

The report was completed in July 1997 and contained a number of recommendations which included a suggestion "...to initiate a study on the problem of ammunition and explosives in all their aspects, as early as possible, within the available financial resources, and in cooperation with appropriate international and regional organizations where necessary."<sup>4</sup>

As described below, several researchers -- most from academic or non-governmental organization (NGO) advocacy perspective -- have suggested that ammunition rather than the weapon itself may be a key to controlling or restricting the illicit use of weapons. To re-coin and twist a truism "guns don't kill, bullets do." A review of some of the reasons put forth regarding why ammunition should be seen as a potential key in addressing the issue of destabilizing surpluses of small arms is warranted. While there may be feasibility in some of the suggestions, no technical or field analysis has been published that assesses the merits of the proposals. Even if there is sound technical credibility, the bureaucratic and political obstacles and the cost effectiveness of the implementation and enforcement mechanisms must be analysed.

At a meeting of NGOs concerned about the global effect of small arms and light weapons in Washington D.C., 10 December 1997, it was suggested that:

"...better control of ammunition production and sales was merited as ammunition has a shorter shelf-life than do the weapons themselves, and it is consumed very rapidly in conflict. Without ammunition, weapons are only political symbols, not instruments of destruction."<sup>5</sup>

Writing in 1995, Christopher Louise states that:

"Another possibility is to exploit the only aspect of light weapons that does not have an indefinite life span: ammunition...this is particularly the case for those weapons that are characterized by rapid rates of fire. Many countries produce ammunition under licence and...are major aid recipients. This invites the issue of aid conditionality..."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> United Nations. *Report of UN Panel of Experts on Small Arms A/52/298*, 27 August 1997. p. 30

<sup>5</sup> See. <http://www.prepcom.org/text/pc4/pc4a> for "Notes on Small/Light Arms Campaign Meeting," 10 Dec 1997

<sup>6</sup> Louise, Christopher. 1995. *The Social Impact of Light Weapons Availability and Proliferation: Discussion Paper 59*. United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, Geneva: U.N., March 1995. p.20