

A third objective is to establish a new set of norms regarding the acquisition and use of this class of weapon, stemming from the increasing number of states which sign and comply with the treaty.

Components of a treaty

Principles

All of the actions taken to date by the international community, briefly described earlier in this report, are a source of principles, norms and behaviors that would be agreed to by signatory states in any treaty that evolved in an Ottawa Two Process. To demonstrate how this might develop, this report puts forth some examples from the two most recent, and perhaps most influential given their global focus, actions. These are the work of the Expert Group on Firearm Regulation of the United Nations Commission on Criminal Justice and Crime Prevention, and the UN Small Arms Panel which submitted its report via the Secretary General to the General Assembly in September 1997.

The Expert Group on Firearm Regulation, headed by James Hayes of Canada, is conducting four regional workshops and inviting governments and selected NGOs to discuss "the possible development of a United Nations declaration of principles based on the following regulatory approaches:"

- * Regulations relating to firearm safety and storage;
- * Appropriate penalties for serious offenses involving the misuse or unlawful possession of firearms;
- * Amnesty or similar programs to encourage citizens to surrender illegal, unsafe or unwanted firearms;
- * A responsible and effective licensing system;
- * A record-keeping system for the commercial distribution of firearms, and the appropriate marking of firearms at manufacture and at import.

The UN Small Arms panel, in its September 1997 report, came up with 22 recommendations, the following being most applicable to a treaty which could codify state behavior that would prevent and reduce the negative effects of excessive and destabilizing accumulations of this class of weapon. These principles were specifically related to small arms and light weapons, and the causes and effects produced earlier in their report.

- * All states should determine in their national laws and regulations which arms are permitted for civilian possession and the conditions under which they can be used.

- * All weapons which are not under legal civilian possession, and which are not required for the purposes of national defense and internal security, should be collected and destroyed by states as expeditiously as possible.

- * All states should ensure that they have in place adequate laws, regulations and administrative procedures to exercise effective control over the legal possession of small arms and light weapons and over their transfer.

- * States emerging from conflict should impose or reimpose licensing requirements on all civilian possession of these weapons on their territory.