

2. Synopsis of the Discussion

Context

There are strong links between domestic and international small arms regimes. The absence of effective arms control in Canada and especially the United States has a significant impact on the supply of weapons in the Hemisphere. *The 1997 Convention could be amended to include domestic weapons control.* This may be difficult to achieve in the OAS context since many Latin American governments still perceive national sovereignty as divisible from human security and would consider such an amendment as infringing upon their state sovereignty. Moreover, the OAS does not legislate, rather, it develops models.

Many countries do not have the institutional capacity to ratify and implement Conventions. *There is a need for capacity-building measures to address this gap between formal multilateral law/regulation making and domestic capacity to ratify/implement treaties.* Attention should be paid to ratifying and implementing existing treaties rather than adopting new ones. Other departments besides DFAIT, especially CIDA, should support/develop capacity building programmes. The small arms issues require a coherent (human security) approach and better inter-departmental coordination. DND, RCMP, IDRC and other departments should also be engaged and their resources harnessed.

More attention should be paid to security sector reform in the Hemisphere. While CIDA has good institutional assistance programmes, they exclude the security sector. There is a need to put security issues into the good governance framework and include the security sector in CIDA's programming. Here the cooperation of DND is required. However, caution was raised about the role and nature of the military in Latin America before embarking on ambitious security sector reforms. Others pointed to the difficulty of involving DND in Hemispheric multilateral efforts (i.e., the Canadian Minister of Defence never attended the Defence Ministers' of the Americas meeting) and to the lack of the Defence Department's commitment to public consultation and input.

In some Latin American countries there is a disconnect between the rule of law and reality/culture. *Ratification and implementation of Conventions do not necessarily mean their respect and enforcement. The wide-spread culture of violence and disrespect for the rule of law must change for laws and regulations to be legitimate and effective.* Spaces for civil society engagement should be opened. Education, not only about small arms, but also poverty and youth violence is needed to initiate real change. Attention should be paid to the differences among countries across the region and generalisations avoided. The cultural aspect of the small arms problem is another reason for the engagement of CIDA (i.e., to develop capacity-building initiatives).

The large security impact of what may seem a small amount of weapons on island countries should be considered.