

# **In the Line of Fire: A Gender Perspective on Small Arms Proliferation, Peace Building and Conflict Resolution**

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## **Report**

Women's International League for Peace and Freedom  
1 rue Varembe, Case postale 28  
1211 Geneva 20, Switzerland  
Tel: + (41 22) 919 7080; Fax + (41 22) 919 7081  
[www.wilpf.int.ch](http://www.wilpf.int.ch)

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## **Introduction**

Small arms proliferation, with its multiple impact on Societies, is not only a disarmament or arms control issue. It has become a burning humanitarian concern in the international community.

Small arms and light weapons claim victims without regard to background, from war torn areas In Sierra Leone to middle class American neighborhoods that were once thought immune to violence. The easy availability of these arms is increasing the lethality of armed conflict, as well as extending the duration of conflicts in regions as diverse as West Africa, South Asia, the Middle East and the Balkans. Infrastructures as disparate as education, investment, employment and transportation are destroyed, exacerbating underdevelopment and poverty. The terrible effects of loss of life on communities due to the growing use of small arms and light weapons are immeasurable. The insecurity and uncertainty incited by the prevalence of these weapons lead to more gun ownership, increasing the recourse to armed violence as a means to resolve conflicts.

Approximately half a million small arms and light weapons are currently circulating the globe. They are brought into communities, and after doing unlimited damage can be easily transported to another community. They can be used over and over again thus there is no final count of victims that one such weapon can cause. Statisticians, researchers and representatives from States, governmental and non-governmental organizations try' to keep track of the weapons, the victims, and as much as possible the impact on communities.

The issue of small arms and light weapons proliferation and the humanitarian consequences of their easy use became a serious concern in the international community only a few years ago. The United Nations decision to convene in New York in July 2001 a World Conference on Illicit Trade of Small Arms and Light Weapons in all its Aspects is a step toward dealing with this issue. In preparation for this conference, the organizers of the annual International Women's Day Seminar focused the 2001 event on the impact of small arms and light weapons proliferation on communities, emphasizing the gender aspect of the issue.

Experienced members of the diplomatic corps, of non-governmental humanitarian organizations and of the international disarmament community were invited to share their knowledge and information to help clarify the issues that surround small arms and light weapons. The seminar disclosed the important work by women in dealing with the problem of small arms in various regions very different from the commonly' thought of roles of women as victims or refugees resulting from conflict.

The wealth of information presented by leaders in the field encompassed technical aspects that will be debated at the small arms conference in New York. Regional initiatives aimed at peace building and conflict resolution were discussed at length including the Nairobi Declaration and the Honiara initiative. The presentations made at the seminar are reproduced in the pages that follow.

The UN conference is not expected to provide clear, indisputable solutions to the multiple problems raised by the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. However, it is a step toward coming to grips with the issue. As Minister Steffen Kongstad of the Norwegian Permanent Mission to the UN Office at Geneva stated in his presentation, the conference can and should raise the general awareness of the problems caused by the uncontrolled spread and use of small arms". The 2001 seminar to mark international Women's Day was a contribution toward that effort. The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom is pleased to make the contributions to the seminar available to the wider public.

**Tene Kaduma, WILPF Disarmament Intern Geneva, June 2001**

**Opening Remarks**  
**Ambassador Anne Anderson**  
**Permanent Representative of Ireland to the United Nations Office at Geneva**

I am very honoured to have been invited to speak at this seminar. I accepted the invitation, not because I am an expert in small arms issues — all of the speakers here today have more expertise than I have — but because I believe strongly in encouraging the involvement of women's groups in these issues.

First, some general remarks about the wider context within which our discussion takes place. All of us are aware of the gender imbalances at the United Nations — both in the staffing structures of the organization itself and also in the make-up of national missions to the United Nations. Nowhere is this more obvious than in the area of disarmament, conflict prevention and conflict resolution. When one walks into the Conference on Disarmament here, or into the First Committee in New York, one cannot but be struck by the overwhelmingly male attendance. In the development, or social policy, or human rights area, the composition is noticeably different. We still have not quite got away from the sense of disarmament as a 'hard' area, largely a male preserve, and social policies as a 'soft' area where women have an interest and a role.

I am quite certain that the current Secretary General, Kofi Annan, is genuinely and seriously committed to the advancement of women. But if one looks at the range of appointees as Special Representatives of the Secretary General in conflict situations, one is conscious of the very small percentage of women. It is difficult to know the explanation — that available and qualified women are not ready to take on the job or the parties to the conflict might not accept women, or women simply do not come to mind when the appointments are being made.

I believe that it is extremely important that we have seminars such as this where we reinforce our commitment to have women as actors in the process of conflict resolution and peace building. Too often when there is an acknowledgement of gender in the whole discussion of conflict and disarmament, the concentration is largely on the role of women as victims.

Of course, we need to study women as victims of war and conflict. The very important work in this area being done by the ICRC and others. In today's conflict situations, where the civilian population carries so much of the burden of the conflict, women suffer greatly. When we look at small arms, we can see that women account for a significant proportion of victims of small arms but only a small fraction of the users. And women are victims in more indirect ways. Conflict so often flows from and perpetuates poverty and underdevelopment. All statistics show that, worldwide, women bear a disproportionate burden of poverty. When there is lawlessness and breakdown in society, women's lives are torn apart — access to food, education, and health care for themselves and their families are made immeasurably more difficult.

But I would like to concentrate on women as actors in conflict resolution and peace building. They can be actors in a number of ways, as direct participants in peace processes — in peacemaking, peacekeeping and peace building — and as pressure points in ensuring that their experience and their perspectives are brought to bear in national, regional, or international negotiations.

There is a good deal of documentation from diverse sources about the contribution that women's groups can make as direct actors in peace processes. On my own island, for example, the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition played a noteworthy role in the negotiations that led to the Good Friday Agreement. There are other examples in Africa, Latin America, Asia, and the former Yugoslavia. Of course no one would claim that women have a monopoly on negotiating or listening skills. But I believe it is the case that women's personality characteristics and life experience fit them particularly well for dialogue and

consensus building. Belatedly, the international community is beginning to give recognition to women as actors in peace processes.

As in so many other areas, the Beijing Platform of Action led the way: 115 section on Women and Armed Conflict made clear that women are massively under-represented in conflict and post-conflict decision-making positions, peacekeeping bodies and defence and foreign affairs Organizations. Last year we had a historic Security Council debate on women and peace and security, as well as looking at the impact of conflict on women. This debate highlighted the important role women play in building peace in their communities and nations. We now have Security Council Resolution 1325. And, most recently, we have the Brahimi Report with its call for a gender Unit in DPKO (UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations) and for greater gender equity in leadership positions within peacekeeping missions.

When it comes to women as pressure points or lobbyists in a negotiation, it is often the very sharpness of their own experience that lends an authenticity and forcefulness to their input. If you like, this is *the* bridge between victim and actor, Precisely because women have so much painful experience arising from the uncontrolled flows of small arms, their voice should have a particular clarity and resonance in the debate about solutions. Before I come to the particularities of the small arms negotiation, I think it is worthwhile to remind ourselves of what makes an effective pressure point, an effective lobbying input. I would say: (1) good analysis (2) clarity and realism of objectives and (3) knowing where and when to apply pressure. These are points to be borne in mind in the small arms negotiation, as in every other negotiation.

Now to turn to the particularities of the small arms negotiation. All the available research shows both the extent and the complexity of the problem. Small arms are now the principal weapons used in most conflicts worldwide. They are used to kill more than half a million people each year, and for every death many more are injured and traumatized. These casualties occur in the context of national, sub-national and regional conflicts, the repression of democratic rights and violations of the right to self-determination. The easy availability of small arms is also linked to high levels of violent crime, domestic assaults, suicides and accidents. Whatever the context — political conflict, crime, domestic assault— the availability of small arms intensifies conflict and hastens its escalation to deadly violence.

As to complexity, we know that the international trade in small arms is a multifaceted phenomenon. There are complex interactions between the public and the private, the state and the civilian, the licit and the illicit, the national and the international. Most small arms begin as legal commodities, whether sold to states or directly to civilians. But because they are durable they are often sold and resold many times, creating a range of opportunities for diversion from legal to illegal markets. Illicit arms traffickers respond to demand and will supply weapons to anyone who can afford them, whether they are combatants in civil war or criminal gangs in the inner city. Consequently it is difficult to separate the small arms which fuel ‘conflict’ from the small arms which fuel ‘crime’. Indeed in some regions the two are inseparable. And because illicit markets are fuelled by diversion of small arms from licit markets, a comprehensive strategy to combat the illicit trade must not ignore licit markets.

As the seriousness of the problem became more apparent during the past decade, work has got tinder way in a number of fora Work is being done regionally, for example, in the Organization of American States, in ECOWAS (the Economic Community of West African States) in SADC (the Southern African Development Community) in the OSCE (the Organization of Security and Co-operation in Europe) and in the European Union. The UN Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Commission, based in Vienna, has just completed work on a Firearms Protocol. And, of course, as you all know — and will be elaborated on later today — a major UN Conference is scheduled this year with the third PrepCom due to be held shortly.

It is essential that this year's UN Conference take practical, concrete steps which will bring added value to work already under way. The draft programme of Action is being carefully elaborated in a series of PrepComs. I would identify four priority areas:

1. Concluding an appropriate binding global agreement on the marking and tracing of weapons to include Systems for the adequate and reliable marking of arms, adequate record-keeping on arms production, possession and transfer, and international arrangements for tracing arms;
2. Trying to develop international definitions of arms brokers and shipping agents and develop controls on their activities, including registration and licensing for each transaction;
3. Developing programmes to deal with surplus weapons. International standards and principles for the destruction of confiscated or surplus small arms and light weapons must be established. Weapons collection programmes in post-conflict situations are critical to the establishment of lasting peace. The UN Conference should agree on a norm of destruction of surplus arms, and recognize and support the role and contribution of local authorities and civil society in the collection and destruction of surplus, unwanted and unsafe weapons.
4. Increasing transparency and accountability. We need better data collection and also better information exchange arrangements so that we know precisely what initiatives are under way at present and can develop a "best practices" approach. On accountability, we should agree to strong common standards on the domestic implementation of international agreed arms embargoes.

I would finish by reverting to the points I made earlier in relation to how groups can most effectively lobby. I identified three criteria: good analysis, clear objectives and knowing where and how to apply pressure. In terms of objectives, I have outlined what I would see as priority areas for the Small Arms Conference. If this is not already being done, I would suggest that the women's groups should target specific parts of the Draft Programme of Action that seem to them most important and concentrate their lobbying effort there. As to where to apply pressure, given the diversity of initiatives under way, there is scope for action at national, regional and international levels. Regarding the Conference itself, I know that there is an ongoing debate about the extent of NGO access. I hope it will be such as to ensure the most vibrant possible debate and certainly that the voice of all concerned NGOs will be heard.

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### **Women Making the Links: Women, Peace and Justice Adele Kirsten, Gun Free South Africa**

South Africa has just gone through a process of approving a new Firearms Control 13i11, which seeks to limit who has which guns and for what purposes. At a workshop two weeks ago in Durban, South Africa, to discuss the drafting of the regulations for the new law, a self-described gun enthusiast lamented that watching my surplus firearms being destroyed would be like watching someone being raped." This is the gender perspective I want to talk about. In some ways, this statement says it all. I will talk primarily out of my own experience as a woman peace activist who has worked in the area of disarmament, violence prevention and conflict resolution for the past 20 years. I think there are many interesting lessons to be drawn from the South African experience.

#### **South Africa: Colonialism and gender**

South Africa has been at war for more than 300 years. In all its various forms there has always been a border. The early British/Xhosa wars were known as the frontier wars. More recently much of South Afri-

ca 5 war during the *apartheid era* was fought on the border and across the border into neighbouring states. A white male conscripted to serve in the *apartheid* army knew that at sometime or other he would go to the border” — that unknown and often times feared destination. Then there were the internal borders, the group areas act. which designated where people could live with very clear boundaries, the borders of the homelands. sometimes called "black spots"— the border between black and white — the border between the oppressed and the oppressor.

A distinguishing feature of the South African experience is our colonial history. And this notion of border' is a key component of this colonial history. Arid an essential ingredient of that history is the relationship of the coloniser to his gun — the gun being an important tool to help maintain the border between the oppressed and the oppressor, between the colonized and the colonizer. Why this focus on the colonial past? I think it is critical to understand and explore how our colonial past has shaped our current reality; because, in particular, it helps us understand the masculine identity of colonizer and gun owner. These remain key features in our society today and so it also helps make sense of the current South African reality. For many in my country there's an eagerness to just move into the future- a let's forget about the past and get on with it' attitude. I do not believe we can develop adequate strategies to deal with the problem of small arms proliferation both in the region, and in South Africa in particular, unless we understand this history of identity.

So, for many white males in South Africa the ownership of a gun has been central to their identity both as male and as colonizer. Guns have always been a feature of the South African landscape, whether it was guns distributed by the *apartheid* government to the young white conscripts to defend the nation, or in the hands of the white commandos spread throughout the country as the civilian-military arm of protection, or to the leaders of the homelands (of which more than 40,000 are now unaccounted for). Private firearm ownership was restricted to whites only. The response of the liberation movements to this highly militarized and well-armed state and citizenry was to arm themselves and so especially in the latter years of *apartheid* we saw weapons in the hands of the youth as members of the self-defence or self-protection units. For many South Africans the AK-47 became the symbol of liberation.

NGO's sprang up all over the place. Many of these directly challenged government policies. others provided services that the government was unwilling to provide. There was only one ~GO that dealt directly with the issue of militarization — the End Conscription Campaign (ECC). I was a founding member of IECC, employed as national secretary during the mid-eighties and remained an active member until conscription was abolished in 1993.

Having achieved its primary goal, the organization closed. The ECC was an interesting organization for several reasons. Although in many other contexts, a call for an end to conscription could have been seen purely as a peace agenda. In South Africa under *apartheid*, its primary aim was to resist the idea of white men defending the indefensible- the injustice of *apartheid* and in this way it undermined the efforts of the military. Conscription was the one thing that reminded whites that they were living in a war situation. It was the price they paid for continuing to support *apartheid*. The fact that ECC was a movement that primarily opposed conscription into an *apartheid* army did not prevent it from having a deeper, more long-term project: the end to conscription in principle. under any circumstances. This was not new to activists. It embodied that well-known slogan of the eighties coming out of the Catholic justice and peace movement, 'Peace with Justice'. This is perhaps one of the most important lessons to draw, not just from the End Conscription Campaign, but also from this whole period in our history, the interrelationship between peace and justice. We cannot have one without the other. As peace builders we need to reclaim this.

This strategy of pursuing short-term achievable goals such as creating awareness about the injustices of the *apartheid* war, within a framework of a long-term vision, no conscription meant that the organization

could also hold within it a diverse range of opinions and views. ECC members included those who were primarily *anti-apartheid* activists, those who supported war theory and also pacifists. Another interesting characteristic of the ECC was that we had a large active female membership, with several women playing leading roles in the executive committees in the various provinces. We were also on the ground mobilizing support for an end to conscription, visiting the young men in jail, and helping develop the strategic direction of the campaign. We were often asked: "why are you involved in something that is essentially a white boys' problem?" That was a legitimate question at the time. On the face of it, conscription did only affect men they were the conscientious objectors. They served jail time. As women we could not serve jail time for refusing to serve in the military. Were we no different from the thousands of white women across the country who were also waiting for their 'boys' to come home from the war on the border? Were we not also occupying the traditional roles of support, as many women have done and continue to do, during wartime? We were very clear that our role in this movement was not just that of mothers, daughters, lovers and sisters but we too, as ordinary citizens of the country, were affected by the war going on around us. One way to end that war was to encourage young men to refuse to serve.

That was perhaps one of the main reasons the State responded so viciously towards the ECC activists. If nothing else, the State understood that our highly visible, Creative and powerful public campaign was calling into question the *raison d'etre* of the military. We were hitting at the belly of the beast. Many of us lived in fear of detention for years, living in hiding for months on end. Out of about 60 of our key activists nationwide, at least 45 were detained during the various states of emergency for periods ranging from 2 weeks to 8 months.

We were ordinary, privileged white youth, who wanted to play our part in ridding our society of the injustice of *apartheid*. Our campaign essentially challenged the very identity of the white male at that time — not just as the defender and protector of his family but also of his nation. Our messages, posters, slogans, etc., were all a betrayal of that male identity. We were not only targeted by the *apartheid* State but also by the community it sought to protect. We were often isolated. But being part of ECC was one way of being part of a movement that was both opposed to the injustice of *apartheid* and at the same time had a vision of a society that did not force its young men to go to war. I have spoken quite a lot about this experience because, although the power relations have Changed dramatically in South Africa, I think it still shapes how we understand what is happening there today the love affair with guns Continues.

### **South African: the transition, crime and gender**

Since 1994, we have seen dramatic and far-reaching changes in our society — most of them positive. South Africa was one of the first governments to sign the Treaty of Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Our government played a strong role in the process leading up to the ban on the use, manufacture and production of landmines. We are also one of the few countries that routinely destroys surplus weapons, open to public participation and scrutiny. However, guns remain a central feature of the South African landscape. On the one hand you have the old colonial and Afrikaner nationalist notion of a man and his gun, or as the Afrikaans saying goes. 'n boer en sy roer'. In some ways this male identity with guns has become starker in the new dispensation. Now that whites have lost political power, and there has been a transfer of power to the democratically elected rulers, their guns appear to have become more central to their identity — not only is it a way to protect themselves against the new regime, but it is also to protect themselves against the new scourge of crime.

So, in the new South Africa, firearms remain a symbol of the white males' masculinity as well as racial identity. At this same workshop in Durban, one of the delegates, a gun owner, came up to me after a long day of small group discussions and said, ~I know your intentions are good, but do you realize that we are up against one of the most evil regimes in the world — much more evil than the *apartheid* government. They are going to disarm all of us—black and white— so they can do with us what they want", or words to that effect. There is often talk in these circles that the restriction on firearm ownership is the slippery

edge of the wedge and one of the first steps to civilian disarmament.

The next step is genocide. The implication of this is that the new government is not to be trusted — by both black and white citizens. So the white male identity with firearms remains intact but it also remains under threat. The major difference now is that it does not have the support of the State as it did in the past.

On the other hand you have this rising tide of gun violence. South Africa has one of the highest firearm homicides in the world. In the early days of our new democracy, an average of 20 persons were shot dead each day (1994-11.134 firearm deaths). By 1998 this figure rose to approximately 33 persons a day (1999-12,298 deaths). South Africa has high levels of firearm ownership. There are approximately 4.5 million licensed firearms in the hands of about 2.3 million licensed owners, and it is estimated that there are approximately 1.2 million illegal firearms in circulation. The three biggest sources of illegal firearms are losses and theft from both the state and licensed firearm owners and then lastly from illegal cross-border trade.

The majority of people who are victims of crime in South Africa today are black. This is one of the reasons for the changing patterns in firearm ownership in our country. One of the reasons for getting a gun these days is for self-defence but in many other instances it is seen as a passport to some sort of economic activity. For many young men involved in crime, a firearm is an essential tool of the trade. In the words of one young man interviewed in jail recently: "If I do not take my gun with me when I go on business, I am not being serious." Young men are most often the users of guns, whether in crime, as part of their macho image, or for self-defence purposes. What the statistics from the mortuaries tell us is that they are also most often the victims. Young black men between the age of 15 and 34 years of age are most at risk of firearm homicides.

In the first annual report of the National Injury Mortality Surveillance System, which only covers about 20% of the estimated 80,000 to 1,000,000 fatal injuries across the country, firearms are the leading cause of non-natural death in South Africa, outstripping motor vehicle accidents (MVA) by about 200 deaths. These figures only cover one year (1999) in ten mortuaries across five provinces. Of the total of 14,829 deaths for that year, 46% were homicides, followed by accidents (34%) and then suicides (8%). Firearms remain the central feature in almost all of this data. It overshadows all other external causes of non-natural death accounting for 26% of all cases. Firearms are the leading cause of homicides (51%), with sharp instruments coming next (33%). Firearms are the leading cause of death for males, 79% of all injury deaths. Firearms also ranked first as the external cause of death between the ages of 15 to 65. One of the significant differences between this SA data and other international data is that in most high income and low income countries across the world (WHO reporting centres), motor vehicle accidents and suicides are in the top ten causes of non-natural death, with homicide either lurking near tenth position or not featuring in the top ten. In South Africa the reverse is true.

The head of the Red Cross Children's hospital in Cape Town, Dr. van As, reports a dramatic increase of firearm-related deaths in children from ages 4 to 12, and now even under 4. In the past, the most common cause of death from 0-4 years has been accidents such as drowning or burns. This pattern is beginning to change with the increasing access to firearms in our society. Dr. van As maintains that the presence of a gun raises the stakes and makes the difference between death and injury. He tells this story: In Cape Town last year a four year old wandered into the kitchen where his father had left his gun lying on the table. He took it, pointed it at his two siblings and shot them, one after the other. His mother came running in from the kitchen to see what had happened and he too shot her. Then a neighbour, hearing all these shots came running to see if she could help. The four-year-old just continued his shooting spree, pointed the gun at her and shot her. Three of the four people he shot died. This was not intentional, it was an accident an enormous tragedy —one that happens too often in our society and will continue to occur

because of the availability of firearms. There are many more such incidents. What they illustrate is that they would have had quite different endings if the individuals simply did not have a gun.

In another study on non-fatal violence in South Africa for the National Injury Surveillance System, the data revealed that violence accounts for almost half of all non-fatal injuries. But unlike the fatal injuries, as mentioned above, where firearm violence predominates, the most common mechanism of violence in non-fatal injuries remains stabbing. What this picture tells is quite simple if attacked by a gun one's chances of survival are slim. With any other weapon there is a chance of surviving.

Men dominate firearms ownership — whether in state structures such as in the police or military or in the home. The vast majority of victims of gun violence across the world, are men. However, there are different kinds of violence of which women most likely become victims because they are women — both in war and peacetime as, for example, the rape of women by the invading 'victorious' army, or in situations of domestic violence where often the woman is abused by her spouse through the use and threat of a firearm. In a small study done in one province in South Africa in 1996, it was found that every six days a woman was murdered by an intimate partner. There was a high proportion of police officers and private security guards as perpetrators. It would appear in violent crime that men are often random targets, with the perpetrator a stranger, yet women are targeted because they are women, often in their home and by someone they know. It is not surprising that women account for the majority of victims in domestic violence worldwide.

Another feature of violence is that of family murders. In the past few months there have been a spate of these in South Africa. The story is very similar; often the man is in some sort of financial trouble, unemployed, or frustrated at work. Gill Eagle, a trauma psychologist, offers this point of view on trying to explain why this occurs relatively often. She says, "It is often because the man, seeing himself as the head of the household and responsible for the well being of his family, cannot see his female partner as an ally, as someone he can come to jointly work out the problems of the family. And so she becomes just another burden, another one of his responsibilities with which he cannot cope." The only way out for him then is to kill her, the children and then himself. What can we do to change these patterns of violence in our Country? I want to tell the story of Gun Free South Africa (GFSA) as one of the initiatives that have made a difference and hopefully will continue to do so.

### **Peace building. GFSA as an example**

GFSA was established in late 1994 primarily by a group of religious and peace activists who had been involved in the four years leading up to our first democratic elections. It was a period of intense violence and conflict. Having achieved the first step on the road to our new democracy many of us felt that the biggest threat to our new democracy was the proliferation of firearms — the surplus weapons of war that had saturated our country.

We called for a 24-hour amnesty on 16 December 1994. We were not that successful in getting guns off the streets and realized that we needed a more long-term project, which addressed the problem of firearms in our country from both the supply and demand sides. Since 1996 we have been campaigning for stricter firearms control and in October last year the National Assembly, with an overwhelming majority voted in favour of the new Firearms Control Bill. One of the most important parts of this campaign was the way in which we focused not just on lobbying the policy makers, but ensuring that ordinary people understood what the new law was about. We facilitated their involvement in the whole legislative process by running workshops to introduce key provisions of the new law. It also involved helping people get to Parliament to make oral submissions to the MPs and to the Portfolio Committee on Safety & Security. Perhaps one of the most powerful moments during the two months of public hearing was when Samuel Kabala, an unemployed man from a rural village in the northern part of the country, made his submission to Parliament. Here was an ordinary person, one unfamiliar with all the rules and procedures of Parliament,

but he had come to tell his elected representatives what they should consider in this new gun law. Samuel Kabala spoke simply and directly about how his village of Maple, with the blessing of the tribal Queen, Kgosigade Langa, had made their entire community a gun free zone. After he spoke the entire committee, even those in the opposition benches applauded him. A seasoned lobbyist from our Cape Town office remarked, ‘this does not happen in Parliament. MPs simply do not clap!’ It was an illustration of the power of ordinary peace builders at the grass roots level. This intervention was critical later on in the debate as the opposition tried to water down some of the key provisions. Those MPs in favour of the Bill (and this was the majority) were able to remind the others that this was what ordinary people wanted.

In preparing this paper and thinking about how I was going to talk about Gun Free South Africa and the role of both men and women in the organization, my immediate thought was that it 5 mainly women. But that is not so. Although the leadership of GFSA is primarily women — both in terms of staff and the Board, the key role-players at the grassroots are men. Is that because we are essentially a patriarchal society where even at the grass roots it is men who have access, whether in getting on a bus and coming to our meetings in Johannesburg, or having access to the tribal chief, even if that chief is a woman?

However, it is the women in particular in GFSA who bear the brunt of what appears to be white male rage. We are targeted with the abusive phone calls, the name-calling whether it be on public radio or in the press, often with an implicit violence — all this because we are seen as taking away their guns. It is not pleasant but what it tells us is that we are challenging deep issues here of sexual and gender identity, the core of colonial white male identity. This is not something I am making up. It is something that is contained in their description of themselves.

Constand Viljoen, an opposition MP, made front-page news when in opposing the new law he said, “My guns are second only to my wife in my affection. 5.” This identity with guns runs very deep. This was the man who was the Chief of Staff of the South African Defence Force (SADF) in the height of the resistance during the eighties. In Parliamentary circles he is regarded as a formidable MP who has integrity. You will often hear people in the corridors of parliament describing him as ‘a real gentleman’.

## **Conclusion**

What I have been trying to say is that if we want to take a gender approach to the Issue of small arms proliferation and peace building, we cannot focus on women as an isolated category. Rather, as my stories illustrate, it is the social relations between men and women that are key to understanding this issue from a gender perspective. Another reason why gender is relevant to the discussion on small arms proliferation, as illustrated, is that a disproportionate percentage of the aggressors are male. However, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that violence is not exclusively a male practice. Just as peace building is not the preserve of women. Jacklyn Cock, Sociology Professor at Wits University., Johannesburg, notes that “women have not been silent in this view of the male as the protector and defender of his family, whether In war or peacetime. There is sufficient evidence that women in many different war situations enthusiastically sup-ported men’s brutality’, as in Nazi Germany, or as in *apartheid* South Africa when they supported white minority rule and the suppression of human rights.”

This gender perspective on small arms proliferation is constructed by both men and women. The challenge to it is also constructed by men and women, as my Stories have illustrated. This demonstrates that just as violence is not inherent to men so peace building is not inherent to women. They are socially constructed and therefore can change. The lessons from both my experience as an ECC activist and more recently as a disarmament activist is that although what we are challenging or struggling against is constituted by a gender identity — men and their relationship to guns the mechanisms we use to fight it are not a gendered movement. It is not a women’s movement against men and their guns. Rather it is a movement of both women and men, which essentially challenges this gender identity. It requires both men and women to build peace through justice.

I have also used these stories of ECC and GFSA to try to illustrate the dynamics between men and women in relation to peace building situated both within a context of war and one of transition to democracy. [It is not an either/or Situation, but one in which, depending on the context, different strategies need to be used to harness the energy and passion of both women and men in the struggle for peace through justice. This means that if we look at the issue of small arms proliferation, conflict resolution and peace building through a gender lens, it will take on different forms in different Countries, and what we as activists need to do is make sure we understand the local dynamics of our own situation so that we can employ the most effective joint strategies to overcome some of the problems.

I have spoken mostly from a peace-building perspective and at that level women are very much involved. But there are still empty spaces in this movement and that is the role of women in peacemaking. By and large, women are absent from the negotiations to end war. Some may argue that, as women are not primarily the perpetrators of war, why should we be at the peacemaking table? I would argue that unless women are at the peacemaking table the kind of peace deals that are negotiated will fall seriously short of what is needed to get a sustainable peace settlement. We need to ensure that key issues such as the reintegration of women ex-combatants, violence against women and the needs of women refugees are put firmly on the negotiating table. Unless this happens the peace will not be meaningful.

Where to from here? Perhaps to go back to one of the resolutions at the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action which says: Equal access and full participation of women in power structures and their full involvement in all efforts for the prevention and resolution of conflict are essential for the maintenance of peace and security.” This key resolution calls for both the involvement of women in the structures of power and at the same time in all efforts to prevent and resolve conflict.

But as we know, peace is so much more than just the end of war. It requires a collective consciousness, which involves organized efforts to promote human security. In each country that will take on a slightly different form; but the long term project or goals should remain the same – peace with social justice.

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**Removing Military Weapons from Civilian Hands**  
**Patricia Lewis, Director of the United Nations Institute for**  
**Disarmament Research (UNIDIR)**

I want to thank everyone for his or her effort and *for* coming to this seminar because I think it is time to actually look at this issue from quite a different perspective. I want to just say a few words about UNIDIR and what UN IDIR is doing on the issue of small arms. UNIDIR is the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research. It was setup twenty years ago and we have been looking at the issue of small arms for quite a number of years. Prior to this a great deal of work was done on the issue of conflict resolution and disarmament under what was in the early 1990s called micro-disarmament.

Presently we divide our work into three themes: global security and disarmament; regional security and disarmament; and human security and disarmament. Into regional security and disarmament and human security and disarmament comes the topic of small arms. We do quite a lot of work on the various aspects of small arms and light weapons (SALW) issues in West Africa, Southern Africa and South Asia. We are researching the transport of arms, how arms are transferred around the world from conflict to conflict. One of the things we have been looking at and trying to get more information on is the issue of military weapons, military-style weapons and the way they are used in society and in post-conflict situations.

The thinking behind this comes from quite a different perspective to the perspective that has come from the arms control community. There are many aspects to it. It is very difficult to separate which types of weapons are the most dangerous, which types of weapons are the most significant, how to deal with whether one can or cannot separate legal from illegal sales and transfers of weapons. How can one separate the use of small arms by civilian use, civilian combatants, or by paramilitary, mercenaries or governmental military? These issues can become very blurred in certain regions of the world where there are conflicts. What we are trying to do is look at it not just from an arms control perspective but to come at it from a humanitarian angle. What is it that is actually killing people? What are people suffering from in conflicts and what can we do? Can we address some of these questions? There are obviously many things that need to be addressed.

We all know that we have to deal with the roots of conflict. We know that we have to deal with development issues, economic issues, conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction. All of these are fundamental to the whole approach when it comes to conflict prevention and conflict resolution.

What I am saying adds to that. It doesn't substitute. I think that is very important because quite often people tend to get very focused on one thing and what we often hear is it is not the weapons, it is the people. Well of course if no one ever used weapons there would not be a problem. We know from certain cases that where you have small conflicts they can be exacerbated by an influx of large numbers of weapons, which young people can get their hands on, and which are used quite indiscriminately. And small conflicts, perhaps even non-violent conflicts, can be exacerbated into becoming large-scale violent conflicts with many weapons flooding into that region.

They are partly the stimulating factor and partly the consequences. These things are very complex and what we wanted to do is try and focus on something that might help. What are the biggest needs of people in conflict and post-conflict situations or what one might call intra-conflict situations? What can we focus on that might actually gain the support of people, might be readily understood and might actually have a chance of making a dent on the effects of small weapons in conflicts?

Along with a large number of other people we have been thinking a great deal about the issue of military weapons or military-style weapons. There is an AK-47 culture in some post-conflict regions. This has meant that there has been circulation of these weapons from one conflict region to another and post-conflict, into societies and the criminal world. That has meant that others, in order to protect themselves, have had to arm themselves often with the same types of weapons. There has been a whole exacerbation of this type of culture.

We are looking at the problem from the point of view of it being a major humanitarian disaster. This is an urgent situation. People are being killed today. We are not talking about weapons that may one day be killing people. We are talking about weapons that are currently killing people. This is not to negate the fact that lots of other types of weapons kill people too, but these weapons are weapons that have been specifically made for war. They are weapons that were designed to be used by military personnel. They spread well beyond their intended clientele and into the hands of illicit arms traders, civilians and often into the hands of young children. What makes them so dangerous is that they are highly destructive. They have a rapid rate of fire. They are not very accurate but nonetheless you can do a great deal of damage in a crowd for example. They are powerful. They are also easy to use and relatively inexpensive.

They are in abundance and one of the reasons they are in abundance is that there was a glut of them in the post-cold war period. They were essentially distributed during the Cold War for free and since the Cold War they have been available at very cheap prices in many parts of the world. For example, it is estimated that more than 70 million assault rifles produced since World War II are in use in well over 90 countries. We are talking about a very large scale, widespread problem which is enhanced by the fact that the

weapons are portable and can be used by both adults and children. They require very little training and very little skill to be used even though they were designed for the military.

Following a conflict or prior to conflict these weapons can really distort a society and inhibit that society from rebuilding itself. Small arms enhance the capabilities of criminals. They compromise the effectiveness of police forces and they end up with law-abiding citizens being encouraged to arm themselves for their own protection. That is how the threshold for violence is lowered.

Small arms are not always a major problem. States may have permissive legislation because the society is well ordered and there is no conflict. But in weak States or States where there is poorly enforced legislation and in States where there are paramilitary forces, terrorist groups and uncontrolled militia, then I think we are looking at a much more serious problem.

In addition, as we have known from some of our work in West Africa, this situation severely undermines the humanitarian system in the conflict zones and in refugee camps. In fact these weapons often increase the difficulty of re-integration and demobilization of refugees.

Is there anything we can do? One suggestion that was made some years ago is banning sales to non-state actors. Many threw it out with derision because the problem with banning sales to non-State actors is that there are sometimes legitimate reasons for them — for example to wish to overthrow a repressive government — to obtain weapons. The humanitarian arms controller would say that this would only be as a last resort to overthrow a cruel, corrupt government when non-violent means have been exhausted. [In fact the whole experience of South Africa is one example of this kind of situation.

In many cases non-violent pressure can be more successful, and certainly more successful in the long run, than violent pressure in overcoming a corrupt and cruel government. Atrocities committed by those who are trying to overthrow a government can often become as horrific or even more horrific than governmental atrocities. Those atrocities can also be aided and abetted by the use of these types of weapons. There is a debate starting about how much should we take into consideration the legitimate needs of certain types of free societies compared with the legitimate needs of people to be protected from large-scale violent conflict? Many people say, keep the conflict away from civilians. However, when you have these types of weapons in society, the conflict is right there on their doorstep.

Additionally, another very important thing to consider is when a conflict has ended or when there is a cease-fire or some kind of halt to what is going on, the weapons need to be collected and destroyed, so that they then don't go back into feeding the conflict or go on to feed another conflict. Weapons add fuel to the fire, a fire that may already exist or be smouldering. Weapons can ignite it in a massive way. So it is crucial that these weapons are collected and destroyed. This is not always easy. In fact in order to be able to do it effectively the whole of society, particularly women are needed.

What is critical to controlling weapons, trade and brokering is the control of ammunition. Restricting ammunition can certainly restrict the amount of violence done. Of course ammunition can be made indigenously. But it increases the cost and the time to the perpetrators of violence and therefore it is most likely to reduce the risk of exacerbating violent conflict.

One example that we are looking at is the South African initiative to destroy the redundant stockpile of weapons. There are certainly some lessons that can be learned in both the positive and the negative sense. We are hoping that the experiences of South Africa will inspire people. The other possibility that needs to be looked at is how to mop up weapons prior to conflict. This gets us into the difficulty of how to encourage people who are feeling insecure in a conflict situation to give up their weapons. When someone is trying to protect his or her family or their land they may not feel that they have an option.

One thing that can help in terms of trying to break the chain of transfers includes national legal measures to prevent civilian possession. This cannot be done at just an international forum. [t has to be done at the national, regional and local level. It has to come from the ground up. It cannot be imposed by an international conference. It has to be done in the villages where there is a problem. It also has to be something that is understood by every citizen who can be involved. Perhaps the most important thing is the role of civil society. If we are trying to deal with these weapons, which are on the ground and integrated into many societies, we cannot do it just by national legislation, police or military means. It has to be done by the community itself. Indeed, the monitoring of the flow of these arms, the monitoring of where they are in society again has to be done by the people in that society.

One of the things we have learned from our work in West Africa in particular is the very key role of women in doing this. For example, let us imagine a village in Guinea on the border with Sierra Leone and in that village there are people trafficking weapons through refugee camps from Liberia or perhaps a number of other villages. Most of those doing that trafficking would be young men. Their mothers and their wives know that they are doing it, They may be aiding and abetting it or doing it themselves. If they understand the effect that war is having on their society, then they begin to feel very differently about the way in which this is done. They start to have a debate in the village about their security and long-term development. And if there are incentives for the development of the village then this can actually help the monitoring of the flow of weapons and the actual collection and destruction of these weapons that could take place. This is not utopian. This has actually occurred in a number of places over a longer period of time.. The role of women is key in this respect. And what we have learned is that it actually cannot be done without the support of the women.

This has to be a major issue for the NGO community. The NGO community has traditionally been focused on disarmament in terms of the larger weapons. But in this case what we have is a serious humanitarian situation. Therefore, I think it is very important that NGOs are involved at the international, regional and local level. It is also important to make NGO involvement as broad as possible. This should include NGOs concerned with health, children's welfare, education, development, and human rights and with humanitarian action. Those involved with disarmament can be helpful in the technical sense. But those involved in the thrust and drive need to come from the health and development community. Indeed the lead on this issue needs to come not from the disarmament community but from the health, humanitarian, human rights and development communities.

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**Global Effects of Small Arms: A Gendered Perspective**  
**Wendy Cukier, President, Coalition for Gun Control, Canada**

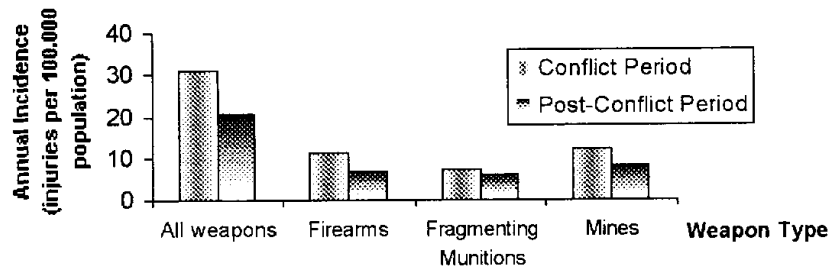
Approximately 500,000 persons are killed each year with small arms — 300,000 in "conflict" and 200,000 in murders, suicides and accidents. Recently released statistics show that the number of small arms in civilian possession far outnumbers those in the possession of States and police. In addition, the evidence is clear that in contexts such as the Horn of Africa, the principal risk is the AK-47, while in other regions such as South Africa or Columbia, handguns -revolvers and pistols—are the weapons most often used to kill. In countries like Canada and Finland, the principal risk, particularly to women and children, is the hunting rifle.

Research also clearly shows that the availability of small arms increases the lethality of conflict whether between warring factions or individuals. The proliferation of small arms also contributes to a culture of violence and a cycle that is difficult to break. Violence fuels insecurity; insecurity fuels violence. The negative consequences of the proliferation and misuse of small arms are an impediment to economic

development, provision of health and education services as well as the development of effective governance and democracy.

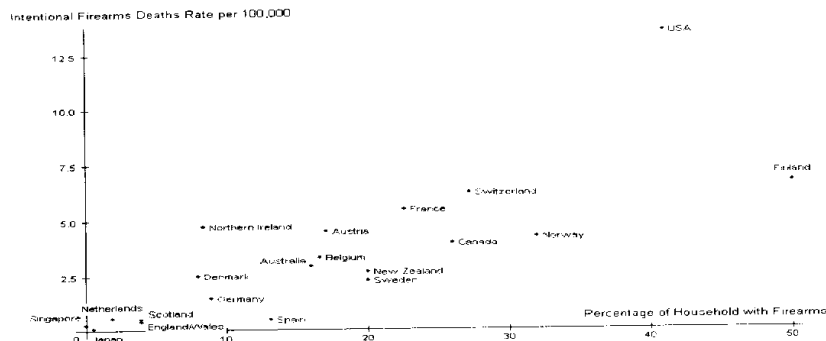
The evidence is strong that the unrestrained availability of small arms is directly linked to levels of lethal violence in both conflict and non-conflict contexts. Research conducted by the International Committee of the Red Cross shows that if small arms are not removed following the cessation of conflict, interpersonal violence substitutes for violence between warring factions. In one case, levels of firearm death declined only 30% following the cessation of conflict.

Figure 1: Annual Incidence of Weapon Injuries During Conflict and Post-Conflict Periods



\*Adjusted for population growth: mean annual incidence of injuries per estimated 100 000 population observed during conflict and post-conflict  
 In high-income countries, there is a very strong relationship between the levels of firearm ownership and levels of firearms-related death.

Figure 2: Firearms Possession and Intentional Firearm Deaths in 15 Countries



There is strong evidence to suggest that where there are more small arms, there are more whether in conflict or peace.

### Gender and Small Arms

A discussion of gender is relevant to understanding the effects of violence as well as its causes, in conflict and in peace, and particularly where small arms are concerned. While small arm casualties among women and children are significant both in war and in 'peace', the vast majority of victims of gun violence worldwide are men. At the same time, women are targets of certain types of violence as a result of their gender. Moreover, some forms of violence against women are unique and an understanding of these dynamics is the key to effective intervention.

## **Conflict**

There are limited data available on the casualties of war and what is available must be used cautiously. Despite claims that “~0% of the victims of conflict are civilians”, the available empirical evidence suggests that civilians account for between 30 and 60% of injuries requiring hospitalization, depending on the context. In addition, in studies available on small arms injuries during and post conflict. The majority of victims are adult males. An important finding in these studies is the fact that following the cessation of conflict, firearm injury rates remain high, as interpersonal violence often substitutes for violence between warring factions.

Gender is relevant to understanding the effects of conflict with small arms because the experience of violence is different for men and women. Women’s experiences of conflict are different, they often have more in common with women from opposing sides, than with the men in their own societies.” In Kashmir, for example, one female respondent noted: Both sides have guns, they shoot each other, they both die. But the problem remains.” At the same time, there is substantial evidence that women are not just passive observers. While they may not be active combatants, they often support armed conflict.

Women are often strategic targets in conflict. Gender-based violence during conflict is sometimes presented as evidence of the way in which militarism and misogyny are intertwined.

## **Gender and Crime**

The majority of victims of most crimes, including murder, are men. In many countries, small arms are the weapons of choice. The sub-population of men are often particularly effected. For example, in the United States, guns are the leading cause of death among young black men (15—24 years old). Studies of injury in South Africa have shown men lobe almost 90% of firearm murder victims.

Women are the targets of particular types of criminal violence, often involving small arms. There are a number of kinds of violence where women are more likely to be victims because they are women. These include domestic violence and sexual violence. 041 en these acts are facilitated by the proliferation of small arms.

Historically, justice Systems have often overlooked violence against women and human rights standards have tended to carve out a private sphere’ free from state intervention. However, for many women, that is the sphere in which they are most at risk. Traditional constructions of crime’ and the criminal element’ and the media focus on random acts of violence have tended to downplay domestic violence. Feminists have argued: “Most homicides are not random acts of violence and most guns used to commit murder are not smuggled or illegally owned. In fact, in most cases legitimate gun owners own them. Is it not true that domestic abuse and domestic homicide are criminal acts? Their friends and neighbours as law-abiding, responsible people usually perceive the men who commit these crimes and many of them own guns legally. But when a man abuses his spouse, he commits a crime, whether he is prosecuted or not.”

Many countries have very limited data-collection capacity and do not track victims by age or gender. Nevertheless, a variety of data sources suggest that the problem is widespread. While there are always methodological questions, a number of victimization surveys indicate that the rate with which women have reported being assaulted in the past year is high: Belgium (25%), Norway (25%), New Zealand (17%), USA (28%), Republic of Korea (38%), Malaysia (39%) Papua New Guinea (58~67%), Barbados (30%) and Columbia (20%). Many of the assaults are by individuals known to the victim.

## **Gender in Domestic Violence**

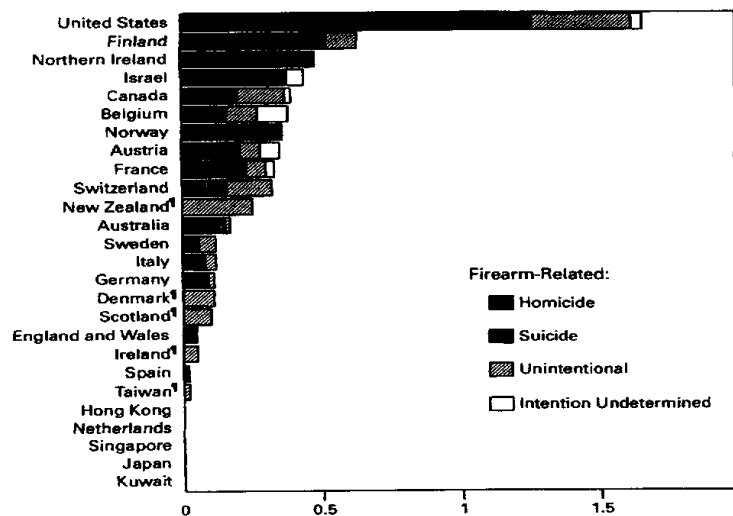
Worldwide, women are more at risk from violence at the hands of intimate partners while men are more at risk from male acquaintances. In four out of five intimate partner homicides in Australia the perpetrator

is male and the victim female. Women account for the majority of victims in domestic violence worldwide.

A number of studies have suggested that the risk of being murdered by an intimate partner increase with the availability of firearms. Consistent with other international studies, research in South Africa suggests that more women are shot at home in domestic violence situations than are shot by strangers on the streets or by intruders. In the United States 55% of women killed by their intimate partners are shot, in Brazil it is 46%, in Canada it is 25%. While the data is incomplete, it does identify certain trends. Among high-income, industrialized countries, the countries with the highest rate of domestic murders involving guns, and the highest rates of children under the age of 15 killed with guns (the US and Finland) are also the countries with the highest rates of gun ownership. (See Figure 3 below)

Guns also figure prominently in the cycle of violence against women. "Even when a gun is not fired, it has the power to inflict serious psychological damage on the people threatened with shooting." For every case where women are killed or physically injured with firearms, there are many more where they are threatened. The patterns of threatening are astonishingly similar across cultures and include such behaviours as shooting the family dog as a warning, or getting the gun out and cleaning it during an argument. Studies of abused women in many corners of the world Australia, South Africa, Canada — report astonishingly remarkable similarities. Almost one quarter of children living in shelters for abused women in New Zealand reported that they had been threatened with guns.

Figure 3: Rate of Children killed with firearms (per 100,000)



Source: Centres for Disease Control: "Rates of Homicides, Suicides and Firearm-related Death Among Children – 26 industrialised countries." *MMWR*. Vol. 46 No.5. 1997.

Recent reports on violations of women's human rights in the four former Soviet republics of Armenia, Moldova, Ukraine and Uzbekistan indicate that domestic violence is treated less seriously than comparable crimes outside the home. The legal system discourages women from taking legal action, and abusive husbands and partners are rarely punished. While there has been research on the flow of weapons through and from the former Soviet Union, and while many of these Countries have particularly high firearm homicide rates (e.g. Estonia) there has been little exploration of the ways in which women are

affected.

### **Gender and Sexual Violence**

Sexual assault is a crime in which women represent a disproportionate number of victims and where small arms are often facilitators. For example, aside from the unreported cases, the number of women raped was estimated at 20,000-50,000 in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Much attention has been focused on the causes of gender-based violence and suggestions include: the underlying acceptance of violence against women, the polarization of gender roles during conflict, the breakdown of social structures and the notion that women are property. Guns are used extensively as part of sexual violence against women as evidenced by the significant increases in rape and sexual assault in South Africa.

### **Gender and Fear of Violence**

Freedom from fear is a fundamental human right and women in most societies express more fear about violence than men and this in turn has secondary effects. For example, despite the fact that statistically men are more likely to be victims of violence, Canadian women expressed more fear that “you or someone in your household would be threatened or injured” (36% men, 59% female). Indeed, there have been efforts to exploit this fear in marketing guns to women.

### **Gender and Suicide**

In industrialized countries, the mortality rates for suicide with firearms are greater than the mortality rates for homicide with guns. Firearms are the weapons of choice in many countries when men commit suicide and the increased lethality of firearms often accounts in part for the gender differences in suicide rates.

### **Summary**

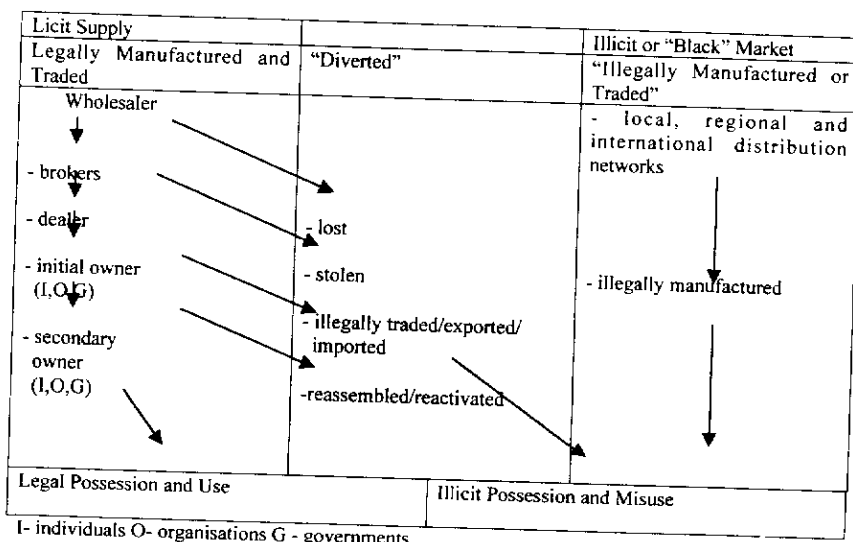
The gender lens provides a unique perspective, which crosses traditional boundaries that encourage dichotomies such as crime/conflict; licit/illicit; north/south; domestic international. It promotes an integrated and holistic approach to the problem of small arms that includes addressing both demand and supply. The regrettable truth is that women are often as much at risk of violence from small arms in contexts described as peaceful as they are in conflicts. Women are as much at risk from licit small arms as from illicit small arms. In terms of improving the safety of women and children from small arms, measures aimed at strengthening control over civilian possession of small arms in order to reduce diversion and misuse are as critical as those aimed at strengthening controls over state to state transfers or imports and exports. Consequently, a gender analysis reinforces the need for an integrated and holistic plan of action arising from the 2001 conference.

### **Opportunities for the 2001 conference Reducing the Supply: Licit/Illicit Links**

While landmines and conventional weapons tend to be concentrated in the hands of States and warring parties, it has been estimated that more small arms are in the hands of civilians than possessed by governments. The types of weapons, and their sources, vary from region to region. For example, in South Africa and Brazil, the principal small arms recovered are handguns while in Kenya and many other post-conflict regions they are AK-47s.

Virtually every illegal small arm began as a legal small arm. There is a range of methods by which small arms held legally by States; organizations and civilians are diverted to illegal markets. (See Figure 4)

Figure 4: Licit and Illicit Supplies of Firearms



Diversions of small arms from licit to illicit markets are a major contributor to the illegal trade in (SALW). It is estimated that more than 500,000 small arms are stolen each year from civilians, and therefore by definition, are falling into the hands of criminals. In many countries, the majority of small arms recovered in crime appear to have been at one time legally owned by States or by civilians. States that establish Strict controls on civilian possession of firearms are still vulnerable to weapons illegally imported from other States. Surplus weapons create another source for illicit trafficking. There are many documented cases of post-conflict weapons, surplus military weapons, police weapons and weapons recovered in crime re-entering the secondary market. Weapons collection programmes in post-conflict areas are critical to the establishment of lasting peace - otherwise the risk of high levels of violence remains.

### Towards an integrated strategy

Complex problems require complex solutions and the small arms problem can only be tackled through a multi-layered strategy that addresses both supply and demand at the international, regional, national and local levels. States, NGOs and community groups have been involved in a wide range of international initiatives aimed at countering both the supply and demand for illicit weapons. Concurrently, there are a host of regional initiatives by the CAS convention, the EU, the Organization of African Unity, the Economic Community of West Africa States, the Southern African Development Community and the East African Community, all aimed at harmonizing regional approaches to various aspects of small arms production, transfers and possession. A number of these proposals include explicit reference to the important role that must be played by NGOs. Not only are NGOs involved in many of the advocacy efforts, but they are also involved in educational initiatives (such as Peace in the City) as well as weapons collections programmes.

### UN Crime Commission

The UN Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice has recognized the need to strengthen regulations on firearms in order to address violence against women. Its resolution of 1997, sponsored by 33 countries, "requests the Secretary-General to promote, within existing resources, technical co-operation projects that recognize the relevance of firearm regulation in addressing violence against

women. in promoting justice for victims of crime and in addressing the problem of children and youth as victims and perpetrators of crime, and in re-establishing or strengthening the rule of law in post-conflict peacekeeping projects.” While the Commission made specific recommendations regarding the need to strengthen domestic legislation. subsequent efforts have focused only on developing standards for marking and controlling the import/export transfers of firearms as part of the recently concluded negotiations of the Firearms Protocol.

The obligations of states to place a priority on safety of citizens, particularly women, is underscored in the UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (DEVAW).

### **2001 Conference**

The proposed 2001 Conference on Illicit Trade in Small Arms in all its Aspects is an important step in reducing small arms violence against women. International-level efforts include the firearms protocol being negotiated as part of the UN Convention on Transnational Organized Crime and the upcoming UN 2001 Conference on Illicit Trafficking of Small Arms in All its Aspects. Non-Governmental Organizations from around the world are engaged in these initiatives, including members of the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA).

IANSA has recently issued a seven-point plan of action endorsed by more than 50 organizations. which reinforces the importance of a multifaceted approach addressing both the demand and supply. Among the key recommendations of the IANSA position are:

- preventing and combating illicit transfers through developing legally binding instruments on marking and brokering;
- controlling legal transfers between States to reduce the risk that weapons will be used in human rights violations;
  
- controls on the availability, use and storage of small arms within States, including strong domestic firearms regulation and a ban on civilian possession of military weapons;
- collection and destruction of surplus weapons from both civil society and regions of conflict;
- increasing transparency and accountability;
- resources to support effective implementation;
- support for research and information sharing measures to counter demand;
- improved coordination between government and civil society at all levels.

### **Silences**

We know that worldwide there are more guns in the hands of civilians than States. The US alone has 200,000,000 small arms of which 500,000 are stolen each year. We know that strengthening domestic regulation of firearms will reduce illicit trafficking by preventing diversion of civilian guns to illegal markets. More importantly, however, strengthening domestic legislation will improve the safety of women who are equally, if not more at risk from legal guns. As the Alberta Council of Women’s Shelters noted: “The distinction between ‘the criminal element’ and ‘law abiding citizens’ is meaningless in the context of violence against women;

Yet the gender bias seen in struggles for domestic regulation at the national level pervades the 2001 conference discussions and even the negotiations among NGOs. The importance of strong domestic legislation has been seen repeatedly in regional declarations, for example in Africa and Central America. And while strong domestic firearms legislation was one of the elements identified as a way of preventing conflict, criminality and violence against women and children in the 1997 resolution of the UN Commission on Crime and Criminal Justice, many governments and even NGOs are willing to drop it out of concern that it is ‘too controversial’. This unfortunate position has arisen due to resistance from some

States and threats from the American gun lobby.

If one analyzes the discussions among States and NGOs regarding the upcoming 2001 conference, one sees clear evidence of efforts to remove discussion of domestic regulation from the agenda based on arguments that “it is not attainable” or “not a priority”. This speaks volumes about how little is understood about women’s experience with small arms. I hope we can count on a strong voice from women’s groups at the 2001 conference to ensure that we move forward in tackling this serious problem.

The links between licit and illicit, domestic and international, north and south are perhaps reflected in my own experience with this issue. I became involved in small arms when on December 6, 1989, a man walked into a Canadian engineering school, separated the male from the female students, and shouting “You are all a bunch of feminists” shot 26 persons with a military-style rifle, killing 14 young women. December 6 is now a national day of mourning to women killed in violence. The Montreal Massacre was the catalyst for a range of initiatives aimed at reducing violence and particularly the misuse of small arms. It also created a vicious and virulent backlash from radical elements of the gun lobby. Despite the obvious differences, I think there is much that links the women’s experiences with small arms around the world, whether they are In South Africa, Columbia or Canada.

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**A Matter of Urgent Humanitarian Concern**  
**Lena Eskeland, ICRC Mines-Arms Unit**

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) welcomes the invitation of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom to join you in seeking a response to one of the major humanitarian issues of our times the global proliferation and widespread abuse of weapons of war.

Sometimes, we are asked why the ICRC is concerned about the proliferation and availability of small arms. Isn’t this a crime-related issue, or a political/disarmament issue, which has mostly to do with the legitimate rights of sovereign States to self-defence? To a certain degree it is, but the problems caused by small arms go far beyond this. This issue presents a massive challenge to the ICRC whose mission is to promote respect for international humanitarian law (IHL) and to assist the victims of armed conflict. Both of these missions are undermined today by the uncontrolled spread and abusive use of arms.

The ICRC is so far one of few aid agencies that has tried to document its own direct experience of the human costs of unregulated arms availability in conflict and post-conflict situations. Our observations and recommendations in relation to small arms diffusion are contained in a study entitled *Arms availability and the situation of civilians in armed conflict*. I will present the key findings of this study, before briefly discussing the consequences of this for women in armed conflict.

**ICRC arms availability study:**

The study distils the ICRCs experience with the effects of arms availability on the civilian population through a variety of methods. It includes two case studies which provide unique insights into the patterns of weapon use and abuse in two contexts in which the ICRC has worked — Cambodia and Afghanistan.

The objective of these two case studies were to examine the circumstances in which weapon injuries were inflicted, and to assess the relative frequency of weapon injuries during and after periods of conflict, in the absence of disarmament.

*Some of the specific findings from these case studies include:*

- In the case of Cambodia, in the absence of arms collection, the number of arms casualties decreased during the UN's presence, but returned to the same level after the UN's departure.
- In Afghanistan, the annual incidence of weapons injuries decreased by only 33% during the 18 months following the end of hostilities in one war-torn area where arms were allowed to remain in circulation. The mortality rate of injuries actually increased over the same period.
- Civilians are the primary victims. In the case of Cambodia, civilians accounted for 71% of non-combat injuries (injuries inflicted as a direct result of inter-factional fighting) and 42% of the combat-related injuries.
- Finally, these case studies indicate that to civilians, post-conflict actually looks like conflict if weapons are not removed.

In addition, a survey was carried out among senior ICRC delegates with a collective experience of 41 assignments in conflict and post-conflict settings on four continents since 1989. The objective was to gather *the perceptions* of ICRC staff on the degree of arms availability within various segments of a given population, the nature of arms-related incidents involving civilians and the direct impact of arms availability on ICRC field operations.

*Main findings:*

- Assault rifles were the most common type of weapon thought to bring about civilian death or injury.
- There was also general consensus among respondents that arms were used against civilians for criminal or coercive purposes - the majority believed such incidents to occur at least weekly.
- The respondents also indicated that ICRC operations were interrupted fairly frequently by armed security threats, impeding the access to the victims and denying the war victims the assistance and protection guaranteed by the Geneva Conventions. Of the respondents, 60 % put the frequency of such interruptions at once or more per month.

**Let me now address me of the principle themes and conclusions of this study:**

Firstly, as international arms transfers — particularly of SALW have become easier, the promotion of respect for IHL has become more difficult. The proliferation of weapons in the hands of new and often undisciplined actors has outpaced efforts to ensure compliance with basic rules of warfare.

Secondly, the study highlights the high price civilian populations have paid in recent conflicts. Civilian casualties represent a substantial proportion of all people injured by weapons.

Disease, starvation and abuse increase when humanitarian agencies, including the ICRC, are directly attacked and must suspend operations or leave a country.

Suffering can continue, often for years after the end of conflicts, as the continued availability of arms undermines the rule of law, threatens efforts at reconciliation, and contributes to a 'culture of violence'.

Thirdly, although the [CRC study does not suggest that arms availability alone is the cause of violations of IHL or a worsening of the situation of civilians, it does indicate that the unregulated transfer of weapons and ammunition can increase tensions, heighten civilian casualties and prolong the duration of conflicts. Among the central conclusions is that the current pattern of transfers of SALW and related ammunition — because it is largely outside of international control — should be a matter of urgent humanitarian concern.

## **Where do women fit into this picture?**

The ICRC study talks about the effects of small arms on the civilian population and does not single out women as such. At the same time, we should remember that today, the vast majority of armed conflicts occur within the borders of States. Such internal conflicts have a devastating impact upon civilian populations. With respect to civilian women, there *used* to be a perceived security — that as a woman and especially as a mother one would be spared from the excesses of warfare. Recent and present conflicts show that this is often not the reality'. On the contrary women are targeted precisely because they are women.

Women as members of the civilian population are increasingly at risk of being killed, wounded, mutilated or forcibly raped at the end of a gun. The proliferation of weapons and the access of these weapons by children give them a power that they have never had before, and has far reaching consequences.

As one woman in Sierra Leone said; “People who hold the guns have all the power. The rebels who killed my children and my husband, they raped me. They raped me openly in the town square

In striving to better understand the impact of armed conflict on women, the ICRC has been carrying out a study over the last two years. This study (the final report of which is nearing completion, some material is provided in your background packets today) aims to increase understanding of the ways in which women are affected by armed conflict to improve the quality, relevance and impact of ICRC services.

### **Key findings of the study**

As members of the civilian population, women and girls are affected by armed conflict in various ways, which I will mention briefly. Some of these highlight the distinctions between women’s and men’s experience of armed conflict.

#### 1. Displacement

Increased insecurity and fear of attack often cause women and their dependants to flee. It is often stated that women and children constitute the majority (oft quoted figure. 80%) of the world’s IDPs and refugees.

#### 2. Security

Women bear increased responsibility for their children and their elderly relatives and the wider community in the absence of their male relatives. Women often choose not to flee the fighting or the threat of hostilities because they and their families believe that the very fact that they are women and mothers will afford them a greater measure of security from the warring parties. But the absence of men, the general instability and the lawlessness that characterises many of today ‘s conflicts heightens the insecurity and danger for women.

#### 3. Sexual violence

Rape, forced prostitution, sexual slavery, and forced impregnation are all violations of IHL which have been more and more spoken about in recent years. Sexual violence has been and is used against women and girls— and to a lesser extent against men and boys as a form of torture, to degrade, to intimidate and ultimately to defeat and chase away targeted populations.

#### 4. Missing

One of the consequences of armed conflicts that continues long after the hostilities are over is the issue of persons missing in relation to hostilities. The majority of persons missing are men. e.g. in Bosnia--Herzegovina of the around 18,000 persons reported to the ICRC as still missing (as a result of the armed conflict which ended in 1995) 92% are men and 8% are women. As a consequence, women are forced to

take on the roles of breadwinner and head of households.

#### 5. Detention

Both as combatants and as civilians, men are much more likely to be detained or interned than women. (e.g., in 1999, the ICRC visited more than 225,000 detainees around the world, fewer than 10,000 of whom were women and girls). Again, the detention of the men has an enormous impact on women as they may be left to head their household and support dependent family members.

#### 6. Access to medical care

The insecure environment in conflict areas creates problems for civilians—women, men and children—attempting to reach health services. For women, this often means that it is difficult to obtain access to specialist medical services, such as reproductive health care. Another aspect of this, is that in addition to caring for themselves, women have an important role in promoting and maintaining the health of their family and community.

#### 7. Access to food and non-food assistance

When men take up arms, flee, are detained, die, or become disabled or missing, women face the heavy burden of taking over the role of head of household and providing both for their own needs and those of their family. Certain tasks traditionally done by men can be difficult for women to carry out because of social and cultural barriers, lack of skills, and/or insecurity resulting from the hostilities, which restricts mobility and increases the risk of attack or injury.

#### **What can be done?**

The ICRC is encouraged by recent small arms initiatives on both national, regional and international levels. Nevertheless, much work still remains to be done, both within and outside of the UN process.

The ICRC has called on States urgently to review their policies concerning the production, availability and transfer of arms and ammunition in light of their responsibility under Article 1 of the Geneva Conventions to "respect and ensure respect" for IHL. In 1999, States party to the Geneva Conventions committed themselves (in the Plan of Action adopted by the 27th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent) to "examine the establishment of means to integrate consideration of respect for IHL into national decision making on transfer of arms and ammunition". The ICRC urges States to help convert this commitment into reality by promoting IHL and human rights-based criteria for arms transfer in norms adopted at the national, regional and international levels.

In addition, we urge States to promote the adoption of a number of specific measures including:

- 1) The establishment of effective implementation and monitoring measures for arms embargoes in regions of conflict.
- 2) The development of an international system for marking and tracing arms and ammunition.
- 3) Arrangements to assure the secure storage of arms and ammunition.
- 4) The destruction—rather than export of surplus stocks of arms and ammunition—whether these surpluses are produced by the modernisation of arsenals or the end of hostilities.

#### **Conclusion**

To finalize, ICRC believes it is of the utmost importance to ensure that the 'human cost' of the widespread proliferation of arms is clearly on the agenda of the 2001 UN Conference on small arms, and that it remains in the centre of debate prior to and after the Conference.

Events such as this one, which address the concerns of women as part of the civilian population are important in order to raise awareness about the problems that need to be addressed in order to find possible ways forward.

Events like this are also important to remind ourselves that women are not only "victims". Women are politicians, community leaders, partners in assistance operations in their communities, and activists for reconstruction, reconciliation and peace. (They are also actively engaged in the fighting as combatants or in support roles to the armed forces). In other words, women are not necessarily vulnerable and victims, although many women have been *made* particularly vulnerable by war. Small arms are a major factor in this process.

International Women's Day is a day to commemorate the courage, the resilience and the strength of women. Women have displayed, and display to this day, tremendous resourcefulness in the coping mechanisms they have adopted as survivors of wars, as head of households, as participants in humanitarian programmes and various initiatives against small arms. Women themselves are one of the greatest opportunities for action, and should be better supported, protected and assisted in the challenges they face when confronted by problems caused by small arms in particular and war in general.

Today, in relation to International Women's Day tomorrow, the ICRC is calling for the general and special protection to which women are entitled by IHL to become a reality in each and every armed-conflict being fought throughout the world.

Improved protection of women in situations of armed conflict can be achieved through 1) better *implementation and respect* of existing humanitarian law and other international norms, and through 2) taking into account the concerns of civilians when addressing the issue of small arms.

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**Conflict Prevention, Illicit Trade of Small Arms  
and the Role of Women  
Eugenic Dossa-Quenum, WILPF Benin/Paris**

**Nature and Causes of Conflicts**

A Conflict is an antagonism between two *Camps*, two groups, two persons of which the needs, the interests or the ideas are fundamentally opposed because they are irreconcilable.

The economic transformation from primitive society towards the slavery based one, then from the slavery based one through the feudal and bourgeois one, has generated class conflicts. Bourgeois society in western Countries has evolved to capitalism. Colonial struggles completed their transformation to imperialism. At each stage, it was the law of the stronger that won over that of the weaker.

These conflicts were sometimes inevitable when they were minor. But the conflicts linked to the larger transformations in the different stages of social order were mostly inevitable.

Since the end of the Second World War; conflicts have no longer been linked to any continuous evolution of imperialism, but rather to hegemonic conflicts for the political and economic control of strategic areas of the world.

## **The Actors In Conflicts**

The protagonists can be called lighters of the fires. There are two types, internal actors and external actors. Intermediaries of the conflict profit from the colossal commissions which they gain from these conflicts. Therefore, it is in their interests that they continue unabated.

Wars of religion or ethnicity can involve only local or regional actors, whilst those which are imperialistic tend to put into play both internal and external actors, in this case, usually the major powers. These too can be named the lighters of fire or fight seekers.

Wars of liberation were in consequence legitimate wars to defend oneself against the invading foreign aggressor; as in the Portuguese, French and Belgian colonies among others. It can sometimes be that internal conflicts are of an inevitable nature when the conditions of oppressor and of terror are imposed on part of a population inside a country by one group in power governing against the interests of the people.

It can happen that populations revolt against both external aggressors and complicit governments. This is what we have witnessed in countries in chaos in which the IMF and World Bank judged it right to dictate a series of draconian measures called Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs). In the end, these programmes affect only the poor; which form the majority of southern populations.

## **The Victims**

In a majority of cases the weakest are the victims of the conflicts. Women, children, and the elderly. But also soldiers who, to follow orders, will let themselves be turned into cannon fodder on the battlefields.

## **Prevention of Conflicts**

Conflict prevention must happen first of all through the satisfaction of the interests of the people inside a country. These are actions to be led at the local level. It is imperative that principles regulating external interventions are put into place and are respected.

### ***A. On the internal aspect***

The principal actors in a conflict prevention plan are the people. They have the responsibility to ensure that democratic institutions are put into place to guarantee a democratic society.

1. The executive functions of government are to provide for the wellbeing of the citizens. To ensure this wellbeing, a minimum of \$3,000 per year and per inhabitant should be allotted to prevent the spread of poverty. Economic development must be ensured through a growth rate superior to 10%, at least in the first years.

Let us take the example of the 54 States of Africa. They are called poor yet their soils are gorged with natural resources as everyone knows, that is, gold, petrol and diamonds. Their demographics vary between 2 and 3 % whilst annual inflation attains 5 to 7% on average. Any growth rate inferior to 10%. Can only lead to a deterioration of living conditions.

It is worth mentioning that Dr. Bienvenu Quenum believes that not only reaching but surpassing a 10% growth rate is possible, even indispensable. This level could be reduced once equilibrium is reached. The growth rate could be reached by pursuing an agricultural policy different from that followed thus far.

There is still time to pursue this new policy when we see the growth rate attained by most of the

countries. Some examples: Botswana + 10%, Cameroun and Mauritius +7 %, Benin +5.5% Kenya +0.4% and Morocco 0%. This justifies the concerns of Mr. Andrea Ricardi, president of Sant' Egidio in his following remarks on Africa: 'I am very concerned that the West's strategy is to safeguard its interests and not to collaborate with Africa for the development of the Continent. The main interests of the Continent have not been taken into consideration to a large extent due to the African elite whose Interests are too close to European interests. An economic reorientation towards sustainable development would bring food security and employment to the people.

2. The people must feel connected to the politics that are undertaken in their name. Thus, the Constitution must not be tailored to the needs of this or that president or dictator, nor modified to enable him to remain in the post for the rest of his days, as is the case in many third world countries and at the moment even in Tunisia.

In addition to the freedom of association, of religion and of expression and the media, the democratic right of peoples is also the right to transparent elections. Instead, it frequently happens that political opponents and journalists are either thrown into jail without a trial for having a different opinion from those in power. Sometimes they are killed or simply disappear. It is with the greatest impunity that the rulers exploit and hijack the wealth of the country which they share with external actors.

3. The separation of power mentioned earlier would consist of entrusting the functions to three distinct institutions. 'It is befitting to divide power to prevent it from becoming arbitrary' wrote Mrs. Dominique Bangoura, President of the Political and Strategic Observatory of Africa (PSOA), during the Fourth UN Conference on the new or restored democracies, held at Cotonou from 4 to 6 December 2000. And it is precisely in African countries that power is arbitrary. When the people manage to tear away this separation, by electing deputies to an Assembly, the power diverts this process by "buying" the deputies, as in Benin. They can also put pressure on the National Electoral Commission (CENA), in order to falsify the elections. All these games are played to remain in power.

Depriving people of their fundamental rights can be a source of conflict or even of a lengthy war. This is the case of the western Saharaoui people which are still waiting in the Sahara, and of the Palestinian people in the Middle East. In the latter example, a UN resolution of 1948 provided for the creation of the State of Israel, and also for a Palestinian State.

### ***B. On the external aspect***

Let us return to the African countries in which the people are deprived of sovereignty.

The policies of those who govern these peoples is dictated by the former colonizing powers in relation to the particular interests of the latter.

### **The Role of Women**

In the prevention of conflict, women have a prime role to play. In effect, "The life which they carry in themselves and which they give at the risk of their own life... cannot continue to be extinguished whilst leaving women indifferent." (Information Bulletin no. 1 of the new millennium January 2001. French Section of WILPF).

Resolved to intervene much more rigorously in conflict situations to prevent them and contribute to their resolution, women are busy organising themselves fervently.

1. They create structures to combat wars. This is the case of the network for the defence of rights and of peace of the Democratic Republic of Congo. This women's network in East Africa comprises Congolese,

Ugandan and Burundi women. They bring together women to whom they give self-confidence and offer them training on the culture of peace. Mrs. Venantie Bisiniwa Nabintu is one example.

2. Meetings, organized by UN Specialized Agencies, have enabled the launching of (< Women and War a study regarding the role played by women in wars and conflicts. It involves women from the Great Lakes region, from Sierra Leone to Congo, Angola, the Northern Caucasus, Indonesia and the Balkans.

At the regional and international levels, the objective of the women is to make their voices heard, and to bring their concerns to the attention of national and international institutions.

As women, mothers, daughters and wives, all victims of wars which were decided without them and imposed upon them.

To cry out against rape, lack of care, malnutrition, unemployment, insecurity; massive and unceasing displacements.

All these movements by women have resulted in an informal meeting by the members of the Security Council of the UN with Non-Governmental delegates on 23/24 October 2000 in New York.

A draft resolution was presented by Namibia and was adopted unanimously on 31 October 2000 by the Security Council (Resolution 1325). The resolution is significant because, in the words of Solange Fernex, President of the French Section of WILPF, "it recognizes women as civil actors in international security and calls for the involvement of women in all peace processes and conflict prevention".

UN resolution 1325 is an important victory for women throughout the world. But there is need to go much further; women must become strong actors and shed the role of the eternal victim. They are in the majority in every country. It is time that they take the place their rightful place in all societies, especially when it concerns decisions that concern them.

By reaching out our hands to form a virtual international chain, they could effectively manage to:

- Block the path of legal and illegal arms dealers.
- Prevent dictators from continuing to rig elections to maintain power.
- Demand an ethical conduct of public life.

Whilst women won a Victory in the Security Council, it was in Dakar that other women effectively brought to judgment the IMF and WB for the negative effects of SAPs on Southern populations, from a nutritional, health, educational and cultural point of view. They have called for the relieve of the debt which has already been paid back many times over.

The Africa room of the Elysee Palace ... has too frequently been a green line for SOS Dictator, "stated Thierry Jean-Pierre, former investigative judge in *Paris*, in an interview given to *Le Figaro* of 4 January 2001. The Constitutions of these countries were written with the help of French consultants. As a result there are ambiguities, even articles going against the interests of the people. For example, the possibility' reserved to the Head of State to call in external military forces in the event of an uprising of the people.

The UN Charter whose principal mission is to "maintain international peace and security" reflects the classic principles of international law. That is state sovereignty, equality and non-interference in their internal affairs. Can we talk of respect of sovereignty of small countries 'when the industrialized nations allow themselves to grab their natural resources to feed their own economy, causing famine in the small countries ? Let us listen to the response of President Jacques Chirac given to a French journalist at the last

Yaounde Summit in Cameroun about dictators in Africa: ((We have discovered their raw materials and we have taken them. in the end, we see that Africa is not in a brilliant state and, since we have enriched our-selves at its cost, we give it lessons as a bonus. All of this deserves deep reflection and a form of self-criticism in which churches themselves must take part. «*Canard enchainé*», 24 January 2001.

The French military bases in certain African Countries are used for the parachuting in of troops in the event of a crisis, with the excuse of protecting French citizens. Is this not also another form of violation of sovereignty?

When brewing tensions exploded in the Ivory Coast, the former colonizers and other observers had been Concerned with the quality of life for poor populations there. They could therefore not predict the outcome, let alone the enormity of violence that characterized the confrontations of the rival groups in their fight for the control of State power Their Strategy was to send French troops in order to maintain and protect the pawn in power.

Judicial independence in relation to political power is an illusion even in Switzerland, at the end of a long process leading to democratization and democratic structures such as the Constitutional Court, Supreme Court, High Court of Justice. All these structures are controlled by bribing those who are meant to be the guardians. Under these conditions, conflict prevention remains a long-term noble project.

In conclusion, the best prevention of conflicts resides in democratic national institutions accompanied by established principles of good governance.

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**Small Arms Proliferation  
in the Current Political Context of Nepal  
Neeru Shrestha, INHURED International**

Nepal restored its multi-party system in 1990, thus ending 30 years of absolute monarchy. We have a new Constitution which is considered to be among the best in the region in terms of protecting civil and political rights. It guarantees freedom of thought, speech and expression, prohibits the practice of physical and mental torture, and abolishes the death penalty. It also provides for compensation to the victims of torture and illegal detention. Nepal has established a National Human Rights Commission for the protection and promotion of human rights although it has no power to bring complaints before the courts against the perpetrators of human rights violations. It can only make recommendations to concerned government agencies for necessary legal and/or departmental action upon investigation.

Nepal has been facing the serious effect of armed opposition of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) since February 1996 and various forms of counter-insurgency measures on the part of the government. The CPN (Maoist) has declared a "people's war" against political instability, corruption, and the sellout of Nepal '5 national interests to international financial institutions such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, Asian Development Bank and multinational corporations. Nepal is rapidly changing to a free market economy and privatization, the promised benefits have not trickled down to the poor. On the contrary, the process has lead to more poverty, hunger, violence and underdevelopment. The gradual privatization of Nepal's rich water and forest resources in the hands of transnational corporations, as well as the privatization of social sectors, such as health and education, has led to more and more discontent, anger, frustration and violent responses all over the country. Before launching the 'people's war' in 1996, the CPN (Maoist) and its legal wing, then called the United Peoples' Front, submitted a 40-point demand

to the government, which included demands of a social, political and economic nature and also Cuts in the power and privileges of the King and the establishment of a republic of Nepal. These demands have become everyone's concerns and are the agenda of any talks.

However, the process of dialogue to find political solutions have not gone anywhere. There were some high-level committees and informal efforts on both sides, but there has been a deadlock for some months now. The CPN (Maoist) is calling on the government and the political parties to form an all-party national government, to write a new Constitution and hold free and fair elections. This drastic shift in their demands has been regarded as a soft approach for Nepal to avoid protracted war and restore peace. However, the government has not yet responded to this demand.

### **Maoist insurgency and small arms**

In the past six months, the government has been concentrating all its efforts on trying to find an armed solution to these problems. After the King and the Nepal Army hesitated to use the military against the Maoists, the government has passed a new draconian ordinance for the establishment of a Special Police Force (Sashastra Prahari Bal) to use in insurgency-affected areas. As it is targeting to employ about 15,000 armed police this year, it is desperately looking for arms from any sources since the Nepal Army has not been co-operating' in the supply of arms to the government. The recent visits of Indian military' personnel, the Chinese Defence Minister and the Nepali Foreign Minister to various countries, mainly India and China, are considered to be hidden efforts to make secret arms deals and military diplomacy towards the suppression of the Maoist insurgency. According to the press reports, the western suppliers have also been contacting various government agencies and private agents for the supply of small arms in urban areas and more sophisticated arms in the country. The ministers and other high government officials, as well as police officers, have been continuously criticized for showing more interest in the purchase of arms than in finding a peaceful solution to the problem. The government has increased the defence budget by around 10% in 2001, and the whole politics of commission and bribery is being further criticized as the main reasons for halting the dialogue. If the government continues along this path, it would seem that Nepal could face the threat of civil war.

### **Problems of small arms and trade in Nepal**

Legally speaking, Nepal has very strong laws and regulations against the purchase and ownership of small arms. There are strict procedures for licensing and renewal. However, the main question is how to prevent the illegal trade of small arms through the 800 mile long open border with India in the east, west and the south, and the possibility of such trade from the geographically difficult but technically feasible northern border with China. Even before the start of the Maoist insurgency, the use of illegal small arms in the Nepal-India border had been common, particularly in relation to ordinary crimes. Nepal has since become a paradise for illegal arms traders from the Middle East to Afghanistan and from Pakistan to India itself. It is only very recent that both the governments in Nepal and India have started talking about mobilizing the armed forces to control any type of illegal trade. In Nepal, the issue is the complete regulation and control of the Nepal-India border, which would be against the provision of the 1950 Nepal-India Peace and Friendship Treaty which provides for an open border and free movement of citizens from both countries without any travel documents or proof of identity.

It is particularly difficult to control the illegal trade of small arms when there is a demand and a huge financial interest and corruption in the government and in defence agencies. For the Maoists, it is natural that they look for cheaper and better arms from any available source. One main reason behind the rapid increase in the Maoist insurgency in almost 50 out of 75 districts of Nepal is the easy access to small arms. As it is frequently reported in the media, the Maoists have been able to collect most of their arms from the police either through the takeover of local police stations or through the sale or hand over of the arms by the police themselves. This argument is not unfounded since most of the police who are sent to fight the guerrillas are low-paid, untrained and have no political or human rights education. In some

cases, the police is supporting the Maoist insurgency. In fact, the government and the chief of the police have repeatedly said that the Maoist insurgency has gone beyond the control of the police. It is for this reason that the government has created a separate armed police force despite public opposition to an armed solution of the Maoist insurgency-related problems. In addition, the Maoists are also manufacturing their own arms via local merchants. Also, licensed arms are being taken away or seized from private citizens. The government is already considering allowing the public, particularly the business industries, to own arms and form their own security personnel.

### **Conclusion**

Without going into depth of the problem of small arms in Nepal, we can pose the following questions based on what I have presented: (a) Is there an armed solution to the present day violence and conflict; (b) can we stop the production and export of small arms, and can we make the concerned governments of arms producing/exporting and importing countries accountable, both legally and politically for the consequences; (c) can we ensure that information on registration, production, as well as export and import of small arms will be made public; (d) can Nepal be given the support of the international community to control and stop the illegal trade of small arms to Nepal and put pressure on the government and the Maoists for an immediate dialogue at a political level to find appropriate solutions?

The problem of small arms and trade and its role in the present conflict is already very serious. If nothing is done immediately to resolve this conflict, particularly with the help of the international community, then Nepal, unfortunately, will be joining other countries which are living under violence, civil war and destruction.

We need to recognize that peace can only be achieved through political dialogue, and that people cannot live in peace without a minimum amount of social and economic security and human dignity. This is the challenge we are all facing today.

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### **Women Can Change Realities** **Jeta Katro Beluli, Women in Development Association**

It is a privilege to have been invited to this one-day seminar held on the eve of the International Women's Day, 2001. I am confident that this seminar will show clearly the very important role and contribution of women to peace building and that the women's movement is not only alive, but greatly contributing to development.

Following wide scale public looting of army depots in Albania during the unrest in March 1997, more than half a million military weapons and many tons of ammunition fell into the hands of civilians. Although a proportion of the weapons looted were trafficked to Greece, Kosovo and elsewhere, significant quantities remained in Albania. The Albanian government estimates that it was able so far to recover only 18% of the weapons stolen.

This situation, which brought the country to the edge of a civil war; is considered to be one of the most critical problems facing the country during this period of transition. Weapons possession fuelled widespread banditry and continues to represent a constant threat to public order by significantly increasing the risk of crime, violence, and political confrontation which often degenerates into armed violence. Regrettably, many weapons-related incidents included and continue to include children, women and the elderly. Moreover; the availability of weapons has been greatly hindering the economic growth of the country including national and foreign investment. Because of the crises in '97 many enterprises closed down, thus having an immediate impact on employment. Due to this situation, the labour market in

Albania has been characterized by a lack of investments, reducing the potential for an increase in employment.

Crime has risen enormously. A large force of policemen were used to escort humanitarian aid and refugees from Kosovo during the crisis, thus allowing the activities of criminals to go unchecked. As a result, organized crime became prevalent and established in both the north and south. Although, the official data does not throw much light on the phenomenon, it is known that criminal groups are very much present and are responsible for most of the trafficking, prostitution and fraud.

Compared to 1998, criminality dropped by 7.3% in 1999 (Albania Human Development Report, 2000). This has been a positive change for public order, although the price has been rather high for the police. 40 criminals and 160 policemen were killed during the past three years, not to mention the numerous innocent civilian victims. What is particularly disturbing is that many of the criminals and victims are between the ages of 14 and 18.

During the Kosovo crisis, the incidence of armed robbery as well as the kidnapping of wealthy businessmen 5 children became another phenomenon, which is still on the rise. In 1999, according to official data, 60 persons were kidnapped, 25 of whom were foreigners. Evidence from 1998-99 demonstrates that many criminals from Turkey, Macedonia, Montenegro, Kosovo and Italy were involved in illegal activities in Albania. This shows that criminal groups in the region have become ever more sophisticated where there is conflict.

The revival of old traditions, such as feudal revenge, is another unpleasant phenomenon that has reappeared recently, mostly in the northern areas of the country. A lot of small arms looted from the military depots in '97 are still in the hands of the individuals, who often use them to end conflicts.

It is against this background that I wish to review and reflect on the women's role in Albania and attempt to present an accurate picture of women's positions in a country that has been in conflict for so many years now. We must recognize that the chaos of 1997-99 greatly affected women who, due to these conflicts, continue to have limited possibilities for exercising their full functions in the society even today. The armed conflict in Kosovo and the situation in 1997 in Albania did not affect men in the same way.

For instance, women's central roles in maintaining and managing the household and family make them much more susceptible to the problems that can arise from gun-related violence in their communities. Violence against women has been highlighted by the presence of guns both in the home and the society as it fuels male aggression. In Kosovo, it was discovered that 23% almost one in four women reported domestic violence. This includes cases where husbands killed their wives. During 1998-99 it is said that many thousands of women were raped in a systematic and organized way, and the research found a 4% disclosure rate of inter-ethnic rape during this war (Human Rights Watch, *Rape as a Weapon of Ethnic Cleansing*, March 2000). Researchers have also been told of girls as young as 10 being subjected to rape.

Above all, most women view weapons differently. They often see them as a security *risk*, while most men view weapons as *a form* of security. This is why demilitarization has been considered a significant step toward building a culture of peace in Albania. "Losing my nephew", a retired woman of 60 said, has been the most terrible thing that has happened to me during these years, and I appeal to the young people to hand in their weapons and save human lives."

Since the conflict, prostitution and trafficking in women have increased considerably in Albania. Criminals often use their weapons as a means of pressure to accomplish their intentions. This is reported by NGOs and the media. Although prostitution is relatively new in Albania, the country has become one

of the main suppliers of prostitutes to neighbouring countries since the above-mentioned conflicts. The number of Albanian prostitutes is estimated to be approximately 15,000 in Italy, 5,000 in Greece and 100 in France (Albanian Human Development Report, 2000).

Women in Kosovo faced a much harder situation during this time. The first reports of Kosovar women came from refugee camps in Macedonia and Albania. These occurred when 800,000 Kosovars had been forced out of their countries by the Serbian military. Some reports mentioned girls or women being tricked into leaving camps while others were abducted at gunpoint. Whilst there is evidence of women being trafficked into Kosovo, evidence of women being kidnapped and taken out is not as readily available.

Another phenomenon related to trafficking became visible in Albania during this time. The increasing number of women trafficked for prostitution from other countries such as Moldova, Lithuania, Russia, Bulgaria and Romania to Western European countries became evident. It is said that most of the women and children are brought into Albania from either Montenegro or Greece and almost all end up in Italy. Over 37% of the prostitutes are thought to be minors. While the daily press is full of stories about the activities of traffickers and the Albanian public is aware of what is going on, there are not many actions taken against them. Regrettably, many have accepted this because it is as lucrative and as competitive as the smuggling of drugs.

Albanian women's limited access to power, education, employment and training have made them less represented in decision-making. This means that their voices are less heard in the debate about keeping weapons. Yet, Albanian and Kosovar women were the ones that managed many difficult situations during the Kosovo crisis. Albanian women hosted hundreds of Kosovar families in their homes in order to help avoid a human catastrophe. Kosovar women took on a lot of responsibility and organized much of the huge influx of Kosovars across the northern borders of Albania.

We are all aware that many conflicts start with incendiary words, which can lead to violence. These words provoke hostility and aggression that may result in a life being taken. Learning to communicate peacefully is therefore very essential in order to prevent violent acts. This has been the motto of women in Albania as they took initiatives, which helped to create friendship and understanding among people during the very volatile events of 1997-99. Two peaceful protests organized by women during this time singled out clearly the message of peace to the government and society.

Many governmental and non-governmental programmes were initiated in Albania. They include the Weapons in Exchange for Development programme, which came into being in Gramsch, an area noted for its high concentration of weapons. The motto of the initiative was "One Less Weapon, One More Life" and it marked the first successful weapons collection programme in Albania where women played a major role. Some 6,000 weapons and 137 tons of ammunition were handed over to the authorities. In exchange, people received community-based development and public works projects, which had a positive impact on many lives.

Albanian women have consistently helped to raise awareness of the dangers of weapons and ammunition in homes and about the urgent need to hand them in. They organized meetings (official and unofficial) in the schools, marketplaces, workplaces and in their villages. Women representatives of NOOs felt in some ways that the local authorities were more willing to listen to them than to men. Therefore, they decided to take the lead. Because of their success, their efforts were replicated in two other areas, namely, Elbasan a city in the south, and Diber in the north of Albania. The programme worked out well. Diber Women — No to Weapons, Yes to Development — was another successful programme which aimed to establish positive links between development and disarmament. Sixty-five women of various ages, professions, occupations and organizations participated in the activities by which 2,332 weapons and 1,801 tons

ofammunition were collected in Elbasan, a city noth ofDiber in the north ofAlbania. In Diber, the women collected 2,407 weapons and 855 tons of ammunition. These experiences serve as a. model for the importance of working together towards a common goal. The women refused to accept the idea that problems cannot be solved. They believed that change was possible and were willing to do their part.

Another example of their commitment is evident in reconciliation programmes that are offered to families who are victims of feudal revenge. In addition, they have organized concerts and have planned to organize a campaign for the destriction ofsmall arms. They have also put increased efforts into establishing contacts, through which ~hey can make inforination readily available.

Unfortunately, the conflicts in Albania have allowed for few opportunities to learn how a democratic society functions in practice. Therefore they are trying to educate themselves while promoting democratic development and working in a democratic way.

Albanian women are aware of their role, which is to not only demand justice and democracy, but also to stress that women's interests be taken into account. Governments should consider women's participation in political life as it can contribute to the redefining of political priorities. placing new items on the political agenda and providing new perspectives on mainstream political issues which can help create an environment for peace building in Albania.

Women are historically associated with non-violence, a value system based on dialogue, compromise, reconciliation and the settling of differences by peaceful means. This value system can provide an alternative to the current culture of violence, whilst at the same time assist in the development of a new political culture. that of peace. co-operation and respect for differences. It is thought in some circles that if politics adopted more of the values associated with women, then there would be more solidarity amongst people and nations and fewer wars and conflicts. Also, there would be more awareness of social issues related to concern for quality of life, such as protection of the environment, social policy and welfare, health care, education, combating drug use and human trafficking. Although this cannot be proven. it can certainly be inferred that where women are allowed to take part in the democratic political process the life of society is more balanced.

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**Expectations for UN 2001: Small Arms Initiatives and the  
UN 2001 Conference — A European Perspective  
Steffen Kongstad Minister, Permanent Mission of Norway  
to the UN Office at Geneva**

**The UN 2001 Conference in perspective:**

The conference will be *one* event among many and not represent the solution to the problems caused by small arms. It may be useful to go back three to four years when the small arms issue started to attract political attention and was slowly recognized as a very serious problem;

There were, broadly speaking, two (opposing) schools of thought: Globalists and regionalists. Globalists were a heterogeneous group where some favoured a multilateral approach with some well-intentioned, spectacular, rather unrealistic elements, and where others would be happy with more declaratory 'UN speak'.

Regionalists were a more humble, less spectacular lot, who favoured a pragmatic, practical approach.

They worked quietly at the national, sub-regional and regional levels. Among these, perhaps not so quiet, were several of the countries that stood behind the Organization of American States' (OAS) convention on fire-arms, which was the first international legal instrument to explicitly address the small arms problem. Most of the regionalists were then, as they are today, in different parts of Africa, Latin-America and Europe.

So when the question of holding a global conference on small arms was posed, many countries, like Norway and South Africa, were skeptical and even opposed to the idea. Not because they were not deeply concerned about the problems caused by the uncontrolled spread and use of small arms, but because they did not think the small arms issue was ripe for the global level. They also felt that a global track could be used to distract and derail the issue.

At the same time the success of the Ottawa process on landmines led, or misled, many to think that small arms could be treated in a similar way. However, those familiar with the landmines process realized that the small arms related problems were far more complex both in practical and political terms. It is equally important to recognize that the small arms issue demands a bottom-up and not a top-down approach.

Anyway, in the world of UN resolutions, the small arms issue had its own life independent of the realities on the ground. For some it has been desirable, even imperative, to be seen as doing something good in a non-committed way. To others it has been a way of neutralizing undesirable, and even threatening, attempts to seriously address the small arms related problems.

But at the end of the day, nobody found it politically opportune and appropriate to oppose a global conference. Once it was decided to hold a UN conference, States and organizations already engaged in the small arms problem were committed to make the best possible use of such a conference.

The character and nature of the process towards the UN conference were clearly illustrated by two issues that immediately became highly controversial. One was the venue of the conference. The other was NGO participation, which before the 3rd PrepCom session is still unresolved.

A considerable group of countries, in particular African and European, favoured Geneva while others favoured New York. So why was this discussion of any significance? Because it was closely related to the perception of the small arms Issue. Those in favour of Geneva saw the small arms issue as a complex matter requiring a comprehensive approach. They saw the small arms problems primarily as a humanitarian issue,

with clear developmental, human rights, health, and to some extent, arms control aspects. Geneva represents a mix of various humanitarian organizations and fora where NGO participation is essential and natural. Those who favoured New York perceived the small arms issue to be mainly, or even solely, a disarmament, arms control issue. And here there is little or no room for real NGO participation.

In this particular context, Geneva represented the more practical, pragmatic approach. New York provided a more politicized and polarized setting. Given the fact that the discussions took place in New York, it is hardly surprising that it was finally decided to hold the conference in New York.

The question of NGO participation remains open. Some of us think that NGOs have expertise and experience that are indispensable for the process. Many NGOs carry out important work on the ground. They are not only working in the humanitarian, human rights, health, and developing assistance fields, but also taking on an important advocacy role.

Various regional and sub-regional processes have taken and are taking place partly independent of, partly leading up to, the UN conference. This includes Europe which is politically and practically important, because Europe has a serious small arms problem (this is not solely a third world problem) and the European problem is partly the source of small arms problems elsewhere, particularly in Africa.

The Europeans must make order in their own house. Several steps have been taken to this end. The OSCE document is quite far reaching if implemented. The EL code of conduct and so-called joint actions may play their part. NATO/EAPC may be seen as a pertinent actor. The end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact have led to a downsizing of armed forces resulting in a considerable surplus of small arms and light weapons. In addition comes a certain adjustment of NATO standards also leading to surpluses of old weapons. NATO may, through the co-operative fora established, be used as a vehicle to operationally address the small arms problems. Europeans should also contribute to further developing trans-regional co-operation and Europeans may learn from the experience of others.

So what is there to expect from the UN conference? Expectations and ambitions vary but it is important to be realistic. Because it is highly desirable to have a positive outcome, we do want to avoid a failure. There are clear limitations to what the market can take. No legal instruments can be negotiated and agreed to at this point in time. The scope of the conference is very limited, namely to trade related aspects. As it has been pointed out, an essential aspect of the small arms problem is domestic legislation and national gun control. This will probably not be allowed to be properly addressed. In the UN and global setting, the lowest common denominator prevails. The chairman of the Preparatory Committee, Ambassador dos Santos of Mozambique, has presented a draft final document for the conference, the so-called Programme of Action. This paper will be discussed and negotiated at the 3rd and final PrepCom session at the *end* of March. Of *course*, we as Norway like so many others, would like to see a much stronger text. But that would never attract consensus.

The UN 2001 conference

- **should not**
    - replace or derail existing activities and
    - put a ceiling on national, sub-regional and regional activities
    - distract attention from the real work and the real issues on the ground
  - **cannot**
    - change the world
    - develop new norms, instruments or institutions
  - **can and should**
    - raise the general awareness of the problems caused by the uncontrolled spread and use of small arms;
    - be a political manifestation recognizing these problems and placing them on national and international political agendas
    - avoid a damaging polarization particularly North-South.
    - support existing activities at the national, sub-regional and regional level and give the NGO community an opportunity to focus and mobilize. An important point here is the gender imbalances in and around the UN. In particular, the disarmament environment is still strongly male-dominated despite improvements over the last years. This is one reason we should support the notion and understanding of the small arms issue as a humanitarian issue that must be people-oriented. The small arms related problems must not be left to the boys in the closed rooms of the traditional disarmament and arms control thinking. Part of the small arms problem is so closely linked to the masculine macho culture. It is essential to inject the gender perspective into this process. This is one reason why I feel very encouraged by this seminar.
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**Update on Small Arms Initiatives in the Asia-Pacific Region  
and the UN 2001 Conference  
Philippa King, Permanent Mission of Australia to the UN Office At Geneva**

Despite the fact that a number of provinces and countries in the Asia-Pacific suffer from the effects of illicit arms flows and stockpiles (PNG, Solomon Islands, Cambodia, Philippines, Bougainville, East Timor) the region has admittedly been slower than other regions in addressing the issue.

However, the region has not been inactive, and it is worth running through some of the initiatives that are being taken. I will not go into any detail on the nature of the region's problems or the specific impact on the societies of the countries in the Asia-Pacific region, as there is an abundant amount of information on the nature of the problem and its root causes.

What I will provide, however; is an overview of the initiatives being taken in the Asia-Pacific, and how these might correspond with the desired outcome for the UN Conference.

The two main regional and subregional groups that are actively considering issues relating to SALW are the ASEAN Regional Forum and the Pacific Island Forum Group. The former is considering the problems posed by the illicit arms trade in its Experts' Group on Transnational Crime The latter is developing a common regional approach to weapon control. It is probably fair to say that activities in the Pacific Island Forum Group are more advanced than in the ASEAN Regional Forum.

The problems in Pacific Island countries are a little different from those countries in which there are huge flows of high-powered military-style weapons. Rather, small numbers of very basic weapons can destabilize small communities in a short space of time and with limited resources. It does not take large quantities of these weapons to create unrest and political and economic instability.

As a result, the Pacific Island countries have been addressing the small arms problem in a way which is particularly appropriate to them. The progress particular to this sub-region is taking place within the framework of an overall effort to develop a common regional approach to weapons control. This proposal was initially put forward in 1996 by Papua New Guinea, and has been built on enthusiastically through the following steps:

- The drafting of the 'Honiara Initiative' on a common approach to weapons control. This includes language for the marking of firearms, strengthening of import and export controls, licensing requirements, record-keeping and information exchange. It covers firearms, firearm parts and illicit manufacturing and trafficking;
- Approval by South Pacific Forum Leaders, in 1999, of the commencement of work on a draft legal framework, using the 'Honiara Initiative' as a basis for the implementation of common weapons control measures

Then last year, the South Pacific Chiefs of Police Conference and the Oceania customs Organization met to consider a draft framework covering non-firearms as well as firearms. As a result, the "Nadi Framework" was produced, incorporating the 'Honiara Initiative and non-firearms weapons issues. This framework is based on the premise that possession and use of firearms, ammunition, other related materials and prohibited weapons is a privilege conditional on the overriding need to ensure public safety. And that public safety will be enhanced by imposing strict controls on the import, possession and use of firearms, ammunition, other related materials and prohibited weapons.

Then at a meeting late in 2000, leaders of these countries agreed to develop top model legislation to facilitate implementation and enforcement of the common approach to weapon control encapsulated in the “Nadi Framework”. It is expected that this model legislation will be finalized by mid-2001 at the latest.

To assist future implementation of the legislation, Australia is hosting a workshop in May 2001 to provide practical advice to legislators, law enforcement officers, customs officers and other influential practitioners involved in regulating the use and ownership of small arms, and to help them implement and enforce the legislation. This workshop will also, we hope, provide an opportunity for Pacific Island Forum countries to consolidate their approach to the UN Conference.

The Pacific Island Forum countries have stated their joint commitment to making a constructive contribution to the UN Conference, through the document presented at the PrepCom in January. (AI CON F. ¶ 92/PCI 24). They have stated publicly that they are looking to the Conference to produce realistic Outcomes that address the issue in a practical way. This includes effectively regulating the use, transfer and accumulation of small arms, which harm civilians and destabilize communities.

In the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), consideration of small arms issues is taking place in the context of the Experts’ Group on Transnational Crime, the next meeting of which is in April 2001 in Kuala Lumpur.

While the focus of the ARF’s consideration of small arms has been within the context of transnational crime, member countries have shown an increased willingness to broaden their consideration of small arms issues.

Progress was made recently at an ARF CBMs seminar in Cambodia, at which there was support for giving further consideration to Australia’s proposal for an ARF Declaration on small arms for the UN Conference.

For Australia’s part, we think the ARF could develop useful co-operative measures on important areas such as stockpile management, including information exchange on national practices. In our view, we should also consider in this context the possibility of regulations on the manufacture and trade of small arms, co-operation at the Customs and border control level, monitoring of brokering activities, adherence to international arms embargoes etc. In other words, many of the measures under consideration in the UN process.

The difference, and as we see it the advantage, would be that once the UN makes the political commitment to the measures contained in part II of Ambassador Dos Santos’s draft Programme of Action, our regional frameworks would provide a more tangible process for follow-up activities. The Conference should indeed set out a programme for follow-up to the July outcome. As we see this, these follow-up mechanisms will provide the political impetus to implement the programme of action, and to maintain momentum regarding efforts to tackle the problem.

However, much of the practical, on the ground follow-up activity, will and should be conducted at a regional and sub-regional level. This is simply because regions have their own particular problems, as well as their own sensitivities, and the countries of those regions are the ones best placed to recognize which measures would have a positive impact and conversely, which measures &e not relevant to them.

Similarly, the positive effects of many of the measures contained in part II of the programme of action would be maximized if undertaken at a regional level. Indeed, some may not be undertaken at any level beyond a regional one.

For example, trans-border customs co-operation and networks, for information-sharing, strengthened regulations, and administrative procedures, the development of best practices for the management of stockpiles and safe storage, might all be the subject of speedier progress if addressed, in the first instance, at a regional or sub-regional level.

This is not to say that there is not scope for cross-regional harmonization, or scope for global measures applicable to all. The point is simply that we should make progress where we can, and if that is at a regional or subregional level, we would strongly support it.

We therefore view the UN Conference and regional initiatives as two pillars of the same process. The effects of each and on each other will vary depending on the degree to which regional initiatives are advanced.

It is conceivable that in some areas the outcome of the UN Conference will fall short of current regional and sub-regional initiatives on some issues. In such cases, the regional efforts could still benefit from the political profile of the UN Conference Outcome and more importantly the international community's commitment, through part III of the Programme of Action, to provide assistance with implementation of a set of non-exclusive measures.

We can envisage this situation with regard to some of the measures being implemented by Pacific Island Forum States, such as the establishment of national co-ordination agencies, and the implementation of adequate laws to regulate the legal ownership and use of small arms, and the establishment of export criteria.

In cases where the UN Conference Programme of Action is out in front of regional efforts, its benefits are immediately obvious. A global political commitment and a menu of measures will hopefully encourage regional activity and facilitate implementation of applicable measures.

To reiterate, we know that the UN Conference will not provide the answer to all the problems. It can, however, provide a framework of measures, which can or would be useful for States choosing to use them in situations in which they are applicable. And it can underline the international community's commitment to provide assistance to those States, which require it in order to improve their own situations. It can also raise the profile and public awareness of governments' commitments to tackle the problem.

That is where we see the specific value of the Conference — it can, if pitched right, offer an overarching, motivational framework of commitments.

For various parts of the Asia-Pacific region, the outcome of the UN Conference will have a different impact from that which it might have on other regions, such as Europe or Africa. Its value would lie in it providing a mixture of leadership at a global level, endorsement of ongoing efforts, and the provision of models, which might be useful for us to follow. And none of this obviates the need for continued activity, along the lines of what is already being done, at the regional and subregional levels.

**The Great Lakes Region and Horn of Africa Initiative on  
Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons**  
**Michael Oyugi, Permanent Mission of Kenya to the UN Office at Geneva**

The Great Lakes Region and Horn of Africa Conference was held in Nairobi from 2 - 5 March 2000. Ministers from ten countries in the area attended — Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Sudan, Rwanda, Burundi, Eritrea, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia and Djibouti.

**Background:**

Currently, in the Great Lakes region and Horn of Africa there are seven ongoing conflicts. Most of these are intra-State and therefore involve both State and non-State insurgents as well. These conflicts and especially the involvement of non-State forces create conditions conducive to the circulation of illicit SALW (small arms and light weapons).

The Government of Kenya decided to convene the meeting due to the lack of region-wide systematic arrangements for addressing the proliferation of small arms problem. There was also the need for developing a common sub-regional approach ahead of the 2001 UN Conference. The Conference culminated in the Issuance of a document known as the Nairobi Declaration.

**Main points:**

1. Information-sharing and co-operation in ALL issues relating to illicit SALW including, in data collection and research
  - encouraging co-operation between governments and civil society.
2. Elaboration of the concrete and co-ordinated agenda for action for the sub-region. Putting in place adequate laws, regulations and administrative procedures by all States
  - transparency in possession of arms by civilians.
3. Co-operation at the global level
  - involvement of UN, other International Organizations
4. Inter-agency co-operation
  - strengthening of sub-regional co-operation among police, intelligence, customs and border control officials in tackling illicit weapons circulation on small arms.
5. National Mechanisms:
  - establishing or strengthening national mechanisms to deal with the problem and also to implement the Nairobi Declaration.
6. Nairobi Secretariat
  - established as a result of the Nairobi Conference. It serves as a co-ordinating body between the governments of the countries involved.
7. Other Meetings
  - besides the Nairobi Conference, other meetings aimed at achieving the objectives of the Nairobi Initiative have been held in Kampala and Dar-es-Salaam.

**The Plan of Action known as the Co-ordinated Agenda comprises 6 main items:**

i) Institutional framework

This deals mainly with the establishment of national focal points which in turn will oversee the implementation of the Plan of Action at the national level:

- Enhancement of the capacity of law enforcement agencies to enable effective investigations, strengthening border controls and conducting cross-boarder operations.
- East African Police Chiefs Co-ordinating Committee (EAPCCO) formed with the framework and meets regularly.

ii) Regional confederation and co-ordination

This involves initiatives for the peaceful resolution of conflicts in the region,  
— hence reducing demand for and the proliferation of illicit small arms.

— developing a comprehensive strategy to tackle illicit small arms taking into account linkages between weapons circulation and human security, peace, stability and development.

—the role played by sub-regional organizations. e.g. Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IAD), East African Community (EAC).

iii) Legislative measures

The main concern is the harmonization of legislation and regulations governing the possession, import/export, transfer, etc., of light weapons and small arms.

iv) Sensitization of the public

Through education and information programmes targeting all sectors of society, also encouraging involvement and cooperation of all sectors of society in addressing the problem of small arms

v) Control, confiscation and destruction

seeks to strengthen, State accountability of its weapon stocks  
promotion of weapons collections programmes by inter alia, encouraging law enforcement agencies to work closely with communities. Destruction of surplus or seized illicit weapons

vi) Gender element

The Nairobi initiative is still young and therefore needs yet to carve out a reputation for itself. There is thus no discernible gender involvement in it as of yet. However, the potential for a leading role by women in the implementation and further development of the Initiative is high. This is embedded in two parts of the

Declaration:

— Preambular part listing the sources of inspiration of the whole initiative

Appalled by the devastating effects of armed conflicts particularly on women and children

— Operational part of the Plan of Action

Recognizing that the effective implementation of the Declaration requires, *inter alia*, the participation of Civil Society.

— creates opportunities for NGOs and this is a window through which women could play a special role. In Kenya women have been active in various aspects of life — agriculture, education, environment etc.

**Conclusion:**

The Nairobi initiative is still in its infancy — in fact it will be one year in mid-March 2001. It could therefore be too early to draw a concrete assessment in terms of performance/success. Nevertheless the Initiative has made a clear mark in several ways:

— manifestation of the political will of States concerned about how to seriously address an

increasingly thorny problem;

— It has provided a kind of a blue print for tackling the problem of SALW in a very volatile sub-region;

— it has brought to the fore a dangerous issue, which for a long time had been ignored and consigned to the background;

it has provided and Strengthened the capacity to source and utilize assistance from the international community in combating the Illicit trade in SALW.

it will facilitate research and compilation of data which was hitherto non-existent.

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### **Closing Remarks**

**Bruna Nota, International President of WILPF**

First I want to thank all those who worked so hard to organize this seminar, as well as all the speakers and the participants.

We have heard many facts and the speakers have woven a complex web of interrelated causes and conditions favouring small arms proliferation and usage. We have once again seen the consequences of the violence generated by small arms availability placed overwhelmingly on the women of the world. We have been cautioned against harbouring expectations that are too high in the face of these complexities. I would like to invite us to place very high both our expectations and our determination to make a difference. I would like to conclude by pointing to actions we can take to build a culture of peace where conflicts are addressed in a spirit of justice and peace building. We, as women, as citizens, as members of NGOs need to take hold of our power and to be realistically demanding.

These actions need to be taken at the personal and the political levels. At the personal level we need to examine our own life styles. When 80% of world resources have become the essential mainstay of the needs of less than 20% of the world population, a fundamentally skewed situation arises. These circumstances are the fertile ground justification of violent intervention and armaments build-up claimed to be necessary to quell the unrest of populations rebelling against this politic of exclusion. against these injustices, against this despoliation. I would therefore invite each one of us to take a pledge not to commit, condone or remain silent in front of this structural violence and injustice, whether it occurs in our backyard or at the other end of the world. Each one of us can create the nuclei of communities where citizens are effectively inter-dependent. As Jane Addams, Nobel Peace Laureate and possibly the most illustrious of WILPF's founders, said, "The good we secure for ourselves is precarious and uncertain until it is secured for all of us and incorporated into our common life."

The personal is political, and the political is personal. We have become inured to the primacy given to the dictates of economic growth. We forget that it only provides for the high comfort of a small number. To build a culture of peace we need to exert our right and duty as citizens to demand from our governments that they reclaim the primacy of human needs and human rights over economic imperative. Some of the concrete steps to achieve this are:

1. Use the instruments that women have worked so hard to get one of the latest being the Security Council Resolution 1325.
2. Divert funds from military expenses, to invest in health, education, housing, a sane environment which constitute the people's security that alone can provide security for both State and citizens.

3. Undertake integral conversion programmes from military industries and institutions to the provision of civilian-directed goods and services, with special attention to the full integration of the displaced workers.

4. In the immediate, use the IANSA position paper and this Seminar's statement to push our governments to take the necessary action to ensure that the Conference on Disarmament shakes off its present stalemate and becomes an effective instrument for world disarmament. I hope we each will use the information and the sense of purpose we have gathered in this Seminar today to mobilize our action for a peaceful and just world.

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**Joint NGO Statement to the Conference on Disarmament  
Co-ordinated by the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom  
in co-operation with the Working Group on Peace of the  
NGO Committee on the Status of Women**

Distinguished Members of the Conference on Disarmament:

The participants of the 2001 International Women's Day Disarmament Seminar in Geneva appreciate the opportunity to address you once again on International Women's Day. It is one of the few occasions that the concerns and wishes of NGO can be voiced in this unique forum in which concrete measures can, and have been taken to rid the world of specific weapons and advance toward disarmament. However, we must state that we have been deeply disappointed and are disheartened over the fact that opportunities have been missed during these past several years and so little has been achieved during this period.

Mr. President, we urge the Conference on Disarmament and especially the Member States not to allow the deadlock to continue, and in that sense we wish to make the following observations. Mr. President, nowadays the perceived need for armament is not so much related to the conquest of territory but more to the imposition of ideology. Throughout history, there have been nations that have believed themselves to be superior to others and who consequently sought to impose their way of life and their beliefs on others by threat or use of force. They were mistaken. One cannot produce Good by means of threats and brute force. Only persuasion and good example can teach good governance.

Recent developments in the international security environment have brought us back to a crossroads, where we have been so often during the past half-century, deciding whether to take the path of co-operation on which the United Nations is founded, or the path of military confrontation. The fate of the Conference on Disarmament is both an indicator and a significant determining factor as to which will be followed. Knowing that in our present world the path of confrontation can only lead to universal disaster, we urge the CD to address the political difficulties and differences within the relevant negotiations rather than letting them become the destructive means of blocking further progress.

There have been remarkable successes in the field of arms limitation and restraint and a number of them were achieved in this chamber. Many treaties were born from humble beginnings with General Assembly resolutions. One such is the Biological Weapons Convention, which has now reached a crucial stage in its path towards more effective implementation, as we wait to see if dominant countries and pharmaceutical Interests will allow the current verification negotiations to succeed. Let us also note that during this past half century, with only a very few exceptions, arms control treaties have been observed and no State has

with-drawn from a major arms control treaty, whether multilateral or bilateral! This is a significant record of achievement and commitment to restraint and good sense — a record that should be maintained.

What a great contribution this can be to the UN declared Decade of a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World which we have just entered. A culture of peace means a modified value system. Pride in the observance of treaty commitments, pride in withholding vetoes; pride in refraining from power games and concentrating solely on the future welfare of humanity. It is in that spirit that we call upon you to immediately accept and implement the work programme proposal contained in CD document 1624, particularly paragraphs 1,2 and 3. The time has come to put aside interpretations as to what might be discussed under the heading of preparations, before any subsequent negotiations are allowed to begin. Of course, such negotiations should not inhibit or be a substitute for progress in other direct interstate or regional negotiations, but that consideration should apply as the usual practice. Negotiations have to start somewhere. The groundwork must be laid somehow. Those who have followed the work of this multi lateral negotiating body including those watching from the gallery and those who have been kept informed of your work over the years — believe that at least for the first year, the substantial work necessary to prepare the groundwork for treaties would be much the same whether called negotiations or pre-negotiations. The point is to get started. Furthermore, we urge that while pre-negotiations or negotiations on these important issues are taking place, States refrain from pursuing further research and testing of any devices that could undermine the talks.

We urge you and the capitals you represent to turn your thoughts to the distant future when others will occupy the places you hold today.

Because of your endeavours, our descendants will have the chance of life, health and peace. Or not. Your actions should be guided so as to earn their respect.

Concerning the CD's agenda item on a "Comprehensive Programme of Disarmament," we wish to underline the importance we give to the question of small arms. Mr. President, in view of the forthcoming third Preparatory Committee meeting for the UN Conference on the Illicit Trade of Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, we would like to mention that this year's International Women's Day Disarmament Seminar, was entitled "In the Line of Fire: A Gender Perspective on Small Arms Proliferation, Peace Building and Conflict Resolution."

The pattern of violent conflict and arms transfers has significantly changed in recent years. UN studies estimate that around 300 manufacturers in more than 70 countries are producing small arms and light weapons. While a significant number of these weapons end up in the hands of State forces, a large number are found in the hands of irregular armies, communal factions, crime and drug syndicates, as well as individuals.

An overwhelming majority of conflicts have been fought with small arms and light weapons (SALW): Of the forty-nine regional conflicts waged since 1990, SALW have been the weapons of choice in forty-six of them. They kill almost as many people in countries that are not at war: In post-conflict situations interpersonal violence replaces violence between warring factions if weapons remain in circulation, and in many other countries small arms figure preeminently in violent crimes, domestic assault, rape, sexual violence, suicides and accidents - legally or illegally possessed. An estimated 500,000 to 700,000 lives are claimed each year by the use of these weapons. This is an average of 1,700 deaths per day or one person dying every minute.

We recognize that the availability of small arms is not the cause of armed conflict, but their easy and cheap accessibility facilitates the transformation of social and political conflicts into violent ones and contribute to the militarization of society.

Women are particularly affected by the wide availability and use of small arms both in times of war and in times of peace. It is a sad fact that women are increasingly participating as combatants in armed conflicts. However, statistics show that they remain the primary victims in such situations. Women's experience in armed conflicts are markedly different to those of men. Women are strategic targets due to their role as biological, cultural and social reproducers of their societies and are subject to gender-based violence at the hands of power wielded through a hand gun or an AK-47. On the other hand, manufacturers of small arms are increasingly targeting women as potential buyers and users of small arms, capitalizing on their need for safety.

The process of economic globalization, the ongoing systematic impoverishment of countries in the economically poor regions, and the erosion of human security increase the demand for small arms especially in urban communities.

In a momentous decision last year, the UN Security Council recognized the important role of women in the prevention, resolution, and management of conflicts, as well as in peace building, when it adopted resolution 1325. Women are effective actors in peace negotiations and their contributions to achieve positive peace have been recognized on paper. It is imperative that all obstacles to the full participation of women at all levels and in all forums be removed. It seems to us equally imperative that the Conference on Disarmament resume its efforts to speedily achieve a comprehensive programme of disarmament. In conclusion, we wish you every success in moving disarmament forward and thank you for hearing us.

## List of Participants

FIRST NAME	LAST NAME	MISSION/ORGANIZATION	ADDRESS
Nujin	Agnur Gunes	Kurdish Centre for Human Rights	Rue des Savoises 15, CH-1205 Geneva
Ann	Anderson	Ambassador, Permanent Mission of Ireland	Rue de Moillebeau 58, CH-1209 Geneva
Colin	Archer	International Peace Bureau	41 rue de Zurich, CH- 1201 Geneva
Ilka	Bailey- Wiebecke	Femmes Africa Solidarité	8 rue du Vieux-Billard, P.O. Box 5037, CH-1211 Geneva
Edith	Ballantyne	WILPF International	1 rue de Varembe, CP 28, 1211 Geneva 20
Abdul	Basit	Permanent Mission of Pakistan	56 rue de Moillebeau, CH-1211 Geneva 19
Bianca	Bellelli	Interpreter	8 Bvd. des Tranchés, CH-1206 Geneve
Jeta Katro	Beluli	Women in Development Association, Albania	Rr. Bajram Curri, p. 438/3 Sh. 1. Ap.9 Tirana
Regina	Birchem	WILPF US	1213 Race St., Philadelphia, PA 19107-1691, USA
Ruth	Bonner	International Baccalaureate Organization	34 ch. Pont Céard, CH-1290 Versoix
Mies	Brouwer	WILPF Netherlands	F.C. Donderstraat 23, NL-3572 JB Utrecht
Cate	Buchanan	Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue	114 rue de Lausanne, CH-1202 Geneva
Allison	Burden	Oxfam Great Britain	P.O. Box 40680, Nairobi, Kenya
Marina	Caprini	Centre for Democratic Control of Armed Forces	11, Chantepoulet, CH-1211 Geneve 1
Magaly	Consejero	Permanent Mission, Republica Dominicana	63 rue de Lausanne, CH-1202 Geneva
Wendy	Cukier	Independent Analyst	Ryerson University, ITM, 350 Victoria St., Toronto, ON M5B 2K3, Canada
Eugenia	Datebah	International Labor Organization	CH-1211, Geneva 22
Bello	de Kemper	Permanent Mission, Republica Dominicana	63. rue de Lausanne, CH-12-2 Geneva
Wendela	de Vries	WILPF Netherlands	F.C. Donderstraat 23, NL-3572 JB Utrecht
Lies	Deggeller	WILPF Netherlands	F.C. Donderstraat 23, NL-3572 JB Utrecht
Eugenie	Dossa- Quenum	WILPF Benin/France	64 Blvd Lénine, Apt. 36, F-95100 Argenteuil
Florence	During	World YWCA	16 Ancienne Route, CH-1218 Grand Saconnex, Geneva
Lena	Eskeland	ICRC	19 Av. de la Paix, CH-1202 Geneva
Salpy	Eskidjian	World Council of Churches	150 Rte. De Ferney, 1211 Geneve 2
Sarah	Estabrooks	World Council of Churches	150 Rte. De Ferney, 1211 Geneve 2
Anna-Yoja	Faulhaber	WILPF Netherlands	F.C. Donderstraat 23, NL-3572 JB Utrecht
Majilis	Friden	Swedish Peace Council	Hjalmvidsbacke 91, S-136-65 Haninge
Ann	Gertler	Canadian Pugwash Group	482 Strathcona Ave., Westmount Quebec, H3Y 2X1, Canada

Lennox	Gordon	Women for Peace, Geneva	Rte Chatelets Veraz F-01170 Gex
Maren	Haartje	Swiss Peace Foundation	Gerechtigheidsgesse 12, CH-3011 Bern
David	Hayene	International Peace Bureau	41 rue de Zurich, CH-1201 Geneve
Tong	Hyong Park	Permanent Mission of the Republic of Korea	1 Ave. de l'Ariana, CH-1202 Geneva
Tené	Kaduma	WILPF Disarmament/Economic Justice Intern.	1 rue de Varembe, CP 28, 1211 Geneve 20
Martin	Kaplan	Pugwash Conference on Science and World Affairs	7 bis, av. De la Paix, CH-1202 Geneva
Phillipa	King	Permanent Mission of Australia	Passage des Fins 2, CH-1218 Grand-Sconnex
Adele	Kirsten	Gun Free South Africa	PO Box 31532, Braamfontein 2017, South Africa
Alexander	Kmentt	Permanent Mission of Austria	9-11, rue de Varembe, 1211 Geneve 20
Kirsti	Kolthoff	WILPF Sweden	Gullmarsvg 59, S-12039 Arsta
Steffen	Kongstad	Permanent Mission of Norway	Avenue de Budé 35, CH-1202 Geneva
Anouk	Lamarre	Permanent Mission of Canada	5 Avenue de l'Ariana, CH-1202 Geneve
Charlotte	Jaut Hernandez	UN Dept. for Disarm. Affairs and CD Secretariat	Palais des Nations, 1211 Geneva 10
Patricia	Lewis	UNIDIR	Palais des Nations, 1211 Geneva 10
Annie	Lufungula	Amnesty International	107, rue de Geneve CH-1226 Thonex
Antoinette	Mächtlinger	WILPF	Elfenuweg 23, CH-3006 Bern
Nontombe	Makupula	SA Permanent Mission	65 rue du Rhone, 1204 Geneva
Heidi	Maugue-Aebi	Femmes pour la Paix	22 Av du Bouchet, 1209 Geneve
Patrick	McCarthy	The Geneva Forum	Pavillon Rigot, Ave de la Paix 11a, CH-1202 Geneva
Ariana	Molina	International Peace Bureau	41 rue de Zurich, CH-1201 Geneva
Rodrigo	Montaluisa	International Peace Bureau	41 rue de Zurich, CH-1201 Geneva
Matthew	Naumann	QUNO	13 Avenue du Mervelet, 1209 Geneva
Kathryn	Nightingale	World YWCA	16 Ancienne Route, 1218 Grand Saconnex, Geneva
Chilemwa	Nkowane	World YWCA	16 Ancienne Route, 1218 Grand Saconnex, Geneva
Inger	Nordback	Soroptimist International	8 ch. Du Jura, CH-1299 Crans
Bruna	Nota	WILPF Canada	70 Mill St., Suite 901, Toronto, ON, Canada, M5A 4R1
Lisa	Oldring	OHCHR	8-14 Avenue de la Paix, 1211 Geneva
Michael	Oyugi	Permanent Mission of Kenya	1-3 Ave. de la Paix, CH-1202 Geneva
Rosario	Padilla	WILPF Phillipines	129-A Matahimik St. U.P. Village Diliman, 1101 Q.C. Phillipines
Rebecca	Pankhurst	International Peace Bureau	41 rue de Zurich, CH-1201 Geneva
Lohes	Rajeswaran	WILPF International	1 rue de Varembe, CP 28, 1211 Geneva 20
Enrique	Roman-Morey	Deputy Secretary General, Conference on Disarmament	Palais des Nations, CH-1211 Geneva 10

Irena	Sabic	WILPF Human Rights Intern, 2001	1 rue de Varembe, CH-1211 Geneva 20
Enayat	Seraj	Afghan Project for Peace	36 Av. William Favre, CH-1207 Geneva
Bhagwan	Shashani	Independent Consultant for IPB	CH-1431 Vugelles-LaMothe, Vaud, Switzerland
Neeru	Shrestha	INHURED International, Nepal	PO Box 2125, Kathmandu, Nepal
Vladimir	Shvets	Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation	15. Av. de la Paix, CH-1211 Geneva 20
Ian	Soutar	Ambassador of the UK to the CD	37-39 Rue de Vermont, CH-1202 Geneva
Evelyn	Tatu	Interpreter	c/o Beelli, 8 Blvd. des Tranchés, CH-1206 Geneva
Michaela	Told	WILPF International	1 rue de Varembe, CP 28, CH-1211 Geneva 20
Mans	van Zandbergen	WILPF Netherlands	Veermonde 28, NL-3434 GH Nieuwegein
Camilla	Waslink	Small Arms Survey	12 Avenue de Sécheron, CH-1202 Geneva
Beth	Williams	WSP International	Palais de Nations, CH-1211 Geneva 10
Nina	Zebergs	International Peace Bureau	41 rue de Zurich, CH-1201 Geneva

Helena Kekkonen

## A WINDOW INTO THE FUTURE

*I opened the window  
facing the future.  
I looked through the years,  
and saw people passing,  
I saw big bridges,  
built of fortresses, not needed anymore.  
They reached across the seas,  
linked the mountains,  
I saw highways, built of the stones from  
prison walls.  
I saw people,  
white, black, yellow: people of all colours,  
walking together,  
you and I amongst them,  
in our hearts having trust in today,  
and tomorrow — across infinity.  
‘Brothers!’ I called,  
Sister! they answered,  
we talked, and talked,  
as in the same language,  
of things in common.  
Brother, sister, all mothers and children,  
people!  
You can’t live without trusting  
that this is what  
the future must be.*

Razul Rza



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