

Foreword

Arms Control and Security Policy Framework

The promotion of international peace and security is a key Canadian foreign policy objective. Indeed, it constitutes one of the three pillars of the government's comprehensive foreign policy statement of 1995, *Canada in the World*, namely "the protection of our security, within a stable global environment." To that end, Canada is a major proponent of arms control and disarmament agreements, as well as measures to promote transparency and build confidence at the regional and global level.

Canada's policies recognize the right, enshrined in the United Nations Charter, of all nations to provide for their legitimate self-defence. At the same time, however, Canada believes that excessive accumulations of arms can have a destabilizing effect on both the regional security situation and global order.

Canada is actively working to promote greater transparency in the trade of conventional weapons. This annual report on the export of military goods from Canada has been issued by the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) for each of the past eight years, beginning with the year 1990. We have endeavoured to improve the report throughout; for example, with the 1996 report we enhanced the level of detail and transparency by providing additional information about the types of goods exported. We look to other countries to pursue similar efforts.

An important element in international efforts to promote greater transparency and responsibility among supplying countries with regard to the trade in conventional arms is the Wassenaar Arrangement. Formed in 1996, the Arrangement seeks to ensure regional and international peace and security by preventing destabilizing accumulations of conventional weapons and dual-use equipment. Canada was a founding member of this group, which currently includes 33 countries.

Canada was an advocate of the creation of the United Nations' Register of Conventional Arms in 1991 and was also a founding contributor. We have supported its continued development and expansion through our participation in the work of the Group of Governmental Experts on the United Nations' Register convened by the Secretary-General in 1994 and in 1997. The United Nations' Register records information on imports and exports under seven major categories of conventional weapons systems. In any one year, more than 90 countries make submissions to the Register; of these, about 70 do so consistently. This includes all major arms exporters and most major importers, providing a reasonable representation of most geographical regions. By capturing over 90 percent of the international trade in major conventional weapons, the Register has become an important and authoritative source of information.