

THE OTTAWA GROUP REPORT ON SMALL ARMS, LIGHT WEAPONS (SALW) AND NON-STATE ACTORS

November 7-8, 2000
Meeting in Bruxelles, Belgium

In Attendance: Wendy Cukier, Yvon Dandurand, Catriona Gourlay, Steve Lee, David Meddings, Sarah Meek, Geraldine O'Callaghan, Sharon Riggle, and Brian Wood.

Apologies: Chris Smith, Paddy Rawlinson

Note: Although this document is presented as a true representation of the meeting held by The Ottawa Group, the views contained herewith do not necessarily reflect those of the entire group. In addition, the group members acted in an individual capacity and their views do not necessarily reflect the policies of the departments they represent.

The Ottawa Group met to establish the issues to be addressed under the subject of SALW and non-state actors, thereby providing the way to new and innovative approaches to methods of control and elimination. While looking at the relationship between non-state actors and SALW, the group concentrated on the complexity of the issue of access to weapons by both state and non-state actors. This issue gave rise to various questions concerning the definition of non-state actors, the creation of international norms to deal with the transfer of weapons to international human rights violators, and the potential effects of the transfer of weapons being used as a foreign policy tool.

Upon first inspection, it was proposed that non-state actors be defined within 5 categories:

- (1) Those who engage in military or para-military activities against the state;
- (2) Those who aspire to an armed insurgency;
- (3) Those who constitute an opposition group with a military strategy;
- (4) Those who engage in providing security services (corporate); and
- (5) Those who are ordinary civilians;

These categories were then used to formulate the discussion surrounding SALW and non-state actors, including issues of definition, supply, demand, transfer, and communication to engage with non-state actors.

It must be remembered that issues under the umbrella of SALW are largely political and humanitarian but, up to now, the international community has moved ahead only on the technical issues, such as the marking and identification of SALW. The political side of the control issue has always been outweighed by the perceived significant role supply plays in foreign policy and by the inability to understand fully the nature of the problem in terms of impact and effect. To make change on the political side also demands that states recognize the importance of alternate