

## CONSOLIDATION OF PEACE THROUGH PRACTICAL DISARMAMENT MEASURES: THE CONTEXT

### 1. Summary

The 1997 session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC) saw the first year of a three-year consideration of the topic "guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament, with particular emphasis on consolidation of peace" through practical disarmament measures. Canada participated actively in these discussions and submitted an extensive background paper<sup>1</sup>. Because of the relationship of the topic to small arms proliferation, these deliberations have assumed a heightened importance in multilateral disarmament fora.

Among the questions on which delegations expressed a variety of perspectives was how disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants in post-conflict situations fits within the scope of the UNDC's terms of reference and within the arms control and disarmament agenda as commonly understood. This paper attempts to answer these questions. It examines the United Nations' traditional approach to arms control and disarmament to determine the extent to which disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme (DDRP) related issues have already been addressed by the General Assembly and the UNDC, and to see if past decisions by these bodies offer insights for dealing with DDRP related issues in future.

The paper concludes that an integrated and coordinated approach to DDRPs is essential for the success of post-conflict peacebuilding efforts. Within such an approach, the disarmament dimension must receive specialized attention by the UN disarmament fora, in consultation and coordination with other relevant bodies, to ensure that the many potential benefits of DDRPs are fully realized. The paper also concludes that an integrated approach to DDRPs is fully consistent with the historical record. DDRP related issues, such as disarmament and development, have been considered within the global disarmament agenda since at least the First Special Session on Disarmament in 1978. Moreover, an integrated approach to DDRPs fits logically within the post-Cold War development of the arms control and disarmament agenda and accords with UN principles on how to proceed with topics having global and regional implications.

These discussions within the UNDC are of particular relevance given the organizational changes that have taken place at the senior bureaucratic level of the United Nations since the last meeting of the UNDC. These initiatives, which facilitate an integrated approach to peacebuilding in order that there might be greater unity of purpose, coherence of efforts and agility in the Organization's response, give further strength to the argument that

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<sup>1</sup> *Practical Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Measures for Peacebuilding*, The Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada, with the assistance of the Canadian Council for International Peace and Security, April 1997.