

interests

- the need to give priority to the welfare of the child during disarmament and demobilisation.

Deirdre van der Merwe outlined the possible content, process, enforcement mechanism and dynamism of a military code of conduct aimed at preserving children's rights in conflict. She said that an already existing peacekeeping framework could be used to develop a code for African soldiers and peacekeepers. The code could be included in a standard training manual for peace support operations that is widely used in African military training institutions.

### **Synopsis of the Discussion**

Discussion centred around the issue of enforcement. Deirdre van der Merwe said that there is a need to raise awareness about the issues of war-affected children among army commanders, the military in general, as well as rebel groups. Moreover, mobilising public opinion is key to the enforcement of any code. Pressure from civil society often crystallises government action. The role of the Security General in voicing these problems is important in this respect.

Anatole Ayissi, echoed these sentiments by saying that a change in mentality/culture is key in legitimising and enforcing norms and codes governing the illicit circulation of small arms and light weapons in West Africa. The supply side of small arms and light weapons should be addressed more closely and the codes should speak to the suppliers as well as buyers/users.

Martha Schweitz pointed out that in many cases, codes of conduct are voluntary and were never intended to be enforced but complied with through implementation reports, for instance. William Maley said that in cases such as illegal small arms regimes and war-affected children, international organisations should signal which actions are acceptable and which are not in order to help consolidate international norms. Ramesh Thakur expressed pessimism about the adoption of voluntary codes of ethics by "uncivil" society (i.e., small arms smugglers).

## **7. CONCLUSION**

At the close of the conference the issue of how new international normative regimes emerge was raised. Where do new norms originate? How does a norm become a law? How does it become universally accepted? In developed industrial democracies, norms promoted by the elites have evolved into laws. The link between emerging global norms and local non-government norms/efforts could be used to develop universal normative regimes without the roadblocks posed by state sovereignty. In this way the work of like-minded countries at the UN on war-affected children, for instance, and the work of Olara Otunnu (Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict) on the ground could be combined in an effort to develop a universal framework for protection of children's rights in armed conflict.