Reducing the Demand for Small Arms and Light Weapons: Priorities for the International Community

By Ernie Regehr

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I. Introduction

Small arms and light weapons (SALW) claim an average of 10,000 lives each week. On the world’s three-dozen and more battlefields, on city streets, and in our homes, weapons from small handguns to automatic assault rifles have become de facto weapons of mass destruction. There are no certain numbers available to document the volume of SALW now in circulation (the best estimates place the figure in excess of 600 million), and certainly no numbers can record the true meaning of the private tragedies and public social and economic consequences that flow from the rampant spread and misuse of these weapons.

One chilling truth that has been insufficiently recognized is that a prominent reason for the large numbers of SALW in circulation is the vigorous demand for them. Much of that demand is inevitably linked to criminality, individual and collective. In addition, however, demand for SALW is widely linked to particular social, economic, and political conditions. The world over, people – in regimes, communities, and organizations, as well as individuals – too often find themselves in such extraordinarily desperate situations that, having no other apparent options, they are led to conclude that perhaps with the acquisition of formidable arrays of guns new options will finally become available. And for every weapon sought, there is an eager line-up of willing suppliers.

The effective control of SALW requires attention to both phenomena – the persistent demand and the abundant supply. Efforts to control SALW, to restrict their availability and to prevent their misuse, without deliberate and ongoing attention to the conditions that encourage their acquisition and use, and without the creation of personal and communal alternatives to the resort to arms, will meet with only limited success.

Through and following the 2001 UN conference on SALW, certain internationally accepted standards to control SALW are emerging, but where conditions are such that individuals, communities, and states believe they can avoid disaster or advance their interests through the acquisition and use of such weapons, regulations, tightened transfer guidelines, and intensified police enforcement will not on their own succeed in preventing illicit acquisition, possession, and use. While SALW that are used simply and unambiguously for criminal purposes certainly call for more effective law enforcement, even here there is a need to address the social and economic conditions that encourage higher crime rates. When individuals, communities, and states acquire SALW, not from conventional criminal motives, but because they genuinely consider themselves (often wrongly) without other options and have concluded that their lives and well-being, or their fundamental interests, depend on access to weapons, effective control certainly depends on attention to the conditions that have led them to such drastic conclusions.

The 1997 UN Panel of Experts Report (para. 42) acknowledged the same point: “When the State loses control over its security functions and fails to maintain the security of its citizens, the subsequent growth of armed violence, banditry and organized crime increases the demand for weapons by citizens seeking to protect themselves and their property.” Thus, despite their devastating, cumulative impact, SALW are, under certain and predictable conditions, widely believed to expand the options of the user: “the transformation of a culture of weapons to a culture of violence, resulting in the increasing demand for weapons, most often occurs when a State cannot guarantee security to its citizens or control the illicit activities in which these weapons are utilized” (UN 1997, para 44).

When states fail and tensions rise in the context of a myriad of economic, political, ethnic, or religious rivalries and divisions, and when readily available SALW convert political and social conflict into armed conflict, the restoration of security and human well-being must engage a wide range of peacebuilding and development imperatives. The founding document of the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA 1998, p. 7) refers to several kinds of initiatives that are central to reducing demand: embedding community-based SALW control programs in development and anti-poverty measures, reversing cultures of violence and promoting cultures of peace, creating norms of non-possession, reintegration
of former combatants, addressing issues of impunity, and so on.

The challenge is to convert these broad demand reduction objectives into credible policy proposals and concrete actions. Indeed, it is remarkable that in recent years some quite extraordinary progress has been made toward that end. The focus of this paper is to review some of that progress and to report on the emerging demand reduction action agenda, and to explore ways in which that agenda can be integrated into the small arms Program of Action (POA).

That governments have also come to recognize the need for demand reduction strategies is confirmed in the increased attention to the human, social, and economic dimensions of the small arms problem. In December 2000 the Organization of African Unity’s (OAU) “Bamako Declaration” on small arms emphasized that “it is vital to address the problem of the illicit proliferation, circulation and trafficking of small arms and light weapons in a comprehensive, integrated, sustainable and efficient manner through: … the promotion of structures and processes to strengthen democracy, the observance of human rights, the rule of law and good governance, as well as economic recovery and growth; … the promotion of conflict prevention measures and the pursuit of negotiated solutions to conflicts; … [and] the promotion of comprehensive solutions … [that] include … supply and demand aspects” (Para V.2).

Although the 2001 UN Conference failed to elaborate demand reduction commitments, it did at least implicitly refer to general areas of demand reduction effort: development, the promotion of cultures of peace, conflict resolution, and security sector reform (Regehr 2001a). While these indirect and general exhortations are relevant, serious efforts are now underway to formulate a more focused SALW demand reduction agenda. A significant series of international workshops has produced an increasingly specific program of demand reduction activities to commend to both states and civil society organizations working in SALW-affected areas. The June 2003 “Strategy and Framework” for reducing SALW by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) defines small arms as “a human development issue” and emphasizes the need to pay attention to “the wider economic and political context in which people acquire SALW.” When development strategies are linked to small arms reduction and control measures, as in the UNDP framework and the UK’s Department for International Development (DFID) 2003 report on Tackling Poverty by Reducing Armed Violence, the focus is more on the links between armed violence and underdevelopment, but the indirect implication is that underdevelopment produces conditions in which the resort to arms is more prevalent, hence the comment that “social and economic exclusion, weak state institutions, and political grievances all motivate gun violence” (p. 1) and, one might add, generate “demand” or interest in gun acquisition.

Demand reduction is of course pursued in the context of, and in support of, the two most basic categories of small arms action – that is, restricting availability of SALW and preventing their misuse. The focus on regulating availability and use develops from the well-understood reality that, although victims of SALW outnumber the victims of landmines by a factor of 20, SALW cannot be the subject of a landmines-type ban on acquisition and use. Armed forces and police around the world use SALW as a primary weapon, and there is no foreseeable possibility of claiming, as campaigners did successfully in the case of landmines, that they have no military or police utility. Civilians, too, use firearms the world over, for sport hunting and security (whether successfully or not), and, not infrequently and however perversely, to define status and assert masculinity.

The central objective that must therefore animate international efforts to address the SALW problem is to establish, and in some cases recover, social, political, and legal protections from SALW abuse. The need to effectively address the SALW problem is part of the broader obligation of states and the international community to protect the vulnerable and to pursue human security – to protect the rights and safety of people. It is an objective that has equal relevance in the global south and north. It applies to states as well as groups and individuals, and equally to situations of regional
armed conflict and to more localized political and social disintegration and high rates of crime.

In all these contexts, SALW abuse is exacerbated by the lack of effective control and enforcement capacity, which in turn is undermined by the ready availability of SALW. In other words, small arms misuse is facilitated by availability, and misuse is exacerbated by excessive availability. The effort to control availability, however, is frustrated by high levels of demand.

The following section briefly reviews some of the widely acknowledged roots of the demand, and Section III in turn looks at ways to lower demand by introducing systematic demand reduction measures into the UN POA. For the purposes of this discussion an attempt has been made to distinguish factors leading to “demand” from factors related to small arms violence or misuse, even though there is a great deal of overlap and analysts frequently treat the two as identical.

II. Demand Factors

Civilians hold four-fifths of the world’s firearms. In other words, it is appropriate that the growing attention to SALW demand factors is focused primarily on civilian demand in the context of conditions in local communities. The Quaker United Nations Offices QUNO series of workshops (see Note 5) has looked especially at community projects that address “the social and economic problems in which violence is rooted” (Atwood and Jackman 1999).

While the focus of this paper is demand at individual and local community levels, it’s worth noting that state-level demand for weapons is also influenced by a range of internal and external social, economic, and security conditions. Routine modernization programs and evolving technology, as well as changing regional security dynamics and internal political conditions, all contribute to persistent though changing demand for small arms and light weapons.

The link between state and individual demand for SALW is found particularly in the ways states respond to changing internal and regional security conditions. In the Cold War the superpowers used the supply of both major and small arms to manage security conditions within and between their respective spheres of influence. In the post-Cold War world, virtually any state can use the supply of small arms to attempt to manipulate domestic and sub-regional political/security conditions.

 Seriously weakened governments sometimes even find it expedient to supply small arms to select groups of their own citizens. Particular communal groups may be armed to combat or discipline their traditional rivals, either because the latter have fallen out of favour with the government of the day or simply as a means of fostering chaos to keep opponents of the government divided and fighting among themselves. Such groups also use their state-supplied weapons for their own purposes, to pursue traditional practices such as cattle raiding or to manage relations with rival communal groups over access to land and resources - and, of course, the supply to one group generates new demand (and a market) in others. Political insurgent groups are often supplied by neighbouring states in destabilization tactics related to regional dynamics and competition. Some of the supply becomes available due to a failure to disarm in post-conflict settings, with the inevitable result that surplus weapons find their way into economically depressed and socially unstable environments.

State behaviour influences both state- and individual- or community-level demand, but the latter receives the primary attention in the following discussion of demand factors. Workshops on demand issues have identified a number of common underlying factors which drive the demand for small arms, including: governance problems; weak and corrupt law enforcement; human rights violations; civil and identity conflicts and the failure of states to protect the vulnerable; social disparities and economic underdevelopment; inadequate controls over small arms supplies; inadequate post-conflict disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of ex-combatants; and cultural attitudes (QUNO 2002, pp. 36-37). The following section briefly notes these themes and related issues under six subheadings: state failure, public peril/safety, underdevelopment, arms
availability, security sector abuses/reforms, and cultures of violence/peace.

1. State Failure:
An irony of continuing globalization is that, as the power and sovereignty of states erode in the face of economic, cultural, and environmental conditions that transcend national boundaries, these same increasingly dependent and essentially weakened states bear the primary responsibility for maintaining human security worldwide. The main contemporary threat to human and therefore global security - that is, the way in which people experience threats to their security in their homes and communities - is not the threat of war between states but of escalating violence and social-political dysfunction within states. Thus, national governments, more than international systems, must be on the frontlines of war prevention and advancing human security. To meet that responsibility, according to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), each state needs “institutions capable of managing socio-political tensions and avoiding their escalation into violence” (Development Assistance Committee 1997, p. 9). It is a measure of the level of dysfunction (or underdevelopment) among modern states that almost one in six has failed so badly in managing its socio-political affairs that tension has escalated to a level of violence sufficient to define it as a location of ongoing war (Project Ploughshares, Armed Conflicts Reports). Indeed, as is frequently noted, almost all of the world’s three dozen armed conflicts must be regarded as intrastate or civil wars, and thus failures, not in international peacemaking, but in national, or even local, management of socio-political change.

In other words, the widespread failure of national institutions to manage domestic state conflict, a failure reflected in the high current levels of internal wars, is a failure in human security - that is, the failure of states to create conditions that meet the social, political, and economic needs of people. When states fail to produce this security, people appeal to other political social units or entities, such as ethnic communities. Thus, ethnic conflicts are not a reflection of an increase in ethnic chauvinism; rather they are reflections of a more fundamental social conflict, borne out of a community’s experience of multiple grievances like economic inequity, political discrimination, human rights violations, and pressures generated by environmental degradation. Identity conflicts emerge with intensity when a community loses confidence in mainstream political institutions and processes and resolves to strengthen its collective influence and struggle for political recognition as a community. The failure of a state to redress a community’s genuine grievances makes group solidarity, bolstered by a capacity to exercise force, an increasingly attractive political strategy. The heightened demand for firearms that are both easy to use and easy to get, leads to growing social and political chaos and public violence, which in turn fuels further demand. The result can even include the weaponization of the political process in which political parties are known to employ armed units.

2. Public Peril:
The failure of states to maintain internal security is obviously experienced as heightened personal and communal insecurity or peril. Rising crime rates, as well as rising communal divisions in the face of loss of confidence in public institutions, lead individuals and communities to conclude that their own security depends on their own capacity to defend themselves and to provide for their own security - creating increased levels of demand for SALW. As the UNDP characterizes it: “Lack of capacity among security, judicial and legal systems to guarantee a minimal level of security, means people are reluctant to surrender the weapons they hold.”

For example, in the Horn of Africa some pastoralist groups remain largely outside the protection of state security forces. Yet they live in vulnerable circumstances in which access to water and grazing land is increasingly difficult. They also live under threat of cattle raiding from neighbouring communities – a traditional threat made more deadly through the arrival of automatic rifles. A 1998 IRIN report on violence in the Antsokia region of Ethiopia described how an attack was “executed with automatic guns and rocket propelled grenades and turned a traditional dispute over grazing and water rights into an unprecedented slaughter” (Eshete...
and O’Reilly-Calthrop 2000, p. 13). Guns escalate the scale of killing in traditional disputes; in cultures where there is a prevailing culture of revenge, they become an essential means first of retaliation and then of counter-retaliation. As traditional reconciliation and restorative mechanisms are unable to carry the burden of dramatically escalated killing, and control measures are unable to contain heightened levels of demand, the community disintegrates.

As already noted, in some cases governments, unable to ensure the security of remote communities, provide them with arms that are intended to help them pursue personal and communal security on their own. However, under volatile conditions the introduction of arms only feeds the tension. Once one group is armed, rival groups seek arms for their own protection from the other, and on and on it goes until the result is a local arms race.

Endemic human rights abuses, or violent urban neighbourhoods ruled over by armed gangs with impunity reinforce the belief that personal and family safety will not be provided by public security forces but must be achieved through informal and privately acquired means. Such conditions are conducive to accelerated demand for SALW.

3. Underdevelopment:

While violence has roots in underdevelopment and marginalization, it is obviously not the case that people living in conditions of extreme poverty are more violent than those who live in affluence. Poor people are obviously not destined to become terrorists – indeed, terrorism is not infrequently the work of people of extraordinary wealth. Still, crime and social and political violence are undeniably more prominent in certain conditions. Poor states, for example, are three times as likely as wealthier states to experience armed conflict at a level that constitutes war. Almost half (45 per cent) of the states in the bottom half of the annual Human Development Index have experienced war on their territories within the previous decade, compared with only 14 per cent of states in the top half of the Index. In the post-Cold War world there is generally a high correlation between underdevelopment and conflict. Over 95 per cent of the conflicts that occurred between 1989 and 1995 took place in developing countries (Project Ploughshares, Armed Conflicts Reports).

Small Arms Survey 2003 (p. 125) pays special attention to “the relationship between small arms availability and misuse and human development.” The correlation of high levels of violence and armed conflict with chronic underdevelopment can be understood in two ways: put rather too starkly, underdevelopment produces or results in heightened conflict and violence; and, second, violence impedes development or results in underdevelopment. The Small Arms Survey 2003 analysis tends to focus on the latter because its primary purpose is in identifying the “effects of small arms on human development.” But a focus on demand issues necessarily draws more on the first understanding, asking the extent to which conditions of chronic underdevelopment generate conflict and demand for small arms.

The purpose of this paper is to consider the extent to which underdevelopment fuels demand for small arms and light weapons and, therefore, the extent to which a focus on development can be an effective means of reducing demand and so reducing the availability and misuse of small arms. In practice, the two approaches are much less distinct, inasmuch as efforts to integrate small arms issues into development initiatives is a recognition of both phenomena: that the presence of arms undermines development, and that persistent underdevelopment increases the likelihood that small arms will become part of the long-term problem.

4. Availability:

Yet, while there is a growing acknowledgement that a range of negative social and economic conditions – including poverty, unequal access to resources, unemployment, and youth alienation – are conducive to instability and violence, the bottom line is that the availability of guns transforms social instability into armed violence and armed conflict, and in the process exacerbates poverty, competition over resources, and alienation. Predictably, the supply of arms
leads to increased demand for them. High rates of crime in urban settings encourage higher levels of arms retained in domestic households.

5. Security Sector Abuses:
As the British NGO Saferworld concludes from its work in security sector reform, “in many countries the unprofessional and unaccountable police and security forces can create mistrust within communities. This makes it difficult to secure the cooperation of the public to stem the flow of small arms and can actually increase the demand for weapons.” This reality has led to widespread research and programming related to the central role of abusive or incapable security forces in exacerbating insecurity and encouraging extra-legal acquisition of SALW.

6. Cultures of Violence:
Perhaps the most debilitating element of the small arms demand pressures is that SALW acquisition and use become social norms. The instruments of violence and their use are socialized and become part of the prevailing order that is then extraordinarily difficult to unlearn and reverse.

III. Demand Reduction Measures
The virtual absence of demand reduction measures in the POA is not a reflection of fundamental disagreements about the nature and roots of demand for small arms. While some assumptions about demand factors and about the correlations between negative social and political conditions and small arms acquisition and use are, and must continue to be, the subject of increasingly systematic research, there is broad agreement that to reduce demand and effectively control small arms attention must be paid to the conditions that exacerbate weapons acquisition and use. Nevertheless, at the time of the current POA’s adoption in 2001, the international community had not devoted sufficient attention to demand factors to produce a set of practical action priorities designed to reduce the perceived need for, or advantages thought to be linked to, SALW acquisition. However, there was already a growing recognition of the need for such action. In the lead-up to the 2001 conference, many NGOs, multilateral agencies, and governments referred to the importance of demand reduction efforts. At the first Biennial Meeting in 2003 repeated references to demand factors illustrated the international community’s growing recognition that the overall goals to control the availability and prevent the misuse of SALW must involve specific attention to demand reduction measures.

Indeed, the priority focus on prevention, at least in the formal title of the POA, acknowledges the priority of measures designed to avoid SALW diffusion and misuse over measures to deal with the problem after the fact (i.e., the Program of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects). Demand reduction needs to be understood as a key element of prevention – preventing the illicit acquisition of and trade in SALW through reduced interest in such acquisitions, and preventing the surge in misuse that accompanies the illicit acquisition of SALW.

In the end, demand reduction comes down to specific programs and actions that contribute to broad and durable social transformation. This transformation requires the implementation of a new and sustainable set of social, economic, and political conditions that meet and protect the basic, legitimate needs and interests of individuals and communities. In recent years the engaged SALW action community has begun to assemble a credible, systematic approach to demand reduction that is designed to complement the more advanced and elaborate action program for weapons control.

Demand reduction is much more a programmatic endeavor than a policy-development effort. Of course, there needs to be a deliberate public policy to pursue and engage in demand reduction programs, but demand reduction “policies,” and especially the inclusion of demand reduction efforts in the Programme of Action are in one sense primarily a resolve to pursue with greater vigor and urgency the SALW action measures already in the POA. But a primary contribution of the demand reduction discussions has been the recognition that not all programmatic responses are equally effective in mitigating
demand. Hence, the objective must be to shape programs so that they address as directly as possible the factors that contribute to a strong interest in gun acquisition.

There is especially a need to gather evidence on and explore the relationship between loss of confidence in public security measures (including pursuit of the full range of human security conditions) and an emerging demand for SALW. The DFID Tackling Poverty report (2003) pointed out that some analysts argue that guns are the tools of conflict, not the root of conflict. That line of analysis then concludes that arms control and reduction efforts “only address the tools of violence, and can therefore distract attention from the more fundamental issues of the root causes of conflict or violence” (p. 12). But fundamental to addressing the SALW problem is to reverse the process by which social and political conflict is transformed into violence and armed conflict by the availability of the tools of conflict. So, the objective is not to prevent conflict but to prevent the transformation of normal and inevitable social and political conflict into armed conflict. And the prevention of armed conflict provides space for social and political measures that get at the roots of conflict. Preventing armed conflict – both controlling the tools of conflict and developing institutions capable of managing social and political conflict by nonviolent means – is an end in itself. The focus on demand factors permits a better understanding of the point in the conflict process when parties to the conflict begin to reject or lose confidence in the institutions and processes of nonviolent conflict management and begin to explore the acquisition of the tools of violent conflict – the point of the emergence of demand for SALW.

Demand factors are especially relevant to any program of action that purports to address the problem of the illicit trade and acquisition of SALW. What are the conditions or circumstances that are most likely to lead individuals, groups, communities, and states to seek out, or to demand, access to SALW? Whether SALW are sought for criminal purposes, for personal or collective safety, or in the pursuit of perceived vital interests, all in defiance of established regulation or restraints, factors leading to such illicit pursuit and acquisition of SALW require prominence in the POA.

The current POA, however, is tellingly short on direct references to demand or demand reduction, perhaps an indirect acknowledgment that any demand reduction strategy presents daunting challenges.

The following sections identify broad approaches and issues for inclusion in the POA. The QUNO series of demand workshops that has occurred largely since the current POA was adopted in 2001 has begun to produce a body of integrative reporting and analysis about best practices in projects and activities focused on demand reduction. Further research and dialogue are being planned to further refine, not only a demand reduction program, but also an implementation strategy.

1. Restoring Public Institutions:
Inasmuch as a primary spur to the acquisition of SALW by individuals and communities is state failure, i.e., the loss of public confidence that government can or is willing to attend equitably and credibly to their security needs, the restoration of the capacity of, and confidence in, public institutions is fundamental to reducing demand for SALW. But restoring confidence is more than a public relations effort. Restored confidence in state institutions depends on visible, credible changes in state behaviour, and on the capacity to make constructive contributions to the safety and well-being of individuals and communities.

A key starting point is accountability, the central requirement for which is active public participation in defining public needs and priorities, and in monitoring and evaluating public performance. The POA (e.g., II. 20 and 40, III.18) does acknowledge the constructive role of public awareness and confidence-building programs explicitly related to SALW control efforts, but it is silent on the overall centrality of public institutions in providing a climate of public order and stability. The POA manages one specific reference to demand in a preambular statement about the links between the illicit trade in small arms and terrorism and illicit trafficking in drugs and precious minerals,
noting that supply and demand factors must both be addressed (I.7). There is no overall recognition of the importance of demand factors, but paragraph I.3 provides an excellent opening for a broad statement. While other paragraphs (e.g., I.2) make the more common point that illicit trade in small arms contributes to underdevelopment, insecurity, and so on, paragraph I.3 raises the concern, however tentatively, that poverty and underdevelopment contribute to the small arms problem – it expresses concern about the “implications that poverty and underdevelopment may have for the illicit trade” in SALW. The paragraph could be usefully expanded to make the point that not only poverty and underdevelopment, but ongoing human rights abuses and violations of humanitarian law, as well as loss of confidence in public institutions that are supposed to provide for the well-being of people, are all factors that contribute to increased demand for SALW and thus to pressures for the illicit acquisition of and trade in SALW.

It would be especially useful to have a separate preambular statement that small arms control must be aided by reductions in small arms demand and that such reduction is closely linked to good governance and confidence in public institutions that serve a common interest and the public good.

It should be noted that the POA calls for additional public institutions, in the form of national small arms coordination agencies (II.4) and regional points of contact (II.24), to implement the POA at national and regional levels. These institutions should be viewed in the context of governance reform and the building of accountable mechanisms for SALW action, and thus as opportunities to restore confidence in public institutions engaged in the pursuit of public safety.

Linking civil society groups directly to SALW national focal points and regional coordinating centres can encourage these agencies to be accountable and active. In East Africa the work of Africa Peace Forum continues to link civil society organizations in the Nairobi Declaration subregion to national and regional small arms agencies, focusing directly on building awareness and a climate of governmental-civil society cooperation in small arms action, and indirectly on monitoring and accountability frameworks. Similar programs have been pursued in Cambodia and Brazil.

Besides performing this broadly political and even symbolic role, these agencies to coordinate action on SALW should also be responsible for coordinating national efforts to study and understand the factors driving the pursuit of SALW, with demand reduction specifically mandated by the focal points’ terms of reference. The related commitment (II.5) to establish national points of contact between states should also encourage and provide the means for states to exchange information on demand-related issues. Coupled with the commitment (III.18) that a range of actors – from states to medical institutions and civil society – should develop and support action-oriented research aimed at facilitating a better understanding of the illicit trade in SALW, these provisions should facilitate, and should be seen to be facilitating, a much better understanding of what drives demand for SALW at all levels.

Democratic accountability, in the sense of participatory and responsible governance, is essential to the development of enduring public confidence in government. To that end the POA specifically urges NGOs and other elements of civil society to be directly engaged in all aspects of its implementation. In many countries NGO participation in security concerns, which states perceive to be strictly their preserve, is far from the norm, making all the more important the wide promulgation of the message of the POA’s final paragraph (IV.2.c), i.e., to “…encourage non-governmental organizations and civil society to engage, as appropriate, in all aspects of international, regional, subregional and national efforts to implement the present Programme of Action.”

Key to restoring public faith in public institutions is to reinforce the links between people and their institutions. At the community level, when residents become directly engaged in community programs they participate directly in institutionalizing community problem-solving processes and mechanisms. “Key to successful community programs are activities which emphasize ‘bottom-up’ problem solving – for
example, community-based justice programs which bring perpetrator and victim together; conflict resolution training for community residents and other civil ways of problem-solving; leadership development training” (Atwood and Jackman 1999).

The capacity of states to perform their key function of preventing violence – their fundamental role being to serve as institutions which “manage socio-political tensions” to avoid their “escalation into violence” (DAC 1997, p. 19) - depends substantially on the level of public confidence in them. The POA could reflect that fundamental reality by linking effective SALW action to effective governance.

2. Upholding Public Safety:
A primary function of states is to employ their monopoly on the resort to force in the service of compliance with state laws, to maintain basic order, and to protect the vulnerable. At the same time, it must also be recognized that law and order - the prevention of lawlessness - ultimately depends less on enforcement capability than on social and economic conditions that are conducive to voluntary compliance with community laws and standards. In turn, voluntary compliance - a culture of peace - is encouraged by active civil society involvement in building a political culture based on respect for common public values and shared public interests and the belief that such shared values and interests are a reliable foundation for personal well-being. Within cultures that promote armaments as the ultimate guarantors of personal safety, public education can play a central role in transforming public and personal consciousness about the impact of arms on individuals, communities, and states.

But individuals and communities are less likely to offer voluntary consent to public laws and standards related to gun control and use if they consider them to be counter to their specific needs and interests in particular situations. In other words, conflict resolution must address the root causes of conflict (III.4). To transform the pursuit of public order from a primarily law enforcement model to a voluntary consent model, it is obviously necessary to address the basic needs and fears of people.

The POA is essentially silent on this question. Respect for human rights, fundamental to addressing the well-being of people in their homes and communities, is not mentioned in the POA. An updated POA that intends to encourage demand reduction measures will have to include references to human rights, the social and economic dimensions of crime prevention, and the social and political conditions essential to communal security. While such social and political conflict mitigation and security enhancement are pre-eminently national responsibilities, they also have important international and local dimensions. The POA recognizes that the international community has a role in the “pursuit of negotiated solutions to conflicts wherever possible, including by addressing their root causes” (III.4). A Nairobi NGO consultation on demand reduction emphasized the importance of drawing on local expertise in traditional conflict management and in building cooperative approaches between traditional leaders and state security authorities (QUNO 2000, p. 6) – in other words, the POA’s reference to international assistance should be complemented with a reference to engaging local and traditional knowledge in conflict management.

The challenges of building local conditions that are conducive to individual and community security, and that instill confidence in public structures and services, are extraordinarily daunting in situations of scarcity and social-political discord. Experience suggests that for programs to be successful in meeting these challenges, they must involve the communities themselves at all stages. Participation by community residents ensures practicality and relevance to local needs. Inclusiveness; the involvement of young people; and the provision of practical, useable knowledge and skills all contribute to successful programs. The participation of ex-combatants in post-conflict reconciliation and rebuilding efforts is of particular importance. Participants in a Horn of Africa consultation on demand reduction summarized: especially at the local level, “decision-making structures about community programs should be open, inclusive, democratic and accountable. Resident-directed projects are more sustainable” (QUNO 2000, p. 1).
3. Promoting Development:
Development programs, even if successful, are not a panacea for conflict prevention. Development programs that are poorly conceived and carried out can actually aggravate instability and even prolong armed conflicts. For example, in the case of humanitarian assistance to the victims of conflict, elements that benefit financially in major ways from the transport and distribution of aid develop a significant stake in perpetuating hostilities. Development programs that benefit communities unevenly can also exacerbate conflicts and generate demand for SALW as some seek to defend their advantages while others seek to challenge them. On the other hand, development programs that are generally ‘conflict-sensitive’ can make significant contributions to conflict mitigation and demand reduction.

A study by World Vision Ethiopia (Eschete and O’Reilly-Calthrop 2000), which focused on weapons use among the Amhara and Oromo peoples in Antsokia, found that attitudes and behaviour relating to weapons ownership changed dramatically over the course of a development project in the region. The study demonstrated that economic improvements – in this case through reliable agricultural production – had a direct effect on levels of violence. The study, which resulted in significant community transformation and reduction in small arms presence and demand, emphasized the central importance of changing attitudes:

“Programs which attempt to alter attitudes toward guns, violence, conflict, death and life will be much more sustainable than those that just target behavior.” The study identified the importance of UN and governmental disarmament efforts being holistic and grounded in local communities, in cooperation with NGOs and religious communities. It also recommended that all community development programs undertake clear self-analysis to identify the likely impact on attitudes and cultures of violence and gun use. And finally, it called on better coordination and information-sharing among community program workers, policy analysts, and advocacy efforts.

The POA acknowledges this link, noting “the implications that poverty and underdevelopment may have for the illicit trade” in SALW (I.3), thereby suggesting, even if rather hesitatingly, that demand for SALW generated as the result of poverty and underdevelopment can add to the illicit trade. As already suggested above, this paragraph would be an appropriate place to acknowledge other factors, such as human rights abuses and other elements of public insecurity, that drive demand for SALW and increase pressure toward illicit acquisition and trade.

Programmatically, the converse is most relevant to efforts to reduce SALW use: effectively targeted poverty reduction and development efforts as well as human rights and public safety efforts can effectively reduce violence and the demand for SALW. The POA specifically recognizes that the SALW challenge is “multi-faceted” and involves, among other factors listed, not only “conflict prevention and resolution,” but also “development dimensions” (I.15). In a particular reference to post-conflict situations, the POA says that states “should make … greater efforts to address problems related to human and sustainable development” (III.17), as part of the effort to prevent the resumption of conflict.

The disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DD&R) of former combatants following the cessation of violent conflict are widely recognized as critical components of building sustainable peace (II.21, 30, and 34; III.16). While reducing the availability of SALW (see below) is an important element of DD&R programs, reintegration of former combatants is also crucial. Soldiers are frequently brutalized, traumatized, and alienated by their experience of conflict, and in the absence of effective reintegration they may be drawn to criminal violence or recruited into renewed fighting. A prominent element of DD&R efforts should be to identify reasons why weapons are held in the first place. Programs should then respond to those factors to ensure more effective weapons collection programs (Hubert 2001).

The POA acknowledges the importance of effective DD&R programs for peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts, including measures to “address the special needs of children affected by armed conflict, in particular … their reintegration into civil society, and their appropriate rehabilitation” (II.22), although
its provisions remain somewhat indefinite. The POA does not sufficiently address the problem of establishing DD&R programs in those countries lacking the economic resources for effective implementation. Further reinforcement of the understanding of the importance of mobilizing resources for sustainable development (III.17) would be welcome.

It is especially important that alternative sustainable livelihoods be developed for young people, to enable them to provide for their own economic security. Many civil conflicts are fought primarily by young, often disaffected, men, who frequently lack the education or skills to find employment after demobilization.

The Small Arms Survey 2003 reports that while the relationship between small arms and underdevelopment is increasingly accepted, “a developmental approach to small arms is still in its infancy” (p. 151). It identified three emerging trends in the developmental approach to small arms:

- A focus on shaping attitudes and behaviour of would-be small arms users to reduce their demand;
- Normative and legal controls to reduce small arms misuse by security forces;
- Destruction of surplus weapons to reduce recirculation (p. 151).

Among the initiatives that link SALW and underdevelopment are the following:

- The OSCE “has developed a task force to study military expenditures and development, with a special focus on small arms” (p. 154).
- “The UNDP is seeking to influence attitudes and behaviour through an awareness and sensitization campaign and the continued promotion of ‘weapons for development’ programs” (p. 154).
- Increasingly, small arms-related programs are being funded by development agencies rather than by foreign affairs ministries.
- The Tackling Poverty (DFID 2003, p. 15) report echoed the importance of explicitly linking poverty reduction efforts to SALW control and reduction measures. Greater cooperation among relevant government departments was identified as a way to give such a linkage operational practicality.

The DFID Conference on poverty and armed violence offers a useful list of recommendations on linking SALW issues to poverty reduction, including:

- Reducing the availability and preventing the misuse of small arms need to be more clearly understood as explicit poverty reduction measures (this recognition is implicit in the POA statement in I.2 that illicit circulation of SALW undermines sustainable development, but a more explicit statement of the positive point that SALW control contributes to poverty reduction would be useful in the POA preamble).
- Guidelines on SALW control and reduction would assist development professionals in shaping development programs to address SALW issues.
- The OECD Development Assistance Committee should become more engaged in SALW issues and “promote greater cooperation and information exchange between development agencies, and the identification and dissemination of best practices.”
- SALW programs need to be evaluated and documented to provide useful lessons and examples of best practice.
- Development programs need to be subjected to assessments of their impacts on SALW availability and misuse, just as in some instances they are assessed in terms of their likely impact on peace and conflict (this and the previous three points would be useful additions to the implementation section of the POA).
- The terminology “combating SALW proliferation and misuse” should be changed to “preventing and reducing armed violence.”

It would also be useful for the POA to expand on its references to restrictions on state weapons transfers (II.11) to include a provision that states refrain from authorizing SALW transfers when there is a reasonable risk that such a transfer will contribute significantly to underdevelopment and thus to ongoing insecurity.
4. Reducing Availability:
Not surprisingly, restricting availability is a major focus of the POA. As already noted, a primary generator of demand for SALW is their easy availability. Ineffective control feeds demand, just as surely as persistent demand undermines control. Furthermore, legally available arms in situations of political tension and adverse economic and social conditions are just as destabilizing and as certain to generate demand as illegally acquired weapons. The international community has repeatedly recognized the reality of destabilizing accumulations. In other words, as weapons become available and accumulate, they are progressively more destabilizing in their effect. The resulting instability in turn undermines security and tends to generate further demand for weapons.

It follows then that demand reduction requires a clear policy commitment to control supply. In any particular situation, current demand is mitigated by a public commitment to restrict the availability of weapons in the future. In situations of political tension and adverse social and economic conditions, the expectations that other individuals, groups, or factions are likely to acquire weapons in the foreseeable future will inevitably lead to decisions to try to acquire similar weapons as a hedge against expected insecurity. Hence, consistency and durability of control measures are critically important to prevent the emergence of strong demand for weapons through illicit channels.

The primary guard against particularly destabilizing accumulations is broad international agreement on transfer controls to restrict shipments to states and regions of advanced political tension. Of course, no such international agreement exists for conventional weapons generally, and the POA does not explicitly call for any such restrictions on small arm transfers. The POA does call (II.11) on states to issue SALW export authorizations only according to strict national regulations that are consistent with states’ existing responsibilities under international law. In other words, the implication is that states should not transfer SALW to any state where weapons might reasonably be expected to be used to breach international human rights standards, international humanitarian law, or commitments relating to prohibitions on the threat or use of force. Universal adherence to that kind of restrictive standard for international transfers would lead to a significant decline in the availability of SALW.

The POA has established the principle that state transfers should be consistent with existing responsibilities under international law. Now it would be useful for the POA to articulate those obligations more clearly, particularly with regard to human rights and humanitarian law violations.

In certain circumstances, the UN Security Council has sought to implement universal supply restrictions to certain states through country-specific arms embargoes. The POA calls on states to respect such measures (II.15 and 32).

The POA is surprisingly committed to domestic gun control. Despite controversy in 2001 over objections to including domestic gun control in the POA, several paragraphs explicitly require such controls. States undertake “to adopt and implement” the legislative or other measures required to “establish as criminal offences under their domestic law the illegal manufacture, possession [emphasis added], stockpiling and trade of small arms and light weapons within their areas of jurisdiction, in order to ensure that those engaged in such activities can be prosecuted under appropriate national penal codes” (II.3). They also agree to establish “national coordination agencies or bodies and institutional infrastructure” to take responsibility for policy guidance, research, and monitoring of efforts designed to halt the illicit trade in SALW. These measures are to be directed against “the illicit manufacture, control, trafficking, circulation, brokering and trade” of SALW (II.4). The document’s reference to illicit manufacturing, control, circulation, and so on, of arms assumes domestic laws to regulate and control SALW and to define licit manufacturing and control to apprehend illicit activity. Then states undertake to “identify … groups and individuals engaged in the illegal manufacture, trade, stockpiling, transfer, possession [emphasis added] … of illicit small arms and light weapons,” and pledge to “take action under appropriate national law [emphasis added] against such groups and individuals” (II.6).
The principle of domestic control of SALW is well-established in the POA and it would be useful to gather together the explicit and implicit measures to restrict availability and to elaborate a comprehensive approach that links restrictions on availability to demand reduction measures and thereby to reducing pressures for the illicit acquisition and trade in SALW.

Efforts to control guns in border areas of the global south where traditional communities span borders would be particularly aided by harmonized gun laws – laws that are the same or at least compatible on both sides of frequently porous borders. The POA does not call for harmonization of such laws, but it would do well to reiterate the provision in the Nairobi Declaration that calls on Member States “to harmonize their policies, regulations and laws relating to possession of arms by civilians.” Such common regulations and cooperative law enforcement activity should be complemented by cross-border programs for sharing resources and local committees, and provisions for joint management of mutual concerns (QUNO 2000, p. 7).

The importance of timely and effective disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration as demand reduction measures cannot be overstated. Unless SALW are removed from post-war society, the risk remains that their abundant presence will make a quick return to war likely if grievances are not addressed, that they will be used in violent crime and banditry in escalating social violence, or that they could be shipped to other conflicts in the region. To build confidence in efforts to promote public safety, populations emerging out of armed conflict need clear evidence that weapons will not be allowed to circulate freely. This requires effective collection of weapons, as well as measures to ensure that weapons authorized for use by police and military authorities are strictly controlled (II.10). The POA also calls for the destruction of confiscated, seized, or collected SALW (II.16), as well as surplus state-owned SALW (II.18), or inadequately marked SALW (III.14). Such destruction is essential to prevent such weapons from (re-)entering the illicit market and driving demand for SALW through their use by, for example, criminal elements. The effective management and security of government-owned stocks of SALW (II.17 and 29) are necessary to prevent leakage into the illicit market.

5. Security Sector Reform:
Durable control of and reduction in demand for SALW require public security institutions that retain the confidence and loyalty of the people and communities affected. For security forces to have the trust of vulnerable populations they must, as research and expert analysis have made clear, be open and accountable to the communities they are intended to serve. Accountability involves adherence to international standards of human rights and humanitarian law. Any political environment in which public institutions are transparently committed to the pursuit of human security, and the protection and safety of people is much less likely to generate unmanageable violence and demand for SALW. The POA does refer to police training and building up of law enforcement capacity (III.6-7), but there is no acknowledgement of the role of abusive security forces in creating demand for SALW.

The lack of attention to international human rights standards in the POA represents a profound failing. It is important that states integrate human rights training, security-sector reform programs, and accountability mechanisms with police and military training, and that international security assistance programs include these elements.

Security Sector Reform is obviously a national effort with many legislative, structural, training, and attitudinal dimensions, but it also has important local community dimensions. Indeed, local efforts, such as gun recovery programs or community policing efforts, need to be coordinated with national reform efforts. Similarly, close cooperation between non-governmental organizations and governments are also essential, with each retaining their fundamental character and roles. For example, “[l]ocal gun ‘hand-in’ programs require coordination and trust between police and local populations” (QUNO 2000, p. 2).

The Putting People First report suggests that a useful focus for transforming a broad and imprecise agenda on reducing demand might be community security - “that is, creating the
conditions of law and order and access to justice that reduce feelings of insecurity and therefore, demand for weapons” (Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue 2003, p. 46). Successful security sector reform must also involve a fundamental redefinition of security. While citizens understand security as conditions of safety in which basic needs can be met, unreformed security forces and regimes tend to equate security with the perpetuation of their authority and power and with regime maintenance. Security sector reform helps security institutions and personnel to understand and measure the success of their efforts by the extent to which citizens are safe and can act freely to meet their basic needs (Donald and Olonisakin 2001).

The Small Arms Survey reports on activities that are taking place:

• Strengthening police and judicial systems;
• Police training in human rights;
• Developing guidelines for weapons use.

Ending impunity is really an element of security sector reform understood broadly to include all elements of the public justice system.

Extensive fieldwork on security sector reform is now underway. For example, a Global Facilitation Network for Security Sector Reform is funded by the US Government’s Conflict Prevention Fund and provides a university-based network of research, policy development, and capacity-building services for governments and international agencies (http://www.gfn-ssr.org). Non-governmental organizations such as the Bonn International Center for Conversion, International Alert, and Saferworld carry out programs that specifically link security sector reform to small arms control and reduction efforts.

Security Sector Reform is one of the most frequently noted programmatic responses to the need to reduce demand for SALW. The POA should recognize and reflect the prominence it has been accorded within the small arms action community.

6. Cultures of Peace:

The POA links the SALW problem to the emergence of cultures of conflict and violence. States promised to “reduce the human suffering caused by the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects ... through the promotion of a culture of peace” (I.4). At the global level states also undertake to “promote dialogue and a culture of peace by encouraging, as appropriate, education and public awareness programmes on the problems of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects, involving all sectors of society” (II.41). Concrete action in support of such generalized intentions will depend substantially on the extent to which civil society becomes engaged in carrying out those education and public awareness programs.

The UNDP’s capacity development strategy emphasizes the need to “focus on the wider economic and political context in which people acquire SALW.” The Program of Action acknowledges the importance of tackling cultures of violence, particularly in post-conflict situations, noting especially the importance of awareness-raising and education initiatives (II.40-41). However, little concrete action is proposed. Civil society organizations must be relied upon to give substance to the pursuit of cultures of peace, in part through learning about the root causes, triggers, and sustaining factors that generate and perpetuate cultures of violence. Community organizers repeatedly point to the urgent need for peace education and conflict management / resolution awareness and skills to be included in school curricula (QUNO 2000, p. 7).

While programs to tackle the demand for SALW may be pursued primarily at the national level, regional coordination of programs will enhance success by helping to prevent advances in one country from being undermined by a lack of progress in another. Recognition of the need to tackle demand for SALW at the international level, together with some degree of consensus on how to address it, will further encourage the establishment of programs in some countries that are situated in regions where little progress is being made.
Notes
1 The UN reports by the group of Governmental Experts (A/52/298 and A/54/258) focus on small arms and light weapons designed for military purposes. SALW are defined as follows (Note #5 of A/54/258): “Broadly speaking, small arms are those weapons designed for personal use, and light weapons are those designed for use by several persons serving as a crew. The category of small arms includes revolvers and self-loading pistols, rifles and carbines, sub-machine guns, assault rifles and light machine-guns. Light weapons include heavy machine-guns, hand-held under-barrel and mounted grenade launchers, portable anti-aircraft guns, portable anti-tank guns, recoilless rifles, portable launchers of anti-tank missile and rocket systems, portable launchers of anti-aircraft missile systems, and mortars of calibres of less than 100 mm. Ammunition and explosives form an integral part of small arms and light weapons used in conflicts, and include cartridges (rounds) for small arms, shells and missiles for light weapons, anti-personnel and anti-tank hand grenades, landmines, explosives, and mobile containers with missiles or shells for single-action anti-aircraft and anti-tank systems.”

2 Despite enormous obstacles to the accurate compilation of statistics on deaths by small arms and light weapons, conservative estimates attribute some 300,000 SALW deaths per year to wars and armed conflicts. While fatalities appear to have declined in recent years (see Sollenberg 2001, and Armed Conflicts Report 2002), post-World War II annual average war deaths number about 500,000 (IISS 2002), with the majority attributable to SALW (ICRC 1999, p. 23; IISS 2002, p. xxviii). About 200,000 more SALW deaths occur in the context of crime and due to suicide (Cukier 2002, p. 263). The Small Arms Survey 2003 also concludes that “on the basis of existing evidence, some 300,000 people are killed as a result of small arms misuse each year in conflict, and an additional 200,000 in so-called ‘peaceful’ societies” (p. 132).

3 The Small Arms Survey 2003 (p. 57) estimates there are about 639 million known small arms around the world.

4 See, for example, the POA on the establishment of laws to regulate transfers (Section II, paras 2, 11, 12, 13, 15, 32), and possession (Section II, paras 3, 6, 8); and earlier the Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials.

5 See for example, the Human Security Network’s participation in Putting People First: Human Security Perspectives on Small Arms Availability and Misuse (a report by the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, July 2003), or the UK Department for International Development report, Tackling Poverty by Reducing Armed Violence: Recommendations from a Wilton Park Workshop (14-16 April 2003).

6 David Jackman (2003) lists five workshops organized by Quaker organizations (Quaker United Nations Offices, American Friends Service Committee) in cooperation with other agencies:
• “Shrinking Small Arms: A Seminar on Lessening the Demand from Weapons,” Durban, South Africa, November 19-24, 1999 (organized by the Quaker UN Offices, New York and Geneva);
• “Curbing the Demand for Small Arms: Lessons in East Africa and the Horn of Africa,” Nairobi, Kenya, December 12-16, 2000 (organized by: Quaker United Nations Offices, Project Ploughshares, and Bonn International Center for Conversion, with the assistance of Africa Peace Forum and SALIGAD [an initiative on small arms by countries in the Horn of Africa that are part of the Inter-Governmental Authority for Development or IGAD]);
• “Curbing the Demand for Small Arms: Focus on Southeast Asia,” Phnom Penh, Cambodia, May 27-31, 2002 (organized by: Working Group for Arms Reduction, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, Quaker United Nations Office-Geneva, Quaker International Affairs Program-Southeast Asia);
• “Curbing the Demand for Small Arms: A Middle East Seminar,” Amman, Jordan, July 8-9, 2002 (organized by: American Friends Service Committee and the Regional Human Security Center at the Jordan Institute of Diplomacy); and

In addition a March 2001 conference on “Small Arms Demand Reduction” was organized by Project Ploughshares and held in Toronto, and in April 2001 the Bonn International Center for Conversion sponsored a conference in Addis Ababa on “Curbing the Demand Side of Small Arms in the IGAD States: Potentials and Pitfalls.”

7 Cukier (2002, p. 3) identifies a correlation between availability and misuse, although others note that “fewer weapons do not always result in safer people” (Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue 2003, p. 45).

8 Most estimates of landmines deaths put the figure at around 25,000 per year, or about 500 per week, compared with an estimated 10,000 deaths per week due to SALW.

9 Small Arms Survey 2003 (Chapter 2 on “Global Firearm Stockpiles,” pp. 57-95) estimates that in the European Union 81 per cent of firearms are held by civilians; in Subsaharan Africa the figure is 79 per cent, in the US 81 per cent; and in Central America 84 per cent.

10 Jackman (2003) reports that “identity issues” were among the “common underlying factors which drive the demand for small arms” identified by demand workshop participants.

11 For the purposes of the annual Armed Conflicts Report, Project Ploughshares defines an armed conflict as “a political conflict in which armed combat involves the armed forces of at least one state (or one or more armed factions seeking to gain control of all or part of the state), and in which at least 1,000 people have been killed by the fighting during the course of the conflict.”

12 In cooperation with Project Ploughshares and funded by the Department of Foreign Affairs of Canada.

13 The POA, in other words, is very much in the business of committing states to the regulation of civilian possession of small arms and light weapons. It even identifies some basic international or global standards of domestic gun control. The document declares (II.7) that “henceforth” all manufacturers must mark all weapons they build (to identify the country of manufacture, the manufacturer and serial number, and to enable effective tracing of individual weapons). From there, states go on to undertake (II.8) to “adopt ... all the necessary measures to prevent the ... possession of any unmarked or inadequately marked small arms and light weapons.” Hence, implementation of the POA not only requires domestic gun control, but also begins to prescribe the content of that control – in this case putting forward a global norm to prohibit the possession of unmarked weapons. Furthermore, states also undertake (II.9) to “ensure that comprehensive and accurate records are kept for as long as possible on the manufacture, holding [emphasis added] and transfer of small arms and light weapons under their jurisdiction. These records should be organized and maintained in such a way as to ensure that accurate information can be promptly retrieved and collated by competent national authorities.” Notably, there is no suggestion that this undertaking applies only to state holdings. The implication is a gun registration system that maintains records to allow national authorities to maintain retrievable and collated records of all SALW held within their jurisdiction – those privately held as well as those publicly held. In summary, through the
Programme of Action the participating states undertake to:
• regulate individual and group possession of SALW;
• make any violation of such regulations a criminal offence;
• take action under their national laws against groups or individuals in illegal possession of SALW;
• prohibit the possession of unmarked or inadequately marked weapons; and
• maintain comprehensive and accurate records of all SALW held within their jurisdiction.
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Project Ploughshares was established in 1976 as an agency of the Canadian Council of Churches to implement the churches’ imperative to seek and pursue peace. Our mandate is to work with churches and related organizations, as well as governments and non-governmental organizations, in Canada and internationally, to identify, develop, and advance approaches that build peace and prevent war, and promote the peaceful resolution of political conflict. Project Ploughshares is affiliated with the Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, Conrad Grebel University College, University of Waterloo.

… and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares and spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation; neither shall they learn war any more. (Isaiah 2:4)

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