

In order to fill . . . gaps in the existing data, the Group therefore recommends a fuller and more systematic compilation and dissemination by Governments of data on . . . military transfers . . .

Canada responded:

The Canadian Government whole-heartedly supports the spirit and the letter of recommendation 3 . . .⁸

This recommendation was also supported by Austria, Japan, Mexico and Norway. Sweden supported the need for the UN to collect information and suggested that information on military transfers could act as a supplement to information on military expenditures already being collected. The Eastern Europeans stated that attempts to collect more information on the military efforts of states detracts from the true problem which is the absence of political will on the part of some states to adopt serious disarmament measures.

In 1983 the United Kingdom suggested that the ongoing UN study should recommend that all states report to the UN the value of their military production and of their imports and exports of arms so as to enable the Centre for Disarmament to establish a means of monitoring any measures that might be taken to restrain arms transfers.

When the issue was first brought up in 1965 the volume of trade in conventional arms was expanding quickly as the colonial era came to an end. Developing countries resisted the idea of a register, and of controls on transfers in general, because they felt it was up to the superpowers and other heavily armed industrial countries to initiate restraint and reductions first before broader discussions could begin. By the time Japan introduced its proposal in 1976 the situation had changed enough that eleven developing nations co-sponsored the resolution.

On the whole the non-aligned nations have continued to emphasize that the legitimate right of states to self defence be given priority. As with other measures requiring publication of information, the Warsaw Pact nations have resisted the idea of a register.

⁸ Document A/S-12/13, p.10.