

community has studiously avoided too great an involvement in defence and security issues. This now looks set to change and opens up the possibility of a revolution in development thinking that could be as significant as the neo-liberal revolution of the early 1980's. Efforts to overcome traditional divisions of labour between government departments means that defence and foreign policy institutions are being brought into the equation on equal terms with development agencies.

Expectations for the Future

Governments are in the process of committing significant political, institutional and financial resources to the light weapons issue. However, the process has only just started and the problems and obstacles that lie ahead should not be underestimated. Just as the Ottawa Convention represents a preliminary step in attempts to eliminate anti personnel landmines and the threats they pose, so the various light weapons initiatives should also be seen as a first step, a means to an end and not an end in themselves. It is imperative that governments appreciate that this is the start of an extremely arduous and expensive process which will require immense political will given the challenges ahead and the competing claims upon scarce resources. It is widely recognised that the problems associated with crime and armed conflict are both complex and challenging. Therefore, it should also be recognised that progress will be slow and setbacks frequent. Even significant agreements may not be sufficient to achieve tangible results in the short term, but this should not be taken to assume that nothing can be achieved over the medium- and long-term. However, the public aversion to weapons and the acknowledgement of their role in the growth in the undermining of human security is growing stronger month by month. This should provide the political basis for a long-term process and should also lead to a public acceptance that significant financial resources will continue to be required; indeed, success in any shape or form will require greater not less, investment.

It is also important that the NGO community maintains realistic expectations in their advocacy programmes, because they too must make long-term commitments and investments to this issue. It would be counterproductive to promise too much too soon.

Constructing Relevant Frameworks

The light weapons issue has emerged to a great extent since the end of the Cold War. It cuts across several traditional areas of international public policy, such as arms control and disarmament, crime, human rights, public health and development. Whilst government departments and international organisations are increasingly working together to address these issues by playing to institutional strengths and recognising institutional weaknesses, we have yet to reach the required level of understanding and agreement as to how to most usefully address this aspect of international public policy. A decade ago, for example, a working interface between the arms control community and law enforcement agencies would have been unthinkable. Now however, meetings involving these and others are commonplace, yet institutional inertia remains a fact of life and there is still much to be done to refine understanding and channels of communication between such disparate groups. During our discussions we recognised on several occasions that institutional interests often outweigh