for November.