

THE OTTAWA GROUP

8th October 1999

Held at:

The Simons Foundation, Vancouver, Canada

In Attendance:

Chris Smith, Michael Hedges, Geraldine O'Callaghan, Christopher Cacho, Paddy Rawlinson, Douglas Ross, Vivienne Chin, Yvon Dandurand, Mark Gaillard, Wendy Cukier, Steve Lee, Joe Smith, Jim Hayes (by telephone)

Although this document has been agreed as a true representation of the meeting held by The Ottawa Group, the views contained herein do not necessarily reflect those of the entire group. In addition the group members acted in a confidential capacity and their views do not necessarily reflect the policies of the departments they represent.

Report by the Ottawa Group on Small Arms. The Simons Foundation.

October 8, 1999

Since the last meeting, a great deal of work has been done to address an extraordinary process of consensus building. The Ottawa Group has been successful in addressing the proliferation and transfer of small arms and light weapons. The group recognizes the role played by NGOs and their ability to influence governments that this is perhaps the most important factor on the ground in achieving a policy agenda. These efforts have been met by several governments with a willingness and a demonstrable commitment to ensure that necessary support will be given to the new efforts. It is instructive to compare the reaction of governments to this work to their responses to other major security issues, such as the need to control the transfer of major conventional weapons and nuclear arms control regimes.

In a relatively short space of time we now have two major initiatives designed to provide the architecture to begin to address the interrelated problems of firearms trafficking and light weapons proliferation. Work on the UN Firearms Protocol proceeds apace, and the forthcoming UN 2001 Conference on Light Weapons Proliferation will set in motion efforts to further these efforts underway by the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). In addition, there are several developments at the regional level. The European Union (EU) has made significant strides in the area of arms control, with the agreement of an EU Code of Conduct on arms exports, the EU programme on arms trafficking and comprehensive joint action on small arms. The Organisation of American States Convention (OAS) on arms trafficking is widely recognised as a landmark achievement. Despite implementation being difficult, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) initiative is still in its infancy but has the potential to address the light weapons problem in West Africa pending successful capacity building. Other initiatives include those underway by SAHARA, ECOWAS and SADC.

Above all, however, we may currently be witnessing a major transformation in thinking about the relationship between security and development. It seems to give substance to concepts relating to human security and a major commitment on the part of state and non-state actors to view security as being fundamental to development. This is a truly historic moment in the development