

CONFERENCE BACKGROUND

At the Human Security Network Ministerial (May 2000) in Lucerne, Switzerland, Canada and Austria agreed to co-host a conference in Vienna on SALW which would bring together representatives of OSCE and African states. However, then Minister of Foreign Affairs Axworthy along with Austrian Foreign Minister Ferrero-Waldner decided in September 2000 to postpone the Vienna Conference. This decision was made on the basis that the then Organization of African Unity (now African Union) held a Ministerial Meeting on Small Arms and Light Weapons in Bamako, Mali from 28-30 November, 2000 during the same time frame as the Vienna Conference.

Since the postponement of the Vienna Conference, DFAIT and the Austrian MFA have continued to work on this project and have been joined by the Foreign Ministries of the United Kingdom, Norway, South Africa, Kenya and Mali. Jointly, these countries will host the "Conference on the Implementation of the UN Program of Action on Small Arms in Africa - Needs and Partnerships" to take place in Pretoria, South Africa in March 18-20, 2002 for a 3 day conference.

Substantive conference participation will be at the Director General / Expert level. It is assumed that there will be:

- 50 African Countries (The partner countries will cover the costs for one senior official.)
- 25 OECD Countries (OECD participants will cover their own costs)
- 30 Non-Governmental Organizations. (There will be focus on African NGOs, balanced by a few western NGOs. We are preparing to invite Project Ploughshare, a Canadian NGO which is involved in SALW projects in East Africa and a second Canadian NGO involved in development projects in Africa.

The major objective of this conference is to generate partnerships between affected countries and donor countries, including the collection and destruction of SALW, training, and efficient export controls, drafting of legislative and regulatory measures.

It is hoped that a "Guidelines on Implementation and Cooperation" will be adopted at the conclusion of this conference. The "Guidelines on Implementation and Cooperation" would address regional and sub-regional initiatives, as well as continental ones related to SALW activities.

This initiative is in line with Canada's leadership of the G8, as Canada has committed itself to the Genoa Plan for Africa, and supports the key themes of the New African Initiative including the Peace, Security and Political Governance Initiatives in particular: Combatting the illicit proliferation of small arms, light weapons and landmines.