

* Dr. Antoine Chapdelaine, WHO Expert and Focal Point on Firearms, Québec:

The purpose of the workshop is to :

provide advice to the Canadian government regarding its policy options for dealing with international small arms and firearms control.

2) provide advice to the World Health Organization (WHO) regarding firearms and small arms in the context of an international strategy to prevent injury and promote safety

Background

Following its success with land mines, the Canadian government has announced its intention to play a leading role in efforts to control small arms. However, it has also recognised that while the model for international action developed in the "Ottawa Process" may be instructive, small arms are not land mines and the context is more complex.

The issue of international small arms or firearms control may be approached from three different perspectives - peace-building, crime prevention and public health. The purpose of the workshop was to explore in more detail the public health perspective and its links to peace-building and crime prevention.

* Dr. Claude Romer, Chief, Injury Prevention and Safety Promotion Program, WHO, Geneva:

The World Health Organisation has passed a resolution identifying the prevention of violence as a public health problem and priority (Resolution WHA49.25) and has developed an integrated plan of action for violence prevention. The WHO played an important role in the land mines issue. Over the last few years, injuries caused by firearms and small arms have become increasingly important from a public health perspective.

As was evident in dealing with land mines, Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) play an important role and there must be collaboration between member States, intergovernmental organisations and other sectors of civil society to achieve change. With regard to surveillance, there is also a need to set methodological standards for comparisons on an international scale. The role of WHO could be to ensure adequate data collection, analysis and dissemination.

* Wendy Cukier, President, Coalition for Gun Control (NGO) and Professor, Ryerson Polytechnic University, Toronto:

International perspectives on firearms and small arms regulation are important from the perspective of national self interest as well as international peace-building.

When Canada began to re examine its domestic firearms control, examples from other countries were important in developing policy. But limited information was available beyond the American experience. Compared only to the United States, Canada's firearms regulation regime seemed very strict. It was only when comparisons from other countries - notably Great Britain, Europe and Australia were examined that it became clear that significant improvements were both needed and feasible. The need for information sharing on an international basis has been demonstrated in many jurisdictions, particularly in light of the efforts of the arms industry and its allies to promote firearms. In addition, national self interest encourages concerns about the international movement of firearms and small arms because even when a country implements strict domestic regulations, small arms and firearms may flow from less regulated areas, including post-conflict zones.

Firearms and small arms are significant for international commitments to building peace and civil society,