

United Nations Register of Conventional Arms (UNCAR) and was a founding contributor. The Register, established by a UN General Assembly Resolution in December 1991, makes a significant contribution to transparency, confidence building and enhanced global security.

The UN celebrated UNCAR's 10th anniversary last year, noting its success in forging a global norm that promotes transparency in order to build confidence. The Register remains the only global, cooperative security instrument that is mandated to address the challenges related to the proliferation of conventional arms.

In support of the Register, which is maintained at UN headquarters in New York, all governments may voluntarily supply data annually on their imports and exports in seven major categories of conventional weapons systems. Each year since the Register began operations, on average more than 90 governments have made submissions to it, and of these about 70 have done so consistently, including Canada. So far, 164 member states have participated at least once in this voluntary instrument, with a record 124 states submitting reports on arms transfers in 2002.

All major arms exporters and most major importers now submit reports annually, and there is reasonable representation from most geographic regions. By capturing over 95 percent of the international trade in major conventional weapons, the Register has become an important and authoritative source of information.

In its report, the 2000 UN Governmental Group of Experts on the continuing operation and further development of the Register recommended seeking universal participation through a series of subregional workshops to enhance familiarity with UNCAR. Taking place in 2002 and 2003, and sponsored by Canada, Germany, Japan and the Netherlands, these workshops promoted the Register as well as the UN Military Expenditures report-another UN transparency instrument.

The 2003 Group of Governmental Experts on the continuing operation and further development of the Register successfully concluded its work on August 1 by adopting a consensus report containing a number of significant recommendations. These recommendations are designed to further improve the operation of the Register and enhance its global relevance. Notably, the Group recommended technical adjustments to two of the seven categories of conventional arms covered by the Register. Specifically, it proposed lowering the reporting threshold for large-calibre artillery systems from 100 to 75 millimetres, and including Man-Portable Air-Defence Systems (MANPADS) in Category VII (Missiles and Missile Launchers).

In addition to looking at technical adjustments to the seven categories of the Register, the Group conducted detailed discussions on a range of other issues. These issues included the status of reporting on procurement through national production and