

Small Arms

Small arms and light weapons are the most commonly used weapons in contemporary armed conflicts and are implicated in the deaths and injuries of thousands of people each year, particularly civilians. The uncontrolled spread of these weapons threatens human security, especially in regions emerging from a period of armed conflict and where governmental institutions are weak.

Small arms proliferation requires urgent action at the global, regional and local levels. Canada has taken a three-pronged approach, focussing on the control of small arms transfers, the transnational criminal aspects of proliferation, and peacebuilding dimensions — the latter being generally concerned with the factors that drive demand and that relate to disarmament, demobilization and reintegration strategies. A priority for Canada will be to work with others for the preparation and follow-up to the 2001 UN Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. The Conference will aim to consolidate accomplishments to date and develop an international plan of action targeting areas requiring further work.

Post-Conflict Peacebuilding

Civil war often destroys many or all of a society's essential institutions of governance. In the aftermath of a ceasefire or peace agreement, these institutions must be rebuilt, usually in a climate of economic hardship, severely reduced human resources and very little trust.

Peacebuilding is the effort to strengthen the prospects for internal peace and decrease the likelihood of violent conflict. Its overarching goal is to enhance the indigenous capacity of a society to manage conflict without violence. Peacebuilding can involve a diversity of measures from reintegrating refugees and displaced persons, to promoting reconciliation and cultural diversity, to reforming the security sector and building democratic institutions. Canada has contributed actively to peacebuilding activities around the world over the last decade in places such as Bosnia, Cambodia, Croatia, East Timor and Haiti. In Canada's view, global commitments to such efforts — both political and financial — are key to creating sustainable conditions for human security.

Angola Sanctions Committee

In the 1990s, the UN Security Council put in place a range of sanctions against the Angolan rebel movement UNITA following the latter's abandonment of the peace process. By limiting UNITA's access to such resources as arms, petroleum and revenues from illicit diamond trading, the sanctions regime aimed to curtail UNITA's ability to pursue its objectives by military means, and to end a long and brutal civil war. As part of its two-year term on the Security Council, Canada chaired the Angola Sanctions Committee and spearheaded investigations by an independent group of experts on international implementation and compliance with the sanctions.

The experts' report took the unprecedented step of naming sanctions violators and recommending new enforcement measures. In April 2000, the Security Council passed a Canadian-led resolution that took action on key recommendations of the independent experts, including the creation of a monitoring mechanism to investigate and report on continuing violations of the sanctions. These efforts represent important steps toward making sanctions in Angola and elsewhere more effective multilateral tools for human security.



UN Military Observer in Guatemala presents a rebel soldier with his certificate of completion of the demobilization process. (1997)