

PREFACE

International attention concerning light weapons proliferation as an arms control and non-proliferation issue is a relatively recent phenomena. Within the framework of the United Nations a "Panel of Government Experts on Small Arms" is presently seeking to identify practical disarmament measures regarding light weapons within the context of conflicts being dealt with by the UN. A Canadian expert is a member of that panel.

Canada views the proliferation and use of light weapons to have potentially serious consequences; in particular, excessive accumulations of these weapons can pose significant dangers to internal security and economic development in many countries as well as to international peace and security. The traffic in and possession of such weapons can also have serious consequences for crime prevention as well as public health and safety.

This report reviews much of the literature on small arms and light weapons proliferation and highlights, from a Canadian perspective, a number of issues that makes this subject a complex and difficult area to address. It is the result of a background research study undertaken to assist in the work of the United Nations Small Arms Panel and is being made available with that aim in mind.

The views contained in this report are those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade nor those who contributed advice individually or as representatives of their Department.