



# Security Council

Fifty-fourth Year

**4048**<sup>th</sup> Meeting

Friday, 24 September 1999, 9.30 a.m.

New York

*Provisional*

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| <i>President:</i> | Mr. van Aartsen . . . . .                                      | (Netherlands)        |
| <i>Members:</i>   | Argentina . . . . .  | Mr. Di Tella         |
|                   | Bahrain . . . . .  | Mr. Al-Khalifa       |
|                   | Brazil . . . . .   | Mr. Lampreia         |
|                   | Canada . . . . .   | Mr. Axworthy         |
|                   | China . . . . .  | Mr. Wang Guangya     |
|                   | France . . . . .   | Mr. Josselin         |
|                   | Gabon . . . . .  | Mr. Ping             |
|                   | Gambia . . . . .   | Mr. Jobe             |
|                   | Malaysia . . . . .   | Mr. Syed Hamid Albar |
|                   | Namibia . . . . .  | Mr. Andjaba          |
|                   | Russian Federation . . . . .                                   | Mr. Lavrov           |
|                   | Slovenia . . . . .   | Mr. Frlec            |
|                   | United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . . . . . | Mr. Cook             |
|                   | United States of America . . . . .                             | Mrs. Albright        |

## Agenda

Small arms

*The meeting was called to order at 9.55 a.m.*

### **Expression of welcome to Foreign Ministers**

**The President:** I am pleased to acknowledge that, at this meeting of the Security Council, many of my colleagues are present. The presidency and the Netherlands appreciate that very much. The spirit of cooperation demonstrated by all those present here, which has made this very important meeting possible, is greatly appreciated by all of us.

### **Adoption of the agenda**

**The President:** Members of the Security Council will recall that the date and agenda for this meeting of the Security Council were agreed upon by members of the Council in its prior consultations.

*The agenda was adopted.*

### **Small arms**

**The President:** The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Security Council is today holding a ministerial meeting on the question of small arms in the context of the challenges facing the international community in that regard.

I call on the Secretary-General.

**The Secretary-General:** I am pleased to join the Council today in this effort to tackle one of the key challenges in preventing conflict in the next century. Small arms and light weapons are primary tools of violence in many conflicts taking place in the world today.

The proliferation of small arms, ammunition and explosives has also aggravated the violence associated with terrorism and organized crime. Even in societies not beset by civil war, the easy availability of small arms has in many cases contributed to violence and political instability. These, in turn, have damaged development prospects and imperilled human security in every way. Indeed, there is probably no single tool of conflict so widespread, so easily available and so difficult to restrict as small arms.

Not only are they the primary instrument of the murder of civilians, who are increasingly targeted in the civil wars of our era; unlike their victims, small arms survive from conflict to conflict, perpetuating the cycle of violence by their mere presence. Many of these weapons

are even recycled, passed on from area to area, from one conflict to another, by unscrupulous arms merchants, who in many cases take advantage of legal loopholes or exploit inadequate national monitoring and enforcement structures.

In an era in which the world will no longer stand by in silence when gross and systematic violations of human rights are being committed, the United Nations is dedicated to addressing both the supply and the demand aspects of the trade in small arms. From the Balkans to Africa to East Asia, small arms have become the instrument of choice for the killers of our time. We must do our part to deny them the means of murder.

The United Nations has played a leading role in putting the issue of small arms firmly on the international agenda. The report on small arms which I submitted to the General Assembly in 1997 has served as a catalyst for a wider series of initiatives. Last year, I was very pleased to note that the General Assembly decided to convene a conference on all aspects of illicit arms trafficking no later than 2001. The Security Council has also been seized of the small arms issue, initially in the context of the implementation of my report on Africa. Since then, in the context of Angola, as well as those of children and armed conflict and the protection of civilians in armed conflict, the Council has shown wisdom in focusing on the need to reverse the proliferation of small arms if any of these issues is to be successfully resolved.

In my report to the Security Council on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, I stated that controlling the easy availability of small arms is a prerequisite for a successful peace-building process, as it is for conflict prevention. I appealed to the Council to devote greater attention to conflict prevention and to provide effective leadership in this area. In addition, I wish to stress the importance of including in peace agreements and mandates of all United Nations peacekeeping operations specific measures for disarmament and demobilization.

While great challenges still await us, we should take note of a number of positive developments in the struggle against small arms proliferation, and particularly illicit arms trafficking.

In Africa, through an initiative led by Mali, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) declared a moratorium on the production and transfer of small arms, covering 16 countries. The United Nations

Development Programme (UNDP) is assisting ECOWAS in implementing that moratorium.

The Organization of African Unity has also moved forward in deciding to hold a regional conference on small arms in preparation for the international conference on illicit arms trafficking.

In Europe, joint action by the European Union in preventing and combating illicit trafficking in conventional arms is another promising step. More specifically, in Albania, UNDP, in close collaboration with the Department for Disarmament Affairs, has been engaged in "Weapons for Development" project. The success of that pilot project has encouraged the Albanian Government to invite the establishment of similar projects in other parts of the country.

In the Americas, the Organization of American States adopted in November 1997 the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives and Other Related Materials.

The momentum for combating small arms proliferation has also come from civil society, which has been increasingly active on this issue. The establishment early this year of the International Action Network on Small Arms has helped sharpen public focus on small arms, which has helped us gain the public support necessary for success.

The international community must seize the opportunity provided by the international conference in the year 2001 to demonstrate its political will and its commitment to reversing the global proliferation of small arms.

Our larger efforts to promote peace and security, whether through conflict prevention, development, diplomacy or, when necessary, intervention, depend to a great extent on how we tackle the smaller, more specific challenges of limiting the tools of war and violence.

In the struggle against small arms, there is a realistic, achievable goal that can be met through foresight, action and cooperation. With the leadership of the Security Council, and the active efforts of your Governments, I am confident that we can succeed.

**The President:** I thank the Secretary-General for his important statement.

I call on the Minister Delegate for Cooperation and Francophonie of France, Mr. Charles Josselin, to make his statement.

**Mr. Josselin (France)** (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, I wish first of all to thank you for the opportunity that you are giving the Security Council to raise the delicate issue of the accumulation and spread of small arms and light weapons in the world. I also want to commend the Secretary-General for the very interesting statement he has just made.

For some time, the Security Council, in the exercise of its responsibilities for international peace and security, has studied this phenomenon that is closely related to changes in the nature of the conflicts afflicting many countries. More than inter-State conflicts, in which regular armies fight each other, and which still exist today but now constitute only a small proportion of current conflicts, we are now witnessing the proliferation of internal conflicts in which more or less well-structured and well-commanded armed groups confront each other, in which the distinction between combatants and civilians is blurred and in which the actions of guerrillas replace frontal combat. This type of conflict lends itself best to small arms and light weapons, which are adaptable to the terrain and to the kind of action undertaken, and are easy to transport, distribute and conceal. We must note that, paradoxically, for several decades small arms, especially landmines, have taken many more victims, both civilian and military, than so-called arms of mass destruction.

This new challenge requires an approach that is both multifaceted and integrated. There is no single comprehensive solution. We must act in many fields — disarmament, peacekeeping, peace-building, the struggle against large criminal organizations, holding producer and user States responsible — and all this must be done at all levels: global, regional and national.

I would identify several types of action, ranging from the stage of prevention to that of post-conflict peace-building. The first concerns the search for better control of legal transfers of small arms and light weapons, which is linked to the development of international cooperation in the struggle against illicit traffic. First we must ensure strict respect for arms embargoes established by the Security Council, not only to bring pressure to bear on the warring parties, but also to try to stem the flow of weapons that fuels these conflicts.

Secondly, the strengthening of national legislative and regulatory frameworks regarding transfers of small arms and light weapons must be given our full attention. If States assume their responsibilities and their duties in this field, it will be possible to achieve better control of all legal transfers and stricter enforcement of arms embargoes.

Then there is adoption of regional codes of conduct or voluntary moratoriums on these transfers — I have in mind the one recently decided upon by the members of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) — which could induce States to display greater restraint in this field and make this activity somewhat more moral. For its part, in December 1998 the European Union adopted a joint action regarding its contribution to the fight against the destabilizing accumulation and spread of small arms and light weapons. Furthermore, the European Union has adopted a code of conduct on arms exports, which can make the issuance of export authorizations dependent on standards of respect for human rights.

Lastly, the conclusion of the protocol on the manufacture of and illicit traffic in firearms, ammunition and other related material, in addition to the future United Nations convention on combating transnational organized crime, should provide us with an appropriate instrument with which to struggle against a particularly disquieting form of criminality.

But we must do more. The holding by 2001, under the auspices of the United Nations, of an international conference on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects, which Switzerland has proposed to organize in Geneva, will give us that opportunity. France hopes to make an important contribution to that work. We are even now considering the drafting of an international convention with legally binding effect relating to one specific aspect of this question: the marking of small arms and light weapons. This type of provision would make us better able to monitor the production and circulation of small arms, to ensure better security conditions in the management of stockpiles and to trace the channels used in trafficking.

Secondly, the management of post-conflict situations is another side of the struggle against the effects of the destabilizing accumulation and spread of small arms. This, specifically, means a number of things. First, it means collecting weapons that are often kept by combatants and that are spread among a civilian population, neutralizing them and preferably destroying them to prevent them from falling back into the hands of warring factions, as,

unfortunately, we have seen recently. Such programmes must be systematically reflected in peace agreements that put an end to internal conflict and be included in peacekeeping operations mandates.

It means that arms collection activity must be accompanied by the demobilization of ex-combatants and their reintegration into civilian life.

I might add that it is the responsibility of all concerned to ensure that these operations are given adequate human, technical and financial resources. In this respect, voluntary contributions, while they do make it possible to start up an operation quickly, cannot be the sole source of financing. They are, by definition, too uncertain. Furthermore, in many cases, disarmament and demobilization programmes are prepared but cannot be completely carried out because of lack of resources.

In the same connection, we must give particular attention to the plight of child soldiers, who are often the last to lay down their arms and the first to take them up again. We must restore meaning to their lives.

Last year the Security Council adopted resolution 1209 (1998) on illicit arms flows in Africa. Africa, while very vulnerable, is not the only continent concerned. In the Balkans, in South Asia and in South-East Asia we have again recently seen the ravages caused by the spread of small arms in zones of tension and conflict. It is therefore necessary and timely for the Security Council to deal with all aspects of the problem. That is the object of the presidential statement to be made today. My country hopes that this will be a new element to mobilize the international community to action to stem the effects of the accumulation of, and destabilizing traffic in, small arms.

**The President:** I thank the Minister Delegate for Cooperation and Francophonie of France for his kind words addressed to me.

I now call on the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, The Right Honourable Robin Cook.

**Mr. Cook (United Kingdom):** Let me at the outset congratulate the Netherlands on initiating this debate. It is inevitable that this Security Council is often preoccupied with immediate and pressing crises. But if we are to do our job of securing peace throughout the world, we must

also find time to consider some of the underlying causes of conflict. The starting point for our discussion today is that one of the clearest underlying causes of conflict is the plentiful supply of small arms. Ready access to small arms provides the means and the temptation to start conflict, and it fuels the tension and the suspicion which sustain conflict.

The dramatic threat to human life from weapons of mass destruction has prompted great diplomatic effort and grand international conferences to bring them under control. It is a tribute to those efforts that nuclear weapons have never been used for half a century and that chemical weapons have been rarely used.

However, as our French colleague has already noted, over the same period it is the assault rifle that has become the weapon of mass killing. Small arms have both continued to proliferate and to escalate in their use. In the last decade alone, conflicts fought with only small arms have killed over 3 million people, overwhelmingly unarmed civilians. Against that enormous death toll, we really need a different phrase than "small arms". There has been nothing "small" about the misery they have brought to families or the disruption they have brought to societies.

We must all accept our responsibility for this situation. Most of the conflicts have taken place in the developing world, but most of the firearms were made in the industrialized world. We have a common problem, and we need to be partners in finding the solutions.

I believe there are three main areas on which we should focus our work together. We need to impound and destroy the firearms that are out there and out of control. We need to regulate and make more transparent the official trade in firearms. And we must drive out of business the illicit traffic in firearms.

The first of these tasks is to reduce the total volume of firearms in the world today. It is a measure of the problem that none of us round this table know how many firearms there are in circulation. I have asked my officials, and I have been given estimates from 100 million to 500 million weapons in circulation at the present time. There are probably more firearms in the world than there are personal computers. And ready access means they are cheap. Five million dollars will buy approximately 20,000 assault rifles — enough to equip the army of a medium-sized State.

We need to find new, imaginative ways of securing the surrender of some of those firearms. In Albania the

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is showing an imaginative way of doing so by providing roads for communities in return for weapons surrendered. That is a double benefit: more development and less insecurity. We need also to make sure that disarmament and weapons amnesties feature in all peace settlements. We must halt the recycling of firearms from one conflict to another.

But destroying firearms is not going to make any difference if they are simply replaced by fresh supplies. That is why the second task is to reduce the flow of firearms. I warmly welcome regional initiatives, such as the moratorium agreed in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). But the countries that manufacture firearms have an equal responsibility to take the initiative among themselves.

In Europe, we have adopted a code of conduct which requires all member States to inform each other when they have refused the sale of weapons because of concerns that those weapons could be used to violate human rights or to fuel tension. It also requires us to consult among ourselves before any other member takes up that contract which has been refused by any of us. The European Union has since agreed a joint action which commits member States to promote the principle that we do not equip groups outside legitimate government with military arsenals. The ownership of military firepower must be the preserve of legitimate Governments.

If the second task is to regulate the legal trade in firearms, the third and last task must be to halt the illicit trade in firearms. Britain will strongly support the work on a firearms protocol. We should explore the feasibility of an international legal basis for the marking of firearms, so that their origin can be traced, and a comprehensive method of recording data on firearms to make sure that, having traced their origin, we can track their movement. The illicit trade in firearms is just as deadly as the drugs trade and needs an equally vigorous international response.

Finally, rising to the challenge will require concerted action by all involved, from producers to purchasers; from businesses to bureaucrats to border guards. To achieve that cooperation, one element is essential: a clear signal from the international community of our resolve to act and the priority we attach to this problem. Today's debate in this Council provides that signal. That is why I welcome and commend the initiative of the Netherlands presidency, and I give it Britain's full support.

**The President:** I thank the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland for his encouraging words.

I next call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Slovenia, His Excellency Mr. Boris Frlec.

**Mr. Frlec (Slovenia):** I wish to start by congratulating you, Sir, on organizing this timely discussion on the subject of small arms. The issue of small arms and light weapons should be the focus of international attention, since these weapons are most often the primary cause of violence, death, suffering and destruction in armed conflict. Also, as you rightly suggested, this debate should specifically address the problem of the excessive accumulation and availability of these weapons and their grave effects on international and regional security, stability and development. This is a global problem from which no region or society is immune.

The way towards effective management of the issue should be to define the problem clearly and identify possible measures for solution. In this we should rely on the large body of expertise already available. I should like to mention especially the influential report (A/52/298) prepared in 1997 by the United Nations Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms, which has charted much of the way. More recently, in December 1998, the European Union ministers adopted the joint action on small arms and light weapons. Slovenia fully shares the position contained in that declaration. We are willing to be actively engaged in this area, and in this connection we look favourably upon the draft convention, prepared by Canada, on the issue of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. We sincerely hope that by the year 2001 it will be possible to conclude an effective international legally binding instrument on small arms. Slovenia also participates with Canada and others in the initiative on human security, of which the question of small arms is an integral and important part.

I would like at this point to stress some aspects of the problem of small arms which in our view deserve special attention in the ongoing processes in this field.

First, the surplus of small arms and insufficient control over this surplus are usually at the source of the small arms problem. Due attention should be paid to effective stockpile management and disposal of these surplus weapons so as to prevent them from feeding the illicit arms flows. In most cases, such disposal requires financial and technical

assistance. Those countries which have the resources and expertise should therefore be called upon to provide such assistance whenever necessary.

Secondly, small arms play an important part in international arms transfers, both legal and illicit. There seems to be a lack of efficient transparency in this area. These weapons do not fall within the scope of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. In addition, there are wide differences between countries of the world in the effectiveness of their export control regimes. In order to improve this situation, we believe that the Disarmament Commission's Guidelines for International Arms Transfers, adopted in 1996, should be applicable.

Thirdly, recent experience of United Nations peacekeeping shows that large quantities of small arms and light weapons that remain in the affected areas after the conflict represent a serious impediment to post-conflict peace-building and reconstruction. Lessons learned in places like Bosnia and Herzegovina are a clear reminder that disarmament is often one of the most crucial components of post-conflict activities. This has a special meaning for the Security Council, which most often defines the mandates of such activities and should, whenever necessary, pay due attention to disarmament and weapons collection and their disposal and/or destruction.

Another area of direct importance for the Council is the role of small arms and light weapons within the implementation of arms embargoes. At this time there are several arms embargoes in place, imposed by the Council. The Council and its sanctions committees will have to address this issue more thoroughly. In particular, effective monitoring mechanisms should be developed and put in place so as to prevent violations of arms embargoes. Also, the Council should call for greater observance by Member States of their obligations, including reporting on national implementation measures.

Before concluding, I should like to refer to the subject of anti-personnel mines, which, according to the definition by United Nations experts, fall within the category of small arms and light weapons. This subject deserves to be mentioned on this occasion, as it has a very strong humanitarian connotation. I wish to mention specifically the positive experience that we have had with the International Trust Fund for Demining and Mine Victims Assistance, which is based in Slovenia. This Fund is concrete evidence of our Government's commitment to contribute to strengthening peace and

security in south-eastern Europe through mine action programmes, particularly in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Fund has expanded its activities to Kosovo and Croatia. In this way, the Fund can serve as an example of regional and international cooperation for addressing the landmine problem. It could also serve as a model for cooperation in other areas concerning the question of small arms and light weapons, a model of how to assist affected countries with knowledge of local situations, expertise and resources. Mutual action by like-minded countries and non-governmental organizations can ensure broad support for raising donations, and can provide transparency and efficiency of financial management.

Slovenia hopes that today's debate will give further impetus to the ongoing efforts to deal effectively with the challenge of small arms and light weapons, and, for the reasons mentioned before, reiterates its support for the presidential statement to be adopted today.

**The President:** I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Malaysia, His Excellency Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar.

**Mr. Syed Hamid Albar (Malaysia):** Mr. President, may I begin by congratulating you on convening this formal meeting of the Council on the subject of small arms, which is of major concern to the international community. This meeting is indeed most timely, given the enormity of the problem and the conflict situations we are in today.

In many of the regional conflicts and civil wars since the end of the cold war, small arms and light weapons have played a significant role in their prolongation and intensification. Far more people have fallen victim to the use of small arms than any other weapons. What is clear is that long after a conflict has formally ended the stockpiles of small arms continue to pose a threat to public order. This often hampers post-conflict nation-building efforts. The rampant use of small arms has exacted a heavy toll on the lives of innocent civilians caught in the conflict, particularly children, women and the aged.

The accumulation of small arms — whether estimated to be 100 million or 500 million — is indeed of grave concern, and illustrates the gravity of the situation. The proliferation of small arms in the hands of combatants more often than not slows down efforts at peacemaking and peace-building. Clearly, the illicit trade in small arms poses a serious threat to international peace and security. It is therefore incumbent upon the international community to

work towards greater control and management of this highly complex problem.

What is urgently needed is a practical approach to deal with it at the country, regional and global levels. Malaysia believes that addressing the proliferation of small arms and light weapons must be viewed from a holistic perspective of arms control and disarmament, post-conflict peace-building, conflict prevention and socio-economic development. In the context of conflict situations, the problem should be seen comprehensively in the context of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants, a subject which the Council addressed in July this year.

We believe the United Nations, particularly the Council, can and should play a critical role in checking the proliferation of small arms. The United Nations should continue to be a central forum for creating better public awareness and understanding of the direct and indirect consequences of the use of small arms. It should continue to serve as a clearing house for information, to facilitate an exchange of national experiences and to learn from them, as well as to arrive at arrangements and agreements most suited to the specific situations faced by Member States. In this regard, Malaysia welcomes the decision of the Secretary-General to establish the United Nations Coordinating Action on Small Arms (CASA). I trust that this will have the strong support of the international community and the Council.

Malaysia commends the Secretary-General's report on small arms, which constitutes an important contribution to our understanding of the problem. The many recommendations contained therein are innovative and far-reaching, and deserve serious consideration. We find that a number of the recommendations can quite easily be implemented, though others may require further examination. We are grateful to the panel of experts who have contributed ideas which have been incorporated in the report of the Secretary-General.

There are a number of other initiatives being undertaken by various parties to develop viable, practical policy options. We are gratified to note that a number of regional organizations have taken the initiative to control the excessive accumulation and uncontrolled use of small arms. The Organization of American States (OAS), for example, has made a significant contribution to this process with the adoption of the Inter-American Convention against Illicit Manufacturing of and Illegal Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunitions, Explosives and

Other Related Materials. These measures also include the strengthening of border controls, marking of firearms and sharing information on weapons producers, dealers, importers and exporters. The support of the international community is equally important to ensure the success of another regional initiative taken by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) on the moratorium on the sale of light weapons. Another welcome development is the establishment of a European Union code of conduct on arms exports. These commendable regional approaches have paved the way towards greater coordination and cooperation between Member States, and should be emulated by other regions of the world, particularly in areas of existing conflict.

In the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) region we have also begun to look seriously at the issue of small arms, particularly in the context of the ASEAN Regional Forum.

Beyond Governments and intergovernmental arrangements, there is also an important role to be played by non-governmental organizations and other actors in international society. It is encouraging that there is increasing involvement on their part, thereby mobilizing additional resources in dealing with this issue. A number of areas have been identified by non-governmental organizations such as combating the illicit traffic in small arms, tighter control of legal arms transfers and the urgent need for reductions in small arms in war-torn societies — for appropriate action to be taken by their Governments. Such efforts by non-governmental actors are indeed important.

Malaysia supports any initiative by the United Nations, individual countries and non-governmental organizations in dealing with this issue. The challenge before us is to define the problem, which has many complexities — political, legal, technical, economic and social — and formulate appropriate and effective approaches and strategies on how best to deal with it.

A pertinent point which ought to be made in any discussion of the subject is that well over one 100 States Members of the United Nations do not manufacture weapons domestically and have to rely on imports to meet their legitimate needs. It has become abundantly clear that the flow of small arms, particularly to developing countries, is driven not only by the forces of demand but also by those of supply.

Malaysia fully supports the convening of an international conference on illicit trafficking in small arms. We believe that such a conference will afford the opportunity for an in-depth analysis of all aspects of the highly lucrative, illicit arms trade. To ensure a successful outcome, there is of course the need to make adequate preparations, including on the important issue of the scope of the conference. The conference should be focused and action-oriented, and should draw upon the experiences of regional approaches to tackling the problem. Malaysia is of the view that given that the problem of illicit arms trade affects a large number of developing countries, it would be appropriate for the conference to be chaired only by one of those countries.

As much as we support current global efforts to address the issue of small arms, we hope that it does not in any way distract the global community from also addressing the core issue of nuclear disarmament, which is far from being resolved and remains the greatest threat to life on the planet. Whether it does or not, I would nevertheless underscore the importance of keeping an equal focus on the nuclear disarmament issue even as we grapple with the problem of small arms.

**The President:** I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Canada, The Honourable Lloyd Axworthy.

**Mr. Axworthy** (Canada): The proliferation, misuse and excessive accumulation of small arms and light weapons is a direct concern for the Security Council. I would like to thank the Netherlands for taking this initiative today to focus the Council's attention on a very critical issue.

*(spoke in French)*

Last week, the Council studied the report of the Secretary-General on the protection of civilians in armed conflict. That report places human security at the centre of the Council's work. That was Canada's objective last February when it requested that report in the Council.

It is impossible to secure the protection of civilians without controlling small arms. These arms are the main instruments of war today. They are used to kill, mutilate and terrorize people, most of whom are innocent civilians.



*(spoke in English)*

In the past decade alone, 46 of the 49 conflicts that beset the world have been carried out primarily or exclusively through the use of small arms and light weapons; that is close to 90 per cent. The impact on civilians has been devastating. Consider these facts: civilians constitute over 80 per cent of casualties in armed conflict; more than a million people die each year as a result of those conflicts; and 90 per cent of those deaths are caused by small arms. Conservatively speaking, this means that more than 700,000 civilian deaths a year are attributable to small arms.

These are truly arms of mass destruction. Their widespread availability has made it easier to fight, multiplying the human cost in civil and ethnic disputes. Small arms are simple to use and light to carry, lowering the barrier for violence and terror. They make it easy for corrupt Governments and warlords to transform innocent children into chillingly efficient killing machines. They endanger international military, police and humanitarian assistance workers, whose very jobs are to help those victimized by conflict. These arms make economic development impossible. The challenges of controlling them are complex, but come down to a question of supply and demand and, frankly, the political courage to do something about them.

The demand for small arms is fuelled by those whose ambitions perpetrate human misery. They are aided and abetted by the dubious business interests that profit from the market place of conflict. One of the failures of globalization is that it has permitted the creation of a new war economy where, in exchange for diamonds and other natural resources, certain corporations provide warlords with the financial resources they need to operate — money that is funnelled back to yet other dubious businesses that are only too happy to make their profit through the illicit arms trade. Those companies must look beyond narrow short-term interests and start to appreciate the real impact of this trade on the lives of people. In other words, they must become part of the solution.

Some encouraging steps are being taken. Canada and a number of other members of the Wassenaar Arrangement have worked to ensure that Wassenaar members respect the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) moratorium on small arms and light weapons. This is what I mean by responsible behaviour: when a group of countries has the courage to say “no” to small arms, we must have the decency to respect their decision.

We also need to think of new ways to approach the problem of small arms. Small arms are ubiquitous, but they are useless without ammunition. We should consider how we might track, control or mark ammunition as one way of controlling the lethal effect of these weapons. As one expert has told me, sometimes it is too late to stop the supply of the weapons themselves; but if you stop the supply of bullets, you stop the killing.

We should also look at unilateral actions such as destruction of surplus stocks. South Africa did it because it had the foresight to know that it had to destroy these weapons before they could kill.

*(spoke in French)*

A broader and more systematic approach is needed: that is the conclusion of the United Nations Group of Governmental Experts on Small Arms, which proposed a world conference in the year 2001. Canada supports that proposal. In order to be effective, that conference must have the broadest possible mandate and agenda.

*(spoke in English)*

We need to use the conference, and more importantly, the time between now and then, to change our thinking and to change behaviour. Canada is ready to host a preparatory meeting to bring a practical focus to this work, but we cannot wait until 2001 to take action: the need is too urgent and too immediate. Rather, 2001 should be an opportunity to take stock of results and plan the way ahead. But to get those results we need to start action now.

Canada believes we should take a practical approach to this problem. That is why we have supported microdisarmament in Mozambique and El Salvador; disarmament, demobilization and reintegration efforts in Sierra Leone; and elaboration of a firearms protocol within the Economic and Social Council. Even in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), we have called on new members to ensure that their modernization efforts do not result in unwanted flows of arms to other regions, and we have served notice on would-be members that their behaviour in this regard will be factored into enlargement decisions.

The fact is, on small arms, small steps often yield big dividends. Earlier this week, Canada and Norway hosted a meeting of microdisarmament practitioners from Sierra Leone, El Salvador, Mozambique and Albania. The

purpose was to share experiences and identify how Governments and other agents can work to support them. Their experiences were both compelling and encouraging. Above all, they emphasized that in order to be effective, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration need to be well planned and well coordinated within the United Nations system and with others that may be involved. Most importantly, it needs the full support of the parties most directly affected.

More active measures to limit the use of these deadly weapons, to prevent the need for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration in the first place, would be even better. To this end, the Council needs to inform itself about the abuse of small arms and military weapons in its examination of individual conflicts, and to make redressing those abuses the centerpiece of its efforts to restore stability.

Where appropriate, the Council should impose arms embargoes and other sanctions targeting the illicit trades that pay for these weapons. Most importantly, the Council must not merely call for, but rather must ensure full and effective implementation of these measures.

This is the impetus behind Canada's efforts as Chairman of the Angola sanctions Committee — to choke the illegal diamond revenues that fuel UNITA's war effort; to reduce access to the petroleum resources that make it possible to operate their war machine; and, perhaps most importantly, to curtail acquisition of the weapons that makes the continuation of this murderous war possible. If we are successful in curbing the flow of diamonds and other resources, it will help the Security Council to devise models that might apply to other conflicts.

In this context, efforts to control the spread of small arms call for a shift in the way we apply sanctions. Comprehensive sanctions cannot and must not be used as a way of doing peace and security on the cheap. They are a blunt instrument. And as we know, blunt instruments hurt — but not always the ones they are intended to hurt. We need to make sanctions razor-sharp. They should be pointed at the perpetrators of conflict; they are the ones who should suffer, not the innocent people.

Clearly the means are within our grasp to operationalize an agenda for action against small arms. First, the Council can act in the ways I have outlined: on sanctions, peace operation mandates, and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes. Secondly, the General Assembly can reinforce and push the Council to

implement the resolutions it has adopted and to do more. Thirdly, regional organizations can reinforce stability and security with arrangements and conventions on illicit and licit trade and trafficking in these weapons, as our friend from Malaysia has pointed out.

Individual Member States can act to ensure that they have the legal framework in place to control the import and export of small arms and to destroy those weapons that are surpluses to their legitimate needs.

Non-governmental organizations and civil society can work in partnership with Governments to promote implementation of measures designed to enhance individual security by curbing the spread and use of small weapons and working to build societies that see no value in the illegal possession and use of these arms.

*(spoke in French)*

The challenge posed by small arms is considerable. A variety of responses are needed — political, pragmatic, financial, technical and cultural.

*(spoke in English)*

We should pledge here to achieve a global division of labour to fight on all fronts — from the Security Council to individual Governments to the level of community organizations — to address the menace of small arms. If we work together with determination, I believe we just may succeed.

**The President:** I thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Canada for the kind words he addressed to me.

I now call on the representative of the Russian Federation.

**Mr. Lavrov** (Russian Federation) *(spoke in Russian)*: We associate ourselves with the words of welcome that the members of the Security Council have addressed to you, Sir, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, as you preside over this meeting of the Security Council.

The problem of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons has been given in recent years a high priority in various forums ranging from international organizations to regional conferences.

Russia recognizes the relevance of this subject, one with which we are quite familiar, and not just by hearsay. We understand the concern at the fact that the broad proliferation of small arms and light weapons may represent a threat to regional peace and security. Without a solution to the problems of the prevention and restriction of the uncontrolled spread of small arms and light weapons throughout the world, conflict settlement will be impossible. Ensuring the security of people and supporting stable economic development will also be impossible.

At the same time, this problem cannot be resolved in one fell swoop. What is required is painstaking work, well-thought-out measures, and coordinated efforts on the part of various countries and organizations with a view to the long term.

We are convinced that the United Nations must play a leading role in this process. The first steps towards drawing up a global approach to the problem of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and towards harmonizing the efforts of States to establish a mechanism for international cooperation in this area have already been taken. In 1997 and 1999, United Nations experts prepared reports containing specific recommendations in this respect. We hope that the implementation of those recommendations will help to resolve the problems relating to the prevention of the spread of small arms and light weapons by regulating their uncontrolled trafficking. In so doing account must be taken of the viewpoints of both the recipients and of the exporters of small arms and light weapons.

We agree with the approach taken by many Members of the United Nations, whose positions are based on the provisions of Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations on the legitimate right of States to self-defence, which entails the legal acquisition of the necessary weapons.

We are also aware of the position of certain States and non-governmental organizations in favour of restricting and reducing legal supplies of small arms and light weapons and of their international regulation.

In this connection, I should like once again to reaffirm that attention should be focused not on radical ideas but on specific measures to rid crisis regions and the world as whole of illegal flows of small arms and light weapons. Existing problems should be resolved based on their priority status, all the more so since actions undertaken so far by the international community, *inter alia* by the United

Nations, to combat illegal trafficking in small arms and light weapons have clearly been insufficient.

An example of this would be the illegal supply of arms to Kosovo, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and other regions of the Balkans, as well as the continued possession of small arms and light weapons by the population of that region. We are particularly concerned by the recent establishment of the so-called Kosovo protection corps, which is largely based on the structures of the Kosovo Liberation Army, and which has available hundreds of units of weapons. All of this directly contravenes Security Council resolution 1244 (1999). It could delay the Kosovo settlement and threaten the lives of the peaceful inhabitants of the area and of the peacekeepers. The perpetrators of those violations are taking on the enormous responsibility of possibly destabilizing the Balkan region.

On the agenda — and the representative of France has spoken today on this point — is enhancing the effectiveness of the embargo regimes imposed by the Security Council on arms supplies. A “porous” arms embargo can only exacerbate confrontation among the parties to the conflict and undermine the authority of the Security Council and the United Nations.

The effectiveness of the common struggle against illegal trafficking in small arms and light weapons throughout the world also depends to a great extent on a stepping-up of cooperation between the police, customs and licensing organizations of various countries, which so far is only just beginning to develop. Elaborating norms and ensuring supplies of weapons solely to Governments of sovereign States or their officially authorized agents could be important steps in the fight against illicit supplies of weapons.

Russia, as a major producer and exporter of small arms and light weapons, is carrying out a responsible policy in the area of the supply of weapons to the international market; undertaking measures at the national level to tighten control over the export, production and supplies of small arms and light weapons; and intensifying the fight against their illicit proliferation. In our country, laws and acts have entered into force in recent years regulating the internal circulation of weapons, including small arms, and stipulating rules and procedures for their production, transfer, stockpiling as well as their export to foreign States. Deliveries abroad of Russian weapons, including small arms and light weapons, are

implemented through licenses and under strict State control.

We support the involvement of the United Nations in efforts to collect and destroy small arms and light weapons if the States concerned agree and a request is made to the Organization for assistance. We are prepared also to take account of regional initiatives that impose moratoriums or restrictions on the export, import and production of small arms and light weapons, as long as those initiatives are voluntary and non-discriminatory in nature.

Initiatives in this area must be considered and put forward more publicly, with the involvement not only of exporters and importers of small arms and light weapons, but also of neighbouring States. It is hardly possible to describe as very constructive a practice whereby a group of countries puts forward large-scale initiatives on small arms and light weapons, and then automatically suggests that the remaining countries should join, including the leading suppliers and recipients, and this without even holding the necessary consultations. The struggle against the uncontrolled proliferation of small arms and light weapons requires that the entire international community pool its efforts.

We know that it could be objected that the dividing line between the legal and illegal supply of arms is sometimes unclear and hard to establish because small arms and light weapons from the legal sector often end up on the black market. In such cases, we must analyse official supplies, carry out investigations and ensure that an exchange of information takes place so that in that area, too, there are no obstacles to cooperation.

We are not opposed to transparency in principle if it relates to information about national legislation and practices with regard to the regulation of trafficking in small arms, leaks of information or smuggling. However, proposals for an international registry on the transfer of small arms and light weapons would be difficult to implement if only because of the difficulty of verification or reliable monitoring, particularly given the failure to resolve the problem of the international recognition of existing marking systems.

We hope that the forthcoming conference on the problems of the illicit arms trade in the year 2001 will be a major landmark in the task of preventing the proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

**The President:** I call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Argentina, His Excellency Mr. Guido di Tella.

**Mr. Di Tella** (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): For a long time, we have been concerned mainly about weapons of mass destruction. In the past decade, we have made considerable progress in that field. However, that does not mean that we must not also be concerned about small arms. There is an element of irony in this situation: weapons of mass destruction are terrible and have a terrible name; small arms seem inoffensive, yet they conceal a truly enormous problem.

It is our responsibility to mobilize the necessary resources and to adopt appropriate policies to replace the culture of violence with the culture of peace and development. The issue of small arms has gained momentum and today, the question is being discussed in different forums. But we must move from words to action. In our opinion, the problem of small arms has three dimensions. First, there is a humanitarian element; we are concerned about the victims of small arms and the easy access to and use of such weapons by children and adolescents. Secondly, there is an economic dimension, because resources are used for arms acquisition instead of for development. Thirdly, there is a security dimension, because of the global and regional impact of the problem.

Of course, the phenomenon of the proliferation of small arms takes on specific characteristics, depending on the region in question. That is why different measures need to be taken in response to the specific surrounding circumstances. Let us consider the case of the southern cone of America, which includes Argentina. It is not a high-risk zone in that it does not have an excessive accumulation of small arms. But the issue has an impact on public safety because the effect of such weapons on common crime is to cause more of it and make it worse.

Fortunately, the southern cone countries have made a firm commitment to the struggle against the manufacture of and illicit trafficking in small arms. The Inter-American Convention Against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives and Other Related Materials has been supplemented by a declaration by the Presidents of the countries of the Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR), Bolivia and Chile, setting up a joint mechanism for the registration of those who buy and sell such devices.

We have also established a system of information exchange on the basis of the Inter-American Convention and of the Model Regulations to Control the Movements of Firearms, Parts and Components and Ammunition,

adopted by the Inter-American Commission for Drug Abuse Control of the Organization of American States.

I want to thank the Department for Disarmament Affairs for its support for the seminar on the proliferation of small arms, ammunition and explosives, which was held in Buenos Aires last May.

Those are some of the actions that have been taken in our region. We know of other initiatives in Africa and Europe. But such actions are not enough. We must curb the negative impact of the proliferation of small arms on human security, without affecting the right to self-defence recognized in the Charter.

It is clear from a study by the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research that so far there has been no integrated approach in response to the problem of small arms in post-conflict processes. What is lacking is an integrated approach that can assure lasting peace and lay the foundations for development. And it is for that reason that we support the holding of an international conference on the illicit traffic in arms in all its aspects by the year 2001.

We are convinced that in order to promote the establishment and maintenance of peace with the minimum human and economic resources being diverted to arms, we must implement Article 26 of the Charter and establish a system for the regulation of armaments. That responsibility is conferred upon this Council, and we cannot evade it.

**The President:** I call on the Minister for Foreign Relations of Brazil, His Excellency Mr. Luiz Felipe Lampreia.

**Mr. Lampreia (Brazil):** I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for taking the initiative to convene this open debate on small arms. As the Secretary-General pointed out in paragraph 44 of his report (A/54/1) on the work of the Organization,

“These weapons do not cause wars, but they can dramatically increase both their lethality and their duration.”

Furthermore, as I stated before the General Assembly, the “spiralling stockpile of and trade in small arms is closely linked to organized crime and drug-trafficking” (A/54/PV.4).

While proposing measures to deal with this highly complex issue, we must bear in mind the legitimate defence and security needs of States, as provided in Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations. Because of its multiple dimensions — humanitarian, criminal, disarmament and security — this issue calls for an overarching and integrated approach. Its complexity should not, however, deter us. Brazil has taken an active part in the discussions in global and regional forums concerning small arms. We hope that this open debate will help enrich the deliberations of the General Assembly on the issue. Brazil has also taken all necessary measures to ensure full compliance with all arms embargoes imposed by resolutions of this Council.

How can we move forward on this issue internationally? Brazil is convinced that the United Nations is playing a key leadership role in this process. We were active in the Group of Governmental Experts on Small Arms set up by the Secretary-General. We regard this Group as a model clearing house for the diversity of perceptions on the complex issue. The Group took note, for example, of the fact that there is no internationally accepted definition of what is a proportional and integrated approach to security and development.

I reaffirm Brazil’s interest in having the General Assembly agree to convene in 2001 an international conference on the illicit arms trade in all its aspects. That conference would, we believe, provide the ideal setting for the consideration of measures geared towards providing the effective, generally accepted and ongoing implementation of the recommendations of the United Nations Group of Governmental Experts.

At the United Nations Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, Brazil and Canada together proposed the negotiation of a protocol on the illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms, ammunition and other related materials to the forthcoming convention against transnational organized crime. Those negotiations are well advanced.

Together with Norway, Brazil has stimulated the debate on the question of marking light weapons, which is of vital importance in tracing their origin. Furthermore, it is essential that global initiatives be accompanied by regional initiatives. The pioneering Inter-American Convention Against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives and Other Related Materials, of which Brazil was a sponsor,

may prove to be a useful experience to be considered by other regions.

As a region free of international conflicts, South America traditionally boasts low levels of military expenditure. For us, the issue of small arms is of concern mainly in connection with criminal activities. In other regions, in contrast, the question of controlling the proliferation of small arms is of direct concern to post-conflict peace-building, as recognized by the guidelines recently adopted by the United Nations Disarmament Commission. Clearly, the emphasis varies from region to region and these different concerns must be catered to. It is therefore only by skilfully amalgamating the different, but complementary, regional perspectives that an overarching and commonly acceptable vision will be forged at the conference in the year 2001.

It is commendable that civil society and public opinion on an international scale have rallied behind the achievements of Governments in this area. Non-governmental organizations have played a crucial role in alerting us to the fact that the dissemination of small arms is not exclusively demand-led but, perversely, is equally fed by suppliers. We share that analysis.

We believe that the Security Council can play an important role in this matter, when its work is combined with progress achieved in other forums, first because, as in no other body of the United Nations system, in our daily dealings with conflict situations we come into constant contact with the tragic consequences of the unrestricted spread of small arms, and secondly, because strengthening arms-trade embargoes, as recommended by the Group of Governmental Experts, could have a tangible effect in minimizing the consequences of arms flows.

The presidential statement we are about to issue is an objective and clear reflection of our responsibility to put the Council's political weight behind these praiseworthy aspirations of world public opinion. It is an additional element in the international community's efforts to eliminate the destabilizing proliferation of small arms. The presidential statement should therefore be seen as a sign of the Security Council's willingness to join other multilateral forums in dealing with this pressing issue.

**The President:** I call next on the Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs of China, His Excellency Mr. Wang Guangya.

**Mr. Wang Guangya (China)** (*spoke in Chinese*): Allow me at the outset to convey our appreciation to the Foreign Minister of the Netherlands, His Excellency Mr. Jozias van Aartsen, for personally presiding over today's Security Council debate on small arms. We would also like to thank the Permanent Mission of the Netherlands for its efforts in arranging this meeting.

In recent years, excessive accumulation of and illegal trafficking in small arms have intensified conflicts in some regions and have caused many civilian casualties. The international community, including the United Nations, has taken various measures with a view to reducing and ultimately eliminating the negative impact of small arms. Towards that end, the Department for Disarmament Affairs created the Coordinating Action on Small Arms mechanism.

At the end of July, at its third session, the Group of Governmental Experts on Small Arms adopted a report (A/54/258) summarizing the progress the international community has made in recent years in dealing with the issue of small arms. The report draws a reasonably objective picture of the present state of affairs, and contains a number of new recommendations. We believe that the report will be helpful in preparations for the international conference on the illicit arms trade, to be held in 2001. We hope that all parties will give due attention to those recommendations.

The Chinese delegation endorses the efforts of the international community to solve the problems caused by small arms, and stands ready to be actively involved in those efforts. In this connection, I would like to take this opportunity to make the following observations.

First, we agree that the Security Council should pay due attention to the issue of small arms. But at the same time, we are of the view that the Council should concentrate its efforts on issues of international peace and security. The issue of small arms should be handled mainly by the Department for Disarmament Affairs, the First Committee of the General Assembly and other competent United Nations bodies.

Secondly, in its endeavours to solve the problems caused by small arms, the international community should fully respect the sovereignty of the countries concerned and should refrain from interfering in the internal affairs of countries in conflict regions, so as to avoid further complications.

Thirdly, while efforts are being intensified to eliminate the adverse impact of small arms, due consideration should be given to the legitimate self-defence and security needs of countries and to guaranteeing their right legally to possess, manufacture and transfer small arms.

Fourthly, in its peacekeeping and post-conflict peace-building process, the United Nations should act strictly within its mandate concerning the confiscation and disposal of weapons, and should respect and comply with arrangements and agreements reached voluntarily among the parties concerned.

And fifthly, the issue of small arms involves many complex causes and diverse factors. It is imperative to address both the root causes and the symptoms of the problem and to analyse issues on a case-by-case basis. The efforts and experiences of some may be of help to others, but they should not be applied mechanically.

We hope that this Security Council debate and the presidential statement that will be issued on small arms will give impetus to the efforts of the international community to solve the problem of small arms through global and regional cooperation.

China exercises strict control over the manufacture and export of small arms. The Chinese Government promulgated laws on gun control in 1996 and on the management of exports of military material in 1998. China has made outstanding achievements in cracking down on the illegal manufacture and smuggling of guns. We are willing to join international efforts to solve the problem of small arms at an early date.

**The President:** I thank the Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs of China for the kind words he addressed to the Permanent Mission of the Netherlands.

I call next on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bahrain, His Excellency Shaikh Mohammed Bin Mubarak Al-Khalifa.

**Shaikh Al-Khalifa** (Bahrain) (*spoke in Arabic*): It gives me great pleasure, Sir, to express to you our great appreciation for your country's initiative and for your own efforts in convening this Security Council debate on the question of small arms, which is a source of concern for the international community.

The international community has for some time understood the danger posed by the proliferation of these

weapons and their role in fueling ethnic conflicts. They have been used by transnational organized criminal groups and fanatic terrorist elements. Many parts of the world are now embroiled in violence and turmoil, which has a negative effect on their economic and social development programmes and on national and individual safety and security.

The many conflicts raging today in Africa and elsewhere are the clearest testimony to the threat posed by the use of these weapons, which are readily available to groups involved in armed conflicts. Moreover, the human suffering caused by such conflicts — including the death and injury of a vast number of innocent people, mainly children, women and the elderly, and the displacement of thousands — now haunts the conscience of the international community. This should make us take immediate action to check the flow of these weapons and to combat illicit trafficking in them.

These weapons are not merely dangerous. They also obstruct the provision of humanitarian assistance to civilian refugees and displaced persons in areas of conflict.

In keeping with Bahrain's firm commitment to the maintenance of world security and stability and to putting an end to all conflicts, my country supported the resolutions on small arms adopted by the General Assembly at its fifty-third session.

Bahrain again advocates the development of specific regulations to govern the flow of small arms. We therefore support all international efforts to contain and prevent the illicit traffic in such weapons in the context of preparations for the international conference to be held in 2001. Of particular importance here are the efforts that will be made in the light of the outcome of that conference and of the report of the panel of Governmental Experts on small arms to be submitted to the General Assembly at its current session. The report will contain a number of ideas and recommendations that should contribute to successful preparations for the conference.

It behooves our Council, concerned as it is with the maintenance of international peace and security, to call upon the parties involved in the trade in such arms to heed the appeals of all peace-loving nations; also, it must call upon regional and international organizations to take measures to ensure that the flow of such arms to conflict zones and to those involved in such conflicts is halted. The Council is duty bound also to affirm its stand against

the illicit traffic in such arms and against terrorism and transnational organized crime. It is further bound to prevent the supplies of weapons and funds from reaching terrorists and fanatics. We must restrict their actions by tightening immigration and residence laws, depriving them of safe havens and freedom of action. It augurs well for this important matter that the Security Council has included it in its agenda, which has a direct bearing on peace and stability in many regions of the world. We hope that this meeting will be a good beginning and will lead to agreement between all States Members of the United Nations on a definitive, unanimous position to eliminate the risks and painful consequences of the misuse of small arms.

In the light of its interest in this matter, the State of Bahrain will endorse the statement by the President which the Council will issue today.

**The President:** I call on the representative of Namibia.

**Mr. Andjaba** (Namibia): I wish to begin by expressing my delegation's heartfelt appreciation to you, Mr. President, for the initiative you have taken to organize this very important debate on small arms. This underscores the importance your country attaches to small arms and light weapons as instruments that whet the appetites of belligerents to continue to seek solutions to political and economic problems by military means.

Namibia, like many other countries emerging from war, was awash with large numbers of small arms. Those numbers have now been reduced significantly, but given Namibia's geographical location, illicit trafficking continues to this day.

Namibia holds the view that the uncontrolled availability of small arms and light weapons encourages the outbreak or continuation of hostilities which have the capacity to ruin treasuries, destroy life and property and cause panic.

Weapons force people to live in an atmosphere of increasing insecurity where differences become more polarized and where peace is at best fragile and at worst illusory. This distressing state of affairs is attributable largely to the impunity with which weapons manufacturers and arms exporters transfer small arms and light weapons to corrupt, unscrupulous and undemocratic regimes with track records of human rights violations and to rebel groups and anti-national elements which use these weapons to

subject populations to brutal savagery for their own selfish ends.

The merchants of war, on the other hand, motivated by the fortunes they make from arms sales, feel no urgency to curb arms transfers nor are they concerned with the devastating consequences those arms have on developing countries, especially in sub-Saharan Africa. Arms transfers and trafficking, and the resulting armed conflicts which they feed, are having a devastating impact on social, political and economic life for Africa south of the Sahara, a region endowed with natural resources but which still has pockets in which live the poorest people in the world today.

It is therefore imperative that the international community should seek to address effectively the culture of impunity related to arms trafficking. Many tend to believe that it is the duty of African leaders alone to constrain the availability and flow of arms in and into the region. Against this backdrop, we believe that the effort to rid Africa of its superfluous small arms is a shared responsibility for the region's leaders and for the international community as a whole.

Uncontrolled transfers of small arms, especially to irregular forces, for cash, diamonds or other commodities weaken or facilitate the collapse of States and result in anarchy. Naturally, non-State parties to the conflicts have a capacity for unusual cruelty and serious violations of international humanitarian and human rights law. Such violations are always the order of the day in areas where the illicit supply of small arms and light weapons flourishes.

Acquisition of weapons is always accompanied by the diversion of scarce resources away from social services. It discourages foreign investment and tourism. It contributes to unemployment and its attendant problems of organized crime, poverty, ignorance and lawlessness.

We would not be true to our consciences if we confined ourselves to tackling the illicit traffic in small arms: we need to include also arms transferred licitly to irresponsible regimes by those who know full well that they will be distributed among ethnic groups that are bent on committing inhuman activities such as ethnic cleansing. My delegation encourages the Governments of arms exporting countries as well as those of receiving countries to exercise a substantial degree of responsibility in such transactions.



**The President:** I thank the representative of Namibia for his kind words addressed to me.

I call on the Minister of State, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and Francophonie of Gabon, His Excellency Mr. Jean Ping.

**Mr. Ping** (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): Like preceding speakers, I thank you for your delegation's welcome initiative to include the item which brings us here today in the Council's agenda: the problem of the massive illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons.

Today, the illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons is a real threat to international peace and security. The Secretary-General has quite rightly focused the international community's awareness on this phenomenon and the dangers it represents to the stability of developing countries, particularly in Africa.

The information we have been receiving from the United Nations and from other intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations shows that this is the type of weapon most often used in the many conflicts that various parts of the world are currently experiencing.

The use of weapons seems to be motivated by how easy they are to use and how cheap they are. In addition, they are easy to conceal and therefore elude the notice of the customs and security services responsible for controlling our various borders.

When we think of the incalculable number of civilian victims that these weapons claim — including women, children and the elderly — we realize the urgency of adopting or strengthening measures, on the national, regional and international levels, enabling us to regulate the proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

It is clear that without close cooperation between the countries that produce these weapons and those that buy and use them, all the efforts that our respective Governments and the United Nations are making to stem the illicit traffic in this category of weapons will not produce the desired results.

Governments in most African regions have taken measures to combat illicit transfers of weapons of all sorts. Following the United Nations example, they have created a subregional register to ensure transparency in terms of the weapons they have available for legitimate defence purposes in accordance with Article 51 of the Charter of

the United Nations. Others, such as the States members of the Economic Community of West African States, have adopted moratoriums on small arms and light weapons.

As one can see, Africa is determined to make its contribution to combating illicit traffickers in small arms and light weapons. It expects that the rest of the international community will show the same determination.

For its part, the Security Council must see to the full implementation of its resolution 1209 (1998) of 19 November 1998. Amongst other things, the resolution urges Member States with relevant expertise to cooperate with African States to strengthen their capacity to combat illicit arms flows, including through the tracking and interdiction of illicit arms transfers; requests the Secretary-General to consider practical ways to work with African States in implementing national, regional or subregional programmes for voluntary weapons collection, disposal and destruction, including the possibility of the establishment of a fund to support such programmes; and encourages the Secretary-General to promote cooperation among Member States, the United Nations, regional and subregional organizations and other relevant organizations to collect, review and share information on combating illicit arms flows, especially regarding small arms, and to make available, as appropriate, information about the nature and general scope of the international illicit arms trade with and in Africa.

I should like to associate myself with those delegations that have never ceased to suggest that specific provisions should be included in the mandates of United Nations peacekeeping and peace-building operations regarding not only the disarmament of former combatants but also the collection and destruction of their weapons, and control over the illicit traffic in arms.

I should like to appeal to all the States Members of our world organization to take part en masse in both the preparatory work for the conference, and in the conference itself on all aspects of the illicit traffic in arms which the General Assembly has decided to convene in 2001 at the latest.

**The President:** I thank the Minister of State, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and Francophonie for the kind words he addressed to the delegation of the Netherlands.

The next speaker is the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of the Gambia, His Excellency Dr. Momodou Lamin Sadat Jobe.

**Mr. Jobe** (Gambia): Let me at the outset express my delegation's appreciation to the delegation of the Netherlands for organizing this important debate on small arms. The holding of this debate during the Netherlands presidency of the Council reflects the importance the Government of the friendly Kingdom of the Netherlands attaches to the subject. We congratulate you, Sir, for convening this meeting.

The widespread availability of small arms is a major cause of concern for my delegation. Small arms and light weapons have a serious destabilizing effect on societies. In the African continent, which presently is replete with conflicts, the availability of small arms and light weapons exacerbates and fuels conflict. In societies where there are social problems, poverty and crime the availability of small arms contributes to those problems through their negative impact in terms of their psychological, physical and social consequences.

The problem of small arms and light weapons poses complex challenges which cut across all levels of society and relate not only to inter-State or intra-State conflicts but also include banditry and crime. For societies that are experiencing conflict or are emerging from conflict situations, the availability of small arms and light weapons poses an even bigger challenge.

We believe the cold war is over. The supply of arms as a conflict-management device is no longer acceptable. My delegation recognizes the close linkage between the proliferation of small arms and international peace and security. We recognize also the interrelationship between international peace and security, and sustainable development. We in Africa need sustainable development: we therefore need peace and security, and hence less proliferation of the millions of small arms in which our continent is awash.

The challenges posed by the problem of the proliferation of small arms cannot be addressed by individual Governments alone, least of all those of countries in regions of conflict. The problem of proliferation transcends national and regional levels and must therefore be tackled through international and global cooperation.

This is not to suggest that local efforts are not necessary: of course they are. In our view, local efforts are

central to curbing the problem. Such efforts may include buy-back programmes; collection and disposal; and effective disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants in societies emerging out of conflict. Recently, a ceremony of that nature took place in Liberia, at which more than 20,000 small arms were incinerated. I hope that this practice continues and, in addition, that it is monitored, so that the results can prove permanent.

Because of the magnitude of the problem, an international process — or processes — is necessary to reinforce local, national or regional processes. It is necessary that international norms should be developed to address the problem. We in West Africa, aware of the problem that the proliferation of small arms has presented for our subregion, have adopted — at the conference of the heads of State and Government of the Economic Community of West African States held in Abuja, on 30 October 1998 — a moratorium on the production of and trade in small arms.

Since the end of the cold war, there has been remarkable progress towards the development of a comprehensive global framework for action against small-arms proliferation. I crave members' indulgence to mention a few.

At the United Nations level, the General Assembly has adopted resolutions which focus on the potential destabilizing effects of arms accumulation and transfers, their possible impact on socio-economic development and illicit trafficking thereof. The "Supplement to an Agenda for Peace" also makes a case for microdisarmament. The United Nations Group of Governmental Experts on Small Arms also contributed significantly to the efforts of the General Assembly.

It is also noteworthy to highlight that a range of United Nations and other global bodies have been developing programmes to tackle this issue. The Economic and Social Council — through the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice — the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Bank and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) are all engaged in this issue in one way or another.

At the regional level, the ECOWAS Moratorium is a good example. Other regional organizations, such as the European Union — through its Programme for Preventing and Combating Illicit Trafficking in Conventional Arms and the European Union Code of Conduct on Arms Exports — and the Organization of American

States (OAS) — through its Inter-American Convention Against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials — are finding ways to tackle the problem.

My delegation welcomes these initiatives. It is our view that any international effort designed to address the twin problems of illicit transfers and excessive accumulation should be encouraged. However, a coherent and coordinated approach is needed to address the problem. As such, we welcome the initiative of the Secretary-General for coordinated action on small arms, which is designed to ensure a coherent and coordinated approach to the small-arms issue within the United Nations system.

We welcome the high priority accorded to the role of the United Nations in promoting better understanding of the direct and indirect consequences of the proliferation of small arms. It is our hope that, ultimately, international consensus will emerge for global action.

In order to effectively address the problem of the proliferation of small arms, measures for the promotion of social, economic and political conditions that provide safety for individuals and societies are indispensable. Coupled with such measures should be well-defined policies designed to improve domestic regulation, controls for production and transfers, measures to address illicit trade and measures to ensure removal of weapons from post-conflict situations.

In this context, the Security Council has a special role to play in conflict and post-conflict situations. The Security Council could, in such situations, address the issues of proliferation in its interventions. Arms embargoes could also play a central role in helping to reduce proliferation. However, many such embargoes of the Council are more honoured in their breach than in their observance. The Security Council should therefore make constructive efforts to ensure the effectiveness of such embargoes. The leadership role of Canada on efforts to render more effective the sanctions against UNITA is therefore commendable and worthy of emulation.

One might argue rightly that all States have the right and responsibility to acquire arms for their defence needs. In the case of Africa, however, I might hasten to support the view of the Secretary-General in his report on Africa that our compelling development interests require that a minimum of our resources be diverted for military purposes. African States can help to diminish the large military expenditures by implementing transparency and

confidence-building measures in the military and security fields. We therefore support the proposal for African States to participate in the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and also welcome the recommendation for the establishment of regional registers.

We must, however, acknowledge that the responsibility in the case of Africa is two-pronged. While African States must get their priorities right, arms manufacturing countries, too, must exercise restraint in supplying arms to African States, particularly in regions of conflict.

In conclusion, while the efforts of the Council to lend its voice to the efforts to halt the excessive accumulation of and traffic in small arms is laudable, we wish to caution that the underlying sociological, economic and political causes of conflict must be addressed so as to create conditions of stability and thus reduce the need for arms and, consequently, for conflict.

In this context, we welcome the momentum generated by the Secretary-General's report on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa. It is our hope that the momentum generated by this report will not be lost and that recommendations contained therein will be implemented. We believe that it is in this spirit of solidarity that you, Sir, have decided to highlight this issue during your country's presidency, at this historic moment when the General Assembly is holding its last session of this millennium. History will positively judge the pertinence of the move undertaken by your country, the Netherlands, as you have always worked in this field in past decades to create an asylum for humanity against the cruelties and the pains that are created by man's own invention against the human race.

**The President:** I thank the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of the Gambia for his kind words addressed to the Netherlands.

I now call on the Secretary of State of the United States of America, Her Excellency Mrs. Madeleine Korbel Albright.

**Mrs. Albright** (United States of America): I want to begin, as others have, by thanking you, Sir, especially and your Government for taking this very important initiative. The United States looks forward to working with the

Netherlands and all those represented here today to combat the traffic in small arms.

Over the past year, I have raised these issues in meetings and speeches and through a report on the arms trade issued by the Department of State this summer. I am optimistic that support for strong action is growing worldwide and I will carry that message with me from our meeting today, beginning next month when I will be raising these issues as part of a trip to Africa.

Although prices are low, the social cost of arms sales is high. Countries that are among the world's poorest spend hundreds of millions of dollars buying small arms and other weapons. Funds are diverted, crops are mortgaged and relief supplies are stolen to finance these purchases. In each case, it is the people who are the losers.

The international community must develop an integrated, comprehensive response in countries of origin and countries of conflict, among buyers, sellers and brokers, and with Governments as well as international and non-governmental organizations.

In today's presidential statement, we commit ourselves to strengthening our coordination, promoting disarmament in peacekeeping operations and improving the enforcement of small arms embargoes. The United States strongly supports these steps. Let me mention several other initiatives that we are taking or that we hope to undertake in concert with others.

The United States will refrain from selling arms to regions of conflict not already covered by arms embargoes. We encourage other nations to establish and observe such moratoriums. We have passed laws making it illegal for traffickers subject to American law to broker illicit deals anywhere. We ask others to crack down on brokering as well. We are working with the European Union to develop principles of restraint and a joint action plan. We are supporting the efforts of the Kampala-based United Nations African Institute for the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders and the Organization of American States, and planning to assist the West African small arms Moratorium.

We welcome the important precedent which the United Nations has set by undertaking the destruction of more than 18,000 weapons, and millions of rounds of ammunition, left over from the Liberian civil war. The United States is participating in this effort and we are committed to working towards destroying such stocks of weapons worldwide.

Finally, we should all commit to finishing negotiations on a firearms protocol to the United Nations convention against transnational organized crime by the end of 2000.

Let me also propose that it is time to attack the economy of war that supports illicit arms flows. In many instances, these transactions are fuelled by sales of gemstones, precious metals and narcotics. Too often, the profits fund violence and mayhem, as in Sierra Leone, where illicit diamond profits allowed the RUF to transform itself from a band of 400 to a marauding army of thousands.

Ambassador Fowler of Canada, as the Chair of the Security Council's sanctions committee on Angola, is working aggressively on the underground economy which fuels that country's civil war. His efforts provide important lessons for other zones of conflict.

The United States accounts for 65 per cent of the world's gemstone market, and we recognize that we must do our part to end illicit transactions. We hope to work here at the United Nations with other nations, and industry, to strengthen certification regimes worldwide. We want particularly to work with the diamond-producing countries to make sure that their interests in strong, stable markets are protected.

No solution to this problem, or to the broad challenge posed by illicit arms sales worldwide, will be complete or materialize overnight. But Governments have a responsibility to keep arms transactions transparent and make those involved accountable. If we do, we can tighten control of borders, make it harder to move arms around and drive illegitimate traffickers out of business.

Again, Mr. President, let me thank you for your personal leadership and that of your Government in this effort.

**The President:** I thank the Secretary of State of the United States of America for her important statement and for her kind words addressed to the Netherlands and to me.

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands.

I have listened with great interest to the views expressed this morning. I will not attempt to summarize or analyse all the points that have been made. It seems

we all agree that small arms pose challenges which the Security Council, in view of its mandate, has to address. I believe the principle that should guide us in our efforts to tackle the small arms issue in essence boils down to one notion: coherence.

We need a coherent approach in addressing the issue of small arms proliferation, taking into account all aspects of this highly complex issue. Coherence is called for in our search for practical ways and means to curb the wrongful use of small arms. And coherence should apply to the efforts of the international community — individual countries, regional organizations and civil society alike.

Efforts are made around the globe to address this issue affecting so many civilians. Allow me to pick up on a point made by the Secretary-General in drawing members' attention to the valuable contribution of civil society, in particular IANSA, the International Action Network on Small Arms. I personally believe that this Council, too, could have benefited from its input, its broad expertise and its forward-looking views. But, in any case, let us see to it that the voice of civil society is heard in the preparations for the small arms conference in 2001.

Let me assure the Council that we in the Netherlands stand ready to give further impetus to this highly important process. Knowing that this readiness is shared by many countries, I would like to suggest that, when the time is ripe, we will offer our services. A group of Friends of the conference could considerably alleviate the preparatory work in the run-up to the conference.

In this process, the Security Council has its own distinctive role to play, a role that should not be confined to verbal support alone. Allow me to share with members some thoughts on three areas in which the Council can offer added value.

The first area is voluntary moratoriums on arms exports to tension zones and conflict regions. The Security Council can play an important role in alerting Member States to the detrimental consequences of continued arms flows to zones of tension and regions in conflict. The Council should encourage Member States to refrain from these potentially harmful exports.

The second area is that of full implementation of Security Council arms embargoes. The Council could consider looking into ways to enhance the effectiveness of present arms embargoes — for example, by reviewing the functioning of all existing sanctions committees.

The third area is the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants. Former combatants and surplus arms are a dangerous, sometimes even deadly, combination. The Security Council should, whenever possible, incorporate adequate measures in United Nations peacekeeping mandates to prevent small arms from causing additional pain and suffering after a conflict has ended. Small arms pose big challenges to all of us, not least of all to the Security Council.

I thank all members for being here today and for taking up this challenge.

I now resume my function as President of the Council.

Following consultations among members of the Security Council, I have been authorized to make the following statement on behalf of the Council:

“The Security Council recalls its primary responsibility under the Charter of the United Nations for the maintenance of international peace and security, in view of which its attention is drawn inevitably to small arms and light weapons as the most frequently used weapons in the majority of recent armed conflicts.

“The Security Council notes with grave concern that the destabilizing accumulation of small arms has contributed to the intensity and duration of armed conflicts. The Council also notes that the easy availability of small arms can be a contributing factor to undermining peace agreements, complicating peace-building efforts and impeding political, economic and social development. In this regard, the Council acknowledges that the challenge posed by small arms is multifaceted and involves security, humanitarian and development dimensions.

“The Security Council is deeply concerned that countries involved in, emerging from, or close to protracted armed conflicts are particularly vulnerable to violence resulting from the indiscriminate use of small arms in armed conflict. In this regard, the Council recalls the report of the Secretary-General on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict of 8 September (S/1999/957) and its resolution 1265 (1999) of 17 September 1999.

“The Security Council emphasizes that the right of individual and collective self-defence recognized

in Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations and the legitimate security demands of all countries should be fully taken into account. The Council recognizes that small arms are traded globally for legitimate security and commercial considerations. Bearing in mind the considerable volume of this trade, the Council underlines the vital importance of effective national regulations and controls on small arms transfers. The Council also encourages the Governments of arms-exporting countries to exercise the highest degree of responsibility in these transactions.

“The Security Council emphasizes that the prevention of illicit trafficking is of immediate concern in the global search for ways and means to curb the wrongful use of small arms, including their use by terrorists.

“The Security Council welcomes the various initiatives that are currently under way, globally and regionally, to address the issue. These initiatives at the regional level include the Economic Community of West African States moratorium on the production and trade in small arms, the Inter-American Convention Against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives and Other Related Materials, the European Union Joint Action on Small Arms and the European Union Code of Conduct on Arms Exports. At the global level, the Council welcomes the negotiation process on the elaboration of an international convention against transnational organized crime, including a draft protocol against the illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms, ammunition and other related materials.

“The Security Council emphasizes the importance of regional cooperation in tackling the issue of illicit trafficking in small arms. Initiatives, such as the work done by the Southern African Development Community and the Southern African Regional Police Commissioners Coordinating Organization, illustrate how regional cooperation can be harnessed to tackle small arms proliferation. The Council recognizes that while regions may sometimes benefit from the experiences of others, one region’s experience cannot be extended to others without taking into account their different characteristics.

“The Security Council also welcomes and encourages efforts to prevent and combat the excessive and destabilizing accumulation of and illicit

trafficking in small arms and invites Member States to involve civil society in these efforts.

“The Security Council notes with satisfaction the growing attention paid within the United Nations system to the problems associated with the destabilizing accumulation of small arms. The Council welcomes the initiative by the Secretary-General for Coordinating Action on Small Arms (CASA), designed to ensure a coherent and coordinated approach to the small arms issue within the United Nations system.

“The Security Council notes that although the humanitarian impact of small arms in a conflict situation is verifiably serious, a detailed analysis is not available. The Council therefore requests the Secretary-General to specifically include the humanitarian and socio-economic implications of the excessive and destabilizing accumulation and transfer of small arms and light weapons, including their illicit production and trade, in the relevant studies he is currently undertaking.

“The Security Council calls for effective implementation of arms embargoes, imposed by the Council in its relevant resolutions. The Council encourages Member States to provide the Sanctions Committees with available information on alleged violations of arms embargoes and recommends that the Chairmen of the Sanctions Committees invite relevant persons from organs, organizations and Committees of the United Nations system, as well as other intergovernmental and regional organizations and other parties concerned, to provide information on issues relating to the implementation and enforcement of arms embargoes.

“The Security Council also calls for measures to discourage arms flows to countries or regions engaged in or emerging from armed conflicts. The Council encourages Member States to establish and abide by voluntary national or regional moratoria on arms transfers with a view to facilitating the process of reconciliation in these countries or regions. The Council recalls the precedents for such moratoria and the international support extended for their implementation.

“The Security Council recognizes the importance of incorporating, as appropriate, within specific peace agreements, with the consent of the

parties, and on a case-by-case basis within United Nations peacekeeping mandates, clear terms for the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants, including the safe and timely disposal of arms and ammunition. The Council requests the Secretary-General to provide the negotiators of peace accords with a record of best practice based upon experience in the field.

“The Security Council requests the Secretary-General to develop a reference manual for use in the field on ecologically safe methods of weapons

destruction in order better to enable Member States to ensure the disposal of weapons voluntarily surrendered by civilians or retrieved from former combatants. The Council invites Member States to facilitate the preparation of such a manual.

“The Security Council welcomes the recommendations of the Group of Governmental Experts on Small Arms (A/54/258), including the convening of an international conference on the illicit arms trade in all its aspects no later than 2001, noting the offer by Switzerland to host the conference. The Council encourages Member States to participate actively and constructively in the conference and any preparatory meetings, taking into account the recommendations contained in this Statement, with a view to ensuring that the conference makes a meaningful and lasting contribution to reducing the incidence of illicit arms trafficking.”

This statement will be issued as a document of the Security Council under the symbol S/PRST/99/28.

The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

*The meeting rose at 12 noon.*