

relatively high weight and relatively low dollar value. Reliable (safe) ammunition is also difficult to produce. Ammunition also has a significantly shorter shelf-life than the weapons in which it is used. For all of these reasons, limitations on ammunition supplies may be more feasible than limitations on the weapons themselves.

#### **Recommendation**

- In line with the UN Panel of Experts on Small Arms, the Commission should recommend that the UN should initiate a study on the problems of ammunition and explosives.

## **CONTROLLING ILLICIT WEAPONS FLOWS**

Once a conflict ends, it is often extremely difficult for authorities to regain control of weapons that have flooded the country. For former combatants, with few marketable skills, weapons become a form of currency. In order to survive, they may use them for banditry or trade them within the civilian market for other goods. The market in illicit weapons often results in the dramatic increase in violence in civil society in regions of conflict. In El Salvador, for example, more people have died from criminal violence each year since the end of the civil war than in combat than during the years leading up to the peace accords.

The wide availability of automatic weapons, such as AK47's, in Mozambique and Angola has flooded Southern Africa with illicit weapons. South Africa has become one of the biggest market for the import and smuggling in of light weapons. This in turn has fuelled a crime wave. A far higher proportion of crime in South Africa now involves the threat or use of a firearm. Out of the 18,312 murders committed in 1994, over 32 percent were committed with small arms and light weapons. During the same year there were 68,320 armed robberies, over 63 percent involved the use of firearms.<sup>5</sup>

### **1. Regional Co-operation**

Efforts to address illicit weapons trafficking requires a dual track approach - controls and co-operation at the national and regional level. The OAS "Inter-American Convention Against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials"<sup>6</sup> combines regional and bilateral co-operation. The move towards harmonisation is to be welcomed. The OAS convention provides an excellent regional model that could be easily adapted and agreed by other regional institutions.

#### **Recommendations**

- Promote the OAS Convention within the UN and the Wassenaar Arrangement.

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<sup>5</sup> Chris Smith, Light Weapons and the International Arms Trade in 'Small Arms Management and Peacekeeping in Southern Africa' UNIDIR Disarmament and Conflict Resolution Project.

<sup>6</sup> Inter-American Convention Against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives and Other Related Materials," OEA/Ser. G, GT/CIFTA-18/97, 17 October 1997.