

## Destruction Data

A number of suggestions have been put forth to tackle the problem of over-abundance of light weapons in the world. One concept gaining ground in the literature is the idea of destruction. Countries often have surplus stocks as a result of modernization or because of changed international circumstances such as the end of the Cold War. Weapons will also be seized from illegal sources. Hostilities will cease and soldiers de-mobilized. UN Peacekeeping operations in the future may incorporate a system of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration for ex-combattants that involve confiscation of light weapons. Some peacebuilding efforts have included weapon buy-back schemes to lower the level of personal armament in a region previously affected by war and unrest. Given all these situations and others, it would seem beneficial to account in a register for light weapons taken out of circulation.<sup>29</sup>

There are problems with trying to account for illicit weapons seized by national security forces. Some nations may be reluctant to divulge the extent of the illicit weapon problem within their borders. Others may be reluctant to admit how many seized weapons are being kept for the use of the national security forces or in domestic reserve stocks. There have been concerns expressed about the quality of weapons which are often returned in the process of buy-back schemes with allegations that patently old, useless weapons are being equated to more dangerous modern weaponry. (Worry about the quality of weapons being accounted for is of minimal concern for a register which deals in quantity and not quality of the units. Indeed, buy-back schemes can be tailored to factor in the quality issue by a sliding scale of reward payment, method of payment, etc.) The critical point is that some weapons are being removed from illicit circulation and emphasis should be put upon this factor. The register can be a useful vehicle for provision of this information.

Including seizure and subsequent disposal figures in a light weapons register might allow some gauge of the effectiveness of control measures instituted by national and multinational entities. Further, providing a capability for highlighting these statistics could allow nations to prove their good intentions. If it were to become the case, as has been suggested by some writers, that future economic aid and favoured trading status become dependent upon national action being taken to alleviate the light weapons situation, a consistent track record in a light weapons register may prove more valuable to the nation concerned than the supposed value of the weapons destroyed.<sup>30</sup> In a perfect world, inclusion of quantities of weapons seized would be useful to reflect correctly the balance of arms transfers. Even in an imperfect world, such an entry would be beneficial in a light weapons register to provide a visibility factor for both national and international authorities who are making the effort to stem the flow of arms or to destroy their existing stockpiles.