

A register should allow participants to show good will and forthrightness to their fellow participants, theoretically increasing the level of mutual trust, and provide a routine forum for explanation of arms dispositions. Therefore, a register should provide as much detail as possible to satisfy all participants. To obtain the maximum benefit, there should be opportunity for explanation of the provided data to avoid misunderstanding and to provide meaningful information to others.

The United Nations Register of Conventional Arms has provided that countries, if they so wish, may explain and amplify on the data submitted. To date, this has been voluntary (as is the whole Register, of course) and only a limited number of countries have made use of this provision. Nevertheless, a register for light weapons would benefit from a provision that encourages countries to provide explanatory notes about transfer details and justification. Countries will inevitably interpret definitions and other details differently. Amplification could allow proper explanation so that a state's position can be more fully understood by other participants.

A register provides an *official* forum for a participating country to contribute information. This has proven, in the case of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, to be very beneficial. As Chalmers and Greene argue, officially-provided information gives a legitimacy to the data submitted and allows a basis upon which intergovernmental dialogues can be established.¹⁰ It follows, then, that information which flows to the register must come from a competent authority within the participating country and there must be confidence that the data is accurate.

In this regard, even negative information such as a "nil" return is worthwhile. The admission by a country that it does not have the capability to seize illicit weapons, for instance, may indicate where international aid may be most beneficially spent. If a nation is unable to account for arms exported, it may be a sign that there is work to do in the area of export controls or licencing issues.

THE SCOPE OF A LIGHT WEAPONS REGISTER

Definition of Classes of Light Weapons

The definition of what classes of weapons are to be included in a register is likely to provoke considerable discussion among potential participants of any register regime. On the one hand, some may wish to include a wide range of weapons, regardless of calibre or size, on the premise that all weapons can be lethal. Others may take a more moderate position that only those of large calibre or capable of large scale injury and destruction should be included. The real problem, except for the extreme case of blanket inclusion, is that there is no simple line of demarcation that will satisfy all concerns as well as be reasonably efficacious to implement. By