

Proposed Components of a new Canadian-led Initiative

Coordination

A Canadian initiative would coordinate interests, activities and the various ad-hoc initiatives within one common framework in order to make the process more durable.

Initiatives currently requiring coordination are taking place at different levels: international, regional, sub-regional, national and local. Coordination efforts could be undertaken at a specific level to support those at another. In particular, coordination efforts could also draw from other regional initiatives and build on current regional proposals. A regional approach may be a preferred starting point as it encompasses several layers (sub-regional, national and local), the international level can be more directly reached from it, and, consensus on the small arms issue already exists at this level. Furthermore, political will at this level is especially strong if the issue of small arms were linked to development issues. Through this linkage, more related issues could be attended to than if the issue was linked to security questions.

The unpopular possibility of dealing with rogue actors in post-conflict situations in order to carry out initiatives could be overcome by involving respected NGOs who would inject credibility into the process. It could also be overcome by putting the onus on the rogue actor to offer its services and willingly participate in the initiative. And, if the initiative involves a capacity-building element, the onus would also be placed on the rogue actor to request such assistance.

Participants recognized that the small arms issue does play a significant role in human security. However, because human security is viewed as a "soft" issue that is not easily quantifiable unlike traditional state-based national security, difficulties could be experienced in building consensus on a human security-based small arms issue.

Suggested bridges that could link different layers and levels include: - building a consensus on measures for tracking the movement of small arms which joins the domestic and international levels; - women's groups which are actively represented at all levels of the multi-level problem, although they are not active to the same degree across regions or states.

A potential strategy that received strong support at the roundtable was the use of the image of the child soldier which would potentially appeal strongly to all levels. The use of such imagery could enable targeted strategies that deal with the circumstances at the different levels that produce the child soldier. The child soldier also vividly personalises the issue of small arms and personifies the damage that the issue of small arms can wreck on society-building efforts. The child soldier is also part of the growing concern with the exploitation of children, either as soldiers or as labourers. However, participants recognized that creating a symbol for the small arms issue risks oversimplifying the issue and focusing solutions on one area at the expense of other, equally important dimensions.