

- The signing of the *Convention Against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials* is evidence of a hemispheric consensus that illicit small arms activity needed to be addressed. However, member state legislatures have been slow to implement the OAS treaty. Some of the reasons for slow ratification include domestic political opposition, the necessity to amend national constitutions and the lack of capacity to implement and adhere to the treaty.
- Even when the OAS Treaty is fully operational, its focus on illicit trafficking will miss important aspects of the small arms problem in the Hemisphere: 1) the impact of national stockpiles on (the internal) black market, 2) use of hand grenades, 3) world supply (other than from OAS member states), 4) illegal distribution and misuse of legally purchased weapons, 5) (legal and semi-legal) arming of private security companies, 6) the culture of pistol and hunting rifle ownership, 7) uneven levels of indigenous arms production (i.e., some countries have indigenous arms production and others do not).

Since all of the small arms problems in the Hemisphere involve civil society, ways should be found to engage and involve the public with the OAS member state governments. A good start could be a forum to coincide with the OAS General Assembly and continue beyond. The creation of such a forum can be justified based on the language contained in the OAS General Assembly resolutions on small arms non-proliferation and civil society involvement. *Civil society must be brought into the process since, in many cases, the government has no capacity to locate the weapons and control effectively their movement. Civil society can illustrate the damage small arms proliferation causes in the Hemisphere and lay bare the challenges it poses for human security, public health and so on. Moreover, it can persuade the governments to act by demonstrating successful community-based initiatives* (i.e., the work of a Brazilian group Viva Rio). In conclusion, Edward Lawrence stressed the importance and merit of building cross-sectoral networks.

Renata Wielgosz drew attention to the relatively fast ratification of the Landmines Convention and the dynamism of the OAS in the 1990's. Since Canada joined the OAS in January 1990 it contributed to the establishment of the Unit for the Promotion of Democracy and the Permanent Committee on Hemispheric Security. Both bodies have been very successful.

While adopting another Convention might not be the best option right now, a *Declaration on the Responsible Transfers of Small Arms and Light Weapons* may be the first practical step to address the externalities of legal inter-governmental transfers. Such a Declaration could be used to introduce the issue as a mandate to move on at the OAS in the near future. The aim of the Declaration would be to better regulate and restrain government-to-government transfers and to prevent irresponsible transfers (i.e., government-to-offender). The Declaration could be a stepping stone for developing other international initiatives.