

## 5. MIDDLE EAST ARMS CONTROL

### BACKGROUND

Since the crisis in the Persian Gulf there has been considerable interest in developing a regional arms control plan for the Middle East which would limit conventional arms transfers and weapons of mass destruction. In the past there have been various proposals for arms control in the Middle East including a proposal for making the region a nuclear weapon-free zone (see Chapter 10, NUCLEAR WEAPON-FREE ZONES) but they have met with little success. New interest in Middle East arms control has been driven as much by the war itself as by the realization that the coalition was faced with many weapons that had been sold to Iraq by coalition members. As a result a number of the proposals that have been put forward for Middle East arms control have centered on controlling conventional arms transfers to the region (see Chapter 1, ARMS TRANSFERS).

In the aftermath of the Persian Gulf war, Canada was the first country to propose new arms control measures. While the situation in the Middle East was key to the Canadian proposals, the proposals themselves have a global focus and do not seek to deal solely with the Middle East. Canada proposed that a world summit be held at the United Nations (UN) to establish a wide-ranging programme of arms control to be completed in time for a second summit to be held in 1995.

The Canadian proposals for the arms control programme encompass both conventional arms transfers controls and limits on weapons of mass destruction. They call for an early commitment to extending the Non-Proliferation Treaty beyond 1995, an expansion of the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR), a strengthening of the Biological Weapons Convention at the next review conference and a commitment to conclude the chemical weapons convention by 1992. As part of the plan, Canada also urged the major arms exporting countries to undertake a formal commitment to greater sensitivity and transparency in arms exports and proposed that the signatories to the Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe agree not to export their surplus arms to areas of tension.

During March and April 1991, there were increasing calls for arms control in the Middle East from countries in the region, as well as from the US and France. On 29 May 1991, after consultations with governments in the region, the US unveiled its proposal for Middle East arms control. The US proposal would involve an agreement among the five major suppliers of conventional arms, Britain, China, France, the Soviet Union and the US, on guidelines which would control the export of destabilizing weapons to the region while allowing exports for legitimate defence needs. Middle East states would agree to refrain from further acquisition, production and testing of surface-to-surface missiles as a first step towards eliminating these missiles. The initiative also calls for a regional ban on the production and acquisition of weapon-capable nuclear material such as enriched uranium; calls on all states in the region to sign the Non-Proliferation Treaty; and supports a nuclear weapon-free