

CURRENT STATUS

The Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice in Vienna had asked Dr. Romer in Geneva for a WHO contribution to the "United Nations international study on firearm regulation". Dr. Romer requested in February 1997, that where possible a WHO Expert represent him on behalf of WHO at any relevant international meeting on firearm violence and injury. The first such opportunity was at the 3rd United Nations Firearm Regulation Workshop for the Americas Region in Sao Paulo, Brazil, 8-12 December 1997. These regional workshops (following Slovenia, Tanzania and preceding Delhi in January 1998) flowed from the resolution passed in Vienna in May 1997, on « Firearm regulation for the purpose of crime prevention and public health and safety », to the UN Economic and Social Council.

The "United Nations international study on firearm regulation", preceded the resolution, surveyed over 50 countries and covered the following topics: : criminal cases, « accidents » and suicides in which firearms are involved; national legislation and regulation at the regional and interregional levels; and international illegal movement in firearms. The study noted that:

- Controls on import and export of firearms are insufficient in themselves to prevent illegal trafficking
- The absence of effective firearm regulation in one member state can undermine not only the regulatory efforts but also the effective governance of other States.
- Effective domestic regulation of firearms requires the co-operation of all levels of government to promote crime prevention and public safety

The UN resolution encourages countries who have not yet done so to adopt regulations relating to: safe storage of firearms, appropriate penalties for serious offences involving the misuse of firearms, a licensing system to ensure that persons who are at high risk of misusing firearms are prevented from possessing and using them, and finally, a record-keeping system for firearms to assist criminal investigations, discourage theft and ensure the accountability of owners.

The resolution also requests that the Secretary General promote projects that recognise the relevance of firearm regulation in addressing violence against women, in promoting justice for victims of crime and in addressing the problem of children and youth as victims and perpetrators of crime and in re-establishing the rule of law in post-conflict peace-keeping projects.

The resolution requests the Secretary-General to continue the data collection and dissemination of information on firearm regulation, (...) and the enhancement of the existing database on firearm regulation; (...) to include in the provisional agenda for the four regional workshops on firearm regulation to be organised in 1997 [for] ... the collection of comparable information on firearm regulation, the provision of technical assistance, training and information-sharing and the need for implementing bilateral, regional or multilateral agreements or arrangements on combating illicit trafficking in firearms, in order to ensure that all Member States have sufficient capacity in the area of firearm regulation, and also requests that interested non-governmental organisations should each be allowed to make a statement at the regional workshops on subjects covered in their agenda but should not be permitted to attend workshop meetings where sensitive law enforcement issues will be discussed;

The resolution further requests the Secretary-General to seek views of Member States, institutes comprising the United Nations Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Programme network, relevant United Nations entities (WHO ?) and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations on the development of a declaration of principles, based on the regulatory approaches suggested above, and to submit a report containing the views received to the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice at its seventh session;