

WCC

Microdisarmament

Policy Framework And Programmes of Action

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POLICY FRAMEWORK AND GUIDELINES ON SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS

Background

Small Arms and Violence

Small arms and light weapons (SALW) are the primary instruments through which persistent and deeply-rooted political conflicts are transformed with alarming frequency into armed violence and war. Through war, crime, domestic violence and suicides, more than 10,000 lives are lost each week to small arms violence. The easy availability of SALW exacerbates and prolongs armed conflicts, defers economic and social development, promotes crime, nurtures cultures of violence, and produces an extraordinary worldwide burden of cumulative personal tragedies and public crises.

The most devastating impact of small arms affects the vulnerable, especially teen-agers. The light weight, transportability and ease of use of small arms and light weapons has facilitated one of the most abusive elements of contemporary armed conflict, notably the engagement of children as armed combatants.

It is a matter of urgent public responsibility that the international community now act to address the problems of the proliferation, accumulation and misuse of small arms and light weapons, and to address their debilitating social, economic, political and humanitarian impacts.

The Role of the Churches

In response to the small arms crisis, and in the context of the international campaign, "Peace to the City," carried out in the context of the World Council of Churches' (WCC) Program to Overcome Violence, the WCC Central Committee called in 1997 for "special attention to the concern for microdisarmament." Subsequently, international and regional consultations on micro-disarmament were held in Rio de Janeiro (May 1998 and July 2000) and Nairobi (October 2000); a Micro-disarmament Fund has been created to support local and regional initiatives; and an Ecumenical Network on Small Arms (ENSA) is in formation.

The July 2000 consultation in Rio declared that "the problem of armed violence and the diffusion of small arms...cannot be effectively addressed without the involvement of the Churches in the region." The Latin American declaration went on to say that "churches have deep roots in local communities and thus are especially well positioned to address

the issues of micro-conflict. Churches know the people's needs, and can understand the insecurities that lead some to seek security through guns.”

The churches are well placed to acknowledge and testify to the impact of small arms, since they minister to the victims and their families all around the world, in rich and poor nations. Churches see people's needs and are in a unique position to address the small arms epidemic, identifying its material, moral, ethical and spiritual dimensions. Churches can inform, mobilize and guide the community, offering a specific and holistic contribution to the international small arms campaign.

Churches also have a policy role to play, bringing theological insights and moral and ethical perspectives to bear upon the social and political pursuit of small arms control and demand reduction.

The Emerging Small Arms Agenda

Through a wide range of UN expert studies, UN resolutions, and civil society research and analysis, a broadly recognized international small arms agenda is emerging. The churches are challenged to support and advance that emerging small arms action agenda designed to *control the supply and availability* of SALW, to promote social, economic and political conditions to *reduce the demand* for SALW, and to facilitate and *ensure effective implementation of and compliance* with small arms control and reduction measures.

While individual states exercise varying degrees of control over SALW, there exist no universal laws or standards by which to regulate the production, transfer, possession or use of small arms, and to protect individuals, families and communities from small arms abuse.

Nevertheless, a series of significant international initiatives by States have been taken that deserve the study of the churches, including:

- a) ECOWAS “Declaration of a Moratorium on Importation, Exportation and Manufacture of Light Weapons in West Africa (November 1998);
- b) The “Nairobi Declaration on the Problem of the Proliferation of Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa” (March 2000);
- c) The “Bamako Declaration on an African Common Position on the Illicit Proliferation, Circulation and Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons” (December 2000);
- d) The OAS “Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and other Related Materials” (November 1997);
- e) The Brasilia Declaration for the 2001 *United Nations Conference on the Illicit Arms Trade in Small Arms and All Its Aspects*, Regional Preparatory Meeting of the Latin American and Caribbean States for the UN Conference (November 2000);
- f) European Union joint action on “Combating the Destabilising Accumulation and Spread of Small Arms and Light Weapons” (December 1998);

- g) The UN “Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition,” supplementing the “United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime” (March 2001).

The UN 2001 Conference

The forthcoming (July 2001) *United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects* offers a significant opportunity to advance the three-fold small arms agenda, to recognize the humanitarian consequences of the proliferation of small arms, and to mobilize support for timely measures and commitments to mitigate their damaging impact.

It is vitally important that the UN conference commit States to measures that will have a real and beneficial impact on the lives of the people who now suffer the devastating and debilitating consequences of the presence and misuse of small arms in their communities. The conference could be a critically important step toward addressing the small arms crisis, but it will only be an early step on the way to developing the international measures, norms, and laws needed to reduce the demand for and enhance the control of SALW.

A Call to Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons

Against the background of the work already undertaken on small arms and light weapons by the WCC International Relations staff and the CCIA Peacebuilding and Disarmament Reference Group, the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs of the World Council of Churches (CCIA/WCC), at its forty-fourth meeting in Crans-Montana, Switzerland, 14-18 May 2001:

Renews the appeal to the churches of the Fifth WCC Assembly (Nairobi 1975) “to emphasize their readiness to live without the protection of armaments;” urges Christians to do those things that make for peace with justice, and to foster the development of social and political institutions that provide security and physical and spiritual well-being for all without resort to weapons;

Renews its commitment to sustained participation in the emerging global effort to address the excessive and unregulated accumulations and proliferation of small arms that foment conflicts around the world, make them extraordinarily destructive, and render them more resistant to peaceful resolution;

Welcomes the convening of the UN Conference on small arms in 2001 and urges the churches to commit it and the broader effort of small arms disarmament to God in prayer;

Emphasizes the urgent need for resolute international action through the 2001 conference and beyond to encourage the international community to put in place a sustained program of action to address the small arms crisis;

Welcomes the formation and work of the International NGO Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA), of which the WCC is a founding member;

Affirms the importance of church action and encourages the Ecumenical Network on Small Arms (ENSA) in its continuing work in collaboration with other members of IANSA;

Calls upon states to use the occasion of the 2001 UN Conference to agree and commit to the following measures, and to put in place policies and resources to ensure their effective follow-up and implementation:

- a) to exercise restraint in the accumulation and transfer of small arms and light weapons, and to pursue a global “code of conduct” to control arms transfers in the context of and consistent with the obligations of states, including the obligation not to acquire arms for purposes other than or beyond levels needed for self-defence, to ensure the least possible diversion of resources to armaments, and to the obligation to respect and protect the welfare and rights of its citizens;
- b) to implement strict domestic controls on the manufacture, possession and use of small arms, including consideration of the feasibility of adopting a legally binding instrument for a universal ban on civilian possession and use of military assault rifles;
- c) to address social, political and economic conditions that tend to generate demand for small arms and light weapons (including a focus on human safety and protection, peaceful resolution of conflict, promoting cultures of peace, an urgent attention to reform of the security sector);
- d) to cooperate, notably within and between regions, in support of more effective and consistent compliance with controls and regulations, including the pursuit of universal legally binding instruments to regulate brokering, and to adopt universal standards for marking, tracing, and record keeping of small arms and light weapons;
- e) to adopt international standards for stockpile management, for post-conflict disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of ex-combatants, for weapons collection, and for the destruction of surplus and collected weapons;
- f) to promote the conversion of weapons manufacturing capacity into socially constructive production;
- g) to practice maximum transparency in transactions and policies and regulations related to small arms and light weapons;
- h) to provide increased international support and resources for programs and initiatives to promote social justice and advance human security as conditions essential to development, and to promote social, economic and political conditions conducive to long-term peace, stability and development;
- i) to provide financial, technical, and political support for the effective implementation of the above measures and policies;
- j) to put in place effective follow-up and accountability processes.

Urges the churches, in the context of the Decade to Overcome Violence, to join with other faiths and civil society partners in their own countries to obtain their governments' agreement to these goals;

Commits itself to continue to give special attention to ameliorating the social, political and economic conditions that tend to generate demand to violence reduction efforts;

Commits itself to continuing active consultation with member churches and regional and national councils of churches to promote education and awareness raising, to develop and refine ecumenical policy on the issue, to contribute to the development of national, regional international plans of action to address armed violence and the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, and assist the churches in developing their own effective programs and actions to control and mitigate the effects of small arms and light weapons.

*Adopted at the 44th meeting of
the CCLA/WCC
18 May 2001
Crans Montana, Switzerland*

Small Arms and Light Weapons

WCC Policy and the 2001 UN Program of Action: How far did we get?

Most NGO assessments of the Program of Action (POA) coming out of the *2001 United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in all its Aspects* have been quite critical. The conference is widely viewed as a “missed opportunity” with acknowledgements that states were in the end able to agree on some constructive action commitments. There were indeed missed opportunities, but in the main the conference produced a useful program of action which, if implemented with any credible degree of rigour, can be expected to produce concrete results toward the alleviation of suffering through small arms and light weapons. A close reading of the POA text yields some perhaps surprising conclusions. While the mood at the end of the conference was one of disappointment because two hotly debated paragraphs had in the end to be abandoned (on civilian ownership on a prohibition on state shipments to non-state actors), the POA includes some significant measures related to civilian ownership or possession (see below) and, it must be stated, significant action on the key policy priorities identified by the CCIA at its May 2001 meeting.

In many ways the expectations for the UN Conference on “The Illicit Trade In Small Arms and Light Weapons In All Its Aspects” were modest. The preparatory process had made it clear that there were major gaps in the international community’s approach. Sub-Saharan African states were looking for some concrete action to stem the tides of small arms flows that exacerbate conflict and undermine human security on the battlefields and troubled urban centres of their region. A broad range of northern countries were pressing for specific commitments, not only to combat illicit trafficking, but also to control and restrict legal flows. At the same time, the United States stood firm in its opposition to any action that would, in the opening statement by John R. Bolton, Under-Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security Affairs of the United States, “constrain legal trade and legal manufacturing of small arms and light weapons.” He said the US would oppose “measures that prohibit civilian possession of small arms,” regarding the issue itself to be outside the mandate for the Conference. Similarly, China and many of the Arab states wanted the Conference to confine itself to the illegal trade in small arms, rejecting the insistence of others that the reference to the Illicit trade “in all its aspects” required states to address the wide range of issues and conditions, including inadequate legal controls on these weapons, that are factors in the illicit proliferation of SALW.

In that mixed political context, non-governmental organizations looking for concrete measures to control and reduce the availability of SALW for the most part identified four minimum requirements for a successful conference: 1) that it build international political will and momentum in support of serious attention to the small arms problem; 2) that it produce a Program of Action with at least some significant and specific commitments to act; 3) that it commit new resources for small arms action; and 4) that it put in place a follow-up mechanism to hold the international community to account for the extent to which its promises are implemented.

On all of those levels the Conference must be judged a basic, if not spectacular, success.ⁱ Even before the Programme of Action (POA) was approved at the close of the conference, the event had been especially effective in promoting attention to the small arms problem and in mobilizing political will in response. NGOs were a primary factor in making the event politically significant. The Conference did commit to follow-up meetings and conferences to review the progress made in addressing the small arms problem. The level of the financial commitment to small arms action in the post-conference environment will become clear only over time, but some states, like the United Kingdom,ⁱⁱ have made formal funding commitments.

WCC Policy Priorities:

The following table lists the CCIA policy priorities on the right and then identifies and comments briefly on the sections of the POA relevant to those priorities:

...the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs of the World Council of Churches, at its forty-fourth meeting in Crans-Montana, Switzerland, 14-18 May 2001...*Calls upon states to use the occasion of the 2001 UN Conference to agree and commit to the following measures, and to put in place policies and resources to ensure their effective follow-up and implementation:*

CCIA Policy:	Relevant UN 2001 Small Arms Conference Action:
<p>a) to exercise restraint in the accumulation and transfer of small arms and light weapons, and to pursue a global “code of conduct” to control arms transfers in the context of and consistent with the obligations of states, including the obligation not to acquire arms for purposes other than or beyond levels needed for self-defence, to ensure the least possible diversion of resources to armaments, and to the obligation to</p>	<p>Transfer controls: The Program of Action’s (POA) reference to arms transfer controls must be regarded as one of the more significant achievements of the Conference. While China and others made sure that nothing in the document could be construed as promoting universal standards that would undermine the prerogative of states to establish their own export policies, Para II.11 goes some distance in acknowledging that export regulations must after all conform to universal obligations and cannot be at the exclusive discretion of individual states. Efforts to include examples of specific export criteria were not successful, but the POA does include what many NGOs regard as an important break-through in the direction of establishing international norms and standards on arms transfers. The POA commits States (II.11) to “assess applications for export authorizations according to strict national regulations and procedures that cover all SALW and are <i>consistent with States’ existing responsibilities under international law</i>” [emphasis added].</p> <p>The paragraph asserts the relevance of international norms and standards (not just national interests) in restricting international transfers and begs the question of just what those “existing responsibilities under international law” are. That in turn provides a significant opening, even mandate, for promoting a Code of Conduct to clarify and codify existing obligations under international law (the purpose of the NGO effort to seek adoption of a framework convention on arms transfers). Such obligations at a minimum include respect for human rights and international humanitarian law and the obligation not to provide arms to recipients if there is a reasonable chance that they will be used in the violation of human rights and humanitarian law.</p>

<p>respect and protect the welfare and rights of its citizens;</p>	<p>The paragraph goes on to commit states “to establish or maintain an effective national system of export and import licensing or authorization, as well as measures on international transit, for the transfer of all small arms and light weapons, with a view to combating the illicit trade in SALW.”</p> <p>In addition, the POA calls for other measures to restrict transfers, including more effective implementation of arms embargoes (Paras I.11, II.16, and II.35), the use of end-user certificates to prevent diversions (II.12), to notify the original exporting state in the event of retransfers (II.13). Para II.12 makes a general call “to put in place, where they do not exist, adequate laws, regulations and administrative procedures to exercise effective control over the production of SALW within their areas of jurisdiction and over the export, import and transit or retransfer of such weapons...”</p> <p>Excessive accumulations: The POA also raises the issue of the “excessive accumulation and uncontrolled spread in many regions of the world” of SALW (Para I.2), with “particular emphasis on the regions of the world where conflicts come to an end and where serious problems with the excessive and destabilizing accumulation of SALW have to be dealt with urgently” (Para I.21.d, and a footnote refers to a description of the term “excessive and destabilizing accumulation of SALW” in A/52/298). Para II.19 commits states to identify stocks that are surplus and to destroy or otherwise dispose of them.</p> <p>The cumulative significance of these measures is a POA that challenges the international community to construct a universal arms transfer control regime that based on restraint, law, and mutual accountability. The challenge now is to continue to elaborate the details of such a regime and to monitor its implementation.</p>
<p>b) to implement strict domestic controls on the manufacture, possession and use of small arms, including consideration of the feasibility of adopting a legally binding instrument for a universal ban on civilian possession and use of military assault rifles;</p>	<p>One of the more controversial and disappointing outcomes of the conference was the failure of States to explicitly commit to effective regulation of civilian possession and use of SALW -- but there is more here than first meets the eye.</p> <p>The US attracted wide attention for its ultimate refusal to support the proposed paragraph calling on states to “seriously consider legal restrictions on...ownership of SALW” (L.5, II.22), and some of the media coverage implied that the POA therefore avoids all reference to gun control, but consider the following references:</p> <p>* Para II.3. commits all participating states “to adopt and implement” the legislative or other measures required to “establish as criminal offences under their domestic law the illegal manufacture, <i>possession</i> [emphasis added], stockpiling and trade of SALW within their areas of jurisdiction, in order to ensure that those engaged in such activities can be prosecuted under appropriate national penal codes.” In other words, the para requires that unlawful possession be a criminal offence -- assuming the existence of domestic controls.</p> <p>* Para II.4 commits states to establishing “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</p>

SALW. The measures, the paragraph says, should be directed against “the illicit manufacture, control, trafficking, circulation, brokering, trade” of SALW. Here too, the paragraph makes sense only in a context where domestic laws regulate the manufacture, possession and circulation of arms, calling, as it does, for the creation of national institutional frameworks to support and elaborate such regulations.

* In Para II.6 States also undertake “to identify...groups and individuals engaged in the illegal manufacture, trade, stockpiling, transfer, possession [emphasis added]...of illicit SALW,” and then pledge to “take action under appropriate national law [emphasis added], against such groups and individuals.” This paragraph refers to the illegal possession of small arms by individuals, and thus establishes the requirement for domestic laws to regulate possession by individuals and to distinguish between legal and illegal possession (so that individuals in illegal possession of such arms can be identified and prosecuted, as the paragraph requires).

* The POA even identifies some **basic international or global standards for domestic gun control**. Para II.7 declares 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), and States then undertake (II.8) “to adopt...all the necessary measures to prevent the... possession of any unmarked or inadequately marked SALW.” Hence, the POA effectively puts forward a global norm to prohibit the possession of unmarked weapons.

* 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 SALW within 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 reference to this undertaking applying only to state holdings. This undertaking implies national gun registration systems that allow national authorities to maintain retrievable and collatable records of all SALW held within their jurisdiction – those privately held as well as those publicly held.

In summary, through the POA 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.

These are inadequate measures, but they can be understood as at least moving toward compliance with basic principles regarding the need to regulate SALW, the need for certain global standards in such regulation, and the need for regulated arms to be clearly marked, identified and kept track of. The proposal to prohibit **civilian ownership of military assault rifles** was tested but rejected.

<p>c) to address social, political and economic conditions that tend to generate demand for small arms and light weapons (including a focus on human safety and protection, peaceful resolution of conflict, promoting cultures of peace, an urgent attention to reform of the security sector);</p>	<p>While there was a reluctance among many states to address the issue of demand head on, the POA does implicitly and explicitly recognize the importance of addressing demand issues in efforts to deal with the SALW problem.</p> <p>1. Development Para I.2bis expresses concern “at the implications that poverty and underdevelopment may have for the illicit trade in” SALW, suggesting that poverty and underdevelopment could exacerbate the illicit trade – or, put another way, the demand for SALW generated as the result of poverty and underdevelopment could add to the illicit trade. Para I.14 also recognizes that the SALW challenge is “multi-faceted” and involves, among other factors listed, “development dimensions.” In particular reference to post-conflict situations (III.18) “State should, as appropriate, make greater efforts to address problems related to human and sustainable development, taking into account existing and future social and development activities and should fully respect the rights of the States concerned to establish priorities in their development programmes.”</p> <p>2. Culture of Peace: Para I.2ter expresses determination to “reduce the human suffering caused by the illicit trade in SALW in all its aspects, ...through the promotion of a culture of peace.” At the global level states undertake to (II.44) “promote a dialogue and a culture of peace by encouraging, as appropriate, education and public awareness programmes on the problems of the illicit trade in SALW, involving all sectors of the society.”</p> <p>3. Peaceful resolution of conflict: In Para III.4 there is a call that “States and international and regional organizations, should, upon request by the affected States, consider assisting and promoting conflict prevention. Where requested by the parties concerned, in accordance with the principles of the United Nations Charter, States and international and regional organizations should consider promotion and assistance of the pursuit of negotiated solutions to conflicts wherever possible, including by addressing their root causes.”</p> <p>4. Reform of the security sector: Para III.7 refers to relevant law enforcement training and cooperation: “States and international and regional organizations should seriously consider assisting interested States, upon request, in building capacities in areas including the development of appropriate legislation and regulation, law enforcement, tracing and marking, stockpile management and security, destruction of SALW and the collection and exchange of information.”</p>
<p>d) to cooperate, notably within and between regions, in support of more effective and consistent</p>	<p>1. Cooperation within and between regions: * National to regional focal points: Intra-regional cooperation was given strong support, and the POA commits states and the international community to establishing national “coordination agencies or bodies and institutional infrastructure responsible for policy guidance, research and monitoring of efforts to prevent, combat and eradicate</p>

<p>compliance with controls and regulations, including the pursuit of universal legally binding instruments to regulate brokering, and to adopt universal standards for marking, tracing, and record keeping of small arms and light weapons;</p>	<p>the illicit trade in SALW in all its aspects,” (II.4) national points of contact (II.5), and sub-regional and regional points of contact (II.26) for cooperative implementation of the POA.</p> <p>* Regional harmonization of laws/moratoria:</p> <p>Para II.27 commits states, at the regional level to encourage negotiations towards relevant legal agreements, including regional agreements to strengthen relevant laws, regulations and administrative procedures (II.30), and to facilitate import moratoria (II.28). “</p> <p>2. Brokering:</p> <p>Action on Brokering was not as strong as many had hoped and even expected (many had hoped for an explicit mandate to negotiate an international convention to regulate brokering). But the POA does commit states (II.14) “to develop adequate national legislation or administrative procedures regulating the activities of those who engage in SALW brokering” (including registration and licensing of brokers, with appropriate penalties for illicit brokering). The specific action recommendation was disappointing inasmuch as States only committed (IV.1.d) “to consider further steps to enhance international cooperation in preventing, combating and eradicating illicit brokering in SALW.”</p> <p>3. Marking, tracing, record-keeping:</p> <p>In Para II.7 states commit to including an appropriate and reliable marking on each SALW as an integral part of the production process (it should be unique, identify the country of manufacture, provide information that enables the national authorities of that country to identify the manufacturer and serial number). And in II.8 states commit to taking “all the necessary measures to prevent the manufacture, stockpiling, transfer and possession of any unmarked or inadequately marked SALW.” In II.9 there is a commitment “to ensure that comprehensive and accurate records are kept for as long as possible on the manufacture, holding and transfer of SALW within their jurisdiction,” with the proviso that “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.” And in II.10 states undertake “to ensure responsibility for all SALW held and issued by the State and effective measures for tracing such weapons.”</p> <p>At the global level states undertake (II.39) “to strengthen the ability of States to cooperate in identifying and tracing in a timely and reliable manner illicit SALW.” The POA calls (III.10) for international cooperation and assistance related to tracing and detection technologies of illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, as well as measures to facilitate the transfer of such technologies.” Cooperation and information exchange are also promised (III.11-12) There is a specific recommendation to UNGA (IV.1.c) “to undertake a United Nations study, within existing resources, for examining the feasibility of developing an international instrument to enable States to identify and trace in a timely and reliable manner illicit SALW.”</p>
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<p>e) to adopt international standards for <u>stockpile management</u>, for post-conflict <u>disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration</u> of ex-combatants, for <u>weapons collection</u>, and for the <u>destruction</u> of surplus and collected weapons;</p>	<p>1. Stockpile management: II.18. “To ensure, subject to the respective constitutional and legal systems of States, that the armed forces, police or any other body authorized to hold SALW establish adequate and detailed standards and procedures relating to the management and security of their stocks of these weapons. These standards and procedures should, inter alia, relate to: appropriate location for stockpiles; physical security measures; control of access to stocks; inventory management and accounting control; staff training; security, accounting and control of SALW held or transported by operational units or authorized personnel; and procedures and sanctions in the event of thefts or loss.” Regional cooperation in Stockpile management: II.31. “To encourage states to promote safe, effective stockpile management and security, in particular physical security measures, for SALW, and to implement, where appropriate, regional and subregional mechanisms in this regard.” III.8 “Regional and international programmes for specialist training on small arms stockpile management and security should be developed. Upon request, States and appropriate international or regional organizations in a position to do so should support these programmes. The United Nations, within existing resources, and other appropriate international or regional organizations should consider developing capacity for training in this area.”</p> <p>2. Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) II.23. “To develop and implement, where possible, effective disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes, including the effective collection, control, storage and destruction of SALW, particularly in post-conflict situations, unless another form of disposition or use has been duly authorized, and such weapons have been marked and the alternate form of disposition or use has been recorded, and to include, where applicable, specific provisions for these programmes in peace agreements.” II.33 commits states at the regional level to support national DDR programs. At the global level states commit to encouraging, “particularly in post-conflict situations, the disarmament and demobilisation of ex-combatants and their subsequent reintegration into civilian life, including providing support for the effective disposition, as stipulated in para 17 of this section, of collected SALW.” II.38 commits states to encouraging “the UN Security Council to consider, on a case-by-case basis, the inclusion, where applicable, of relevant provisions for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration in the mandates and budgets of peacekeeping operations.” III.17 “Particularly in post-conflict situations and where appropriate, the relevant regional and international organizations should support, within existing resources, appropriate post-conflict programmes related to the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants.”</p> <p>3. Destruction of surplus/confiscated stocks: II. 17. “To ensure that all confiscated, seized or collected SALW are destroyed, subject to any legal constraints associated with the preparation of criminal prosecutions, unless another form of disposition or use has been</p>
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	<p>officially authorized, and provided that such weapons have been marked and registered.”</p> <p>II.20. “To destroy surplus SALW designated for destruction, taking into account inter alia the report of the United Nations Secretary-General on methods of destruction of small arms, light weapons, ammunition and explosives (S/2000/1092) of 15 November 2000.”</p> <p>At the global level, states commit (II.37) to encouraging DDR, “including providing support for the effective disposition, as stipulated in para 17 of this section, of collected SALW.”</p> <p>III.14 “Upon request, States and appropriate international or regional organizations in a position to do so should provide assistance in the destruction or other responsible disposal of surplus stocks or unmarked or inadequately marked SALW.”</p>
<p>f) to promote the conversion of weapons manufacturing capacity into socially constructive production;</p>	<p>No specific reference in the POA.</p>
<p>g) to practice maximum transparency in transactions and policies and regulations related to small arms and light weapons;</p>	<p>Transparency and information sharing:</p> <p>II.25. “To make public national laws, regulations and procedures that impact on the prevention, combating and eradicating of the illicit trade in SALW in all its aspects, and to submit on a voluntary basis to relevant regional and international organizations and in accordance with their national practices, information on, inter alia: a) SALW confiscated or destroyed within their jurisdiction; and b) other relevant information such as illicit trade routes and techniques of acquisition that can contribute to the eradication of the illicit trade in SALW in all its aspects.”</p> <p>II.29. “To establish, where appropriate, sub-regional or regional mechanisms, in particular trans-border customs cooperation and networks for information sharing among law enforcement, border and customs control agencies, with a view to preventing, combating and eradicating the illicit trade in SALW across borders.”</p> <p>II.34. “To encourage regions to develop, where appropriate and on a voluntary basis, measures to enhance transparency with a view to combating the illicit trade in SALW in all its aspects.”</p> <p>At the global level states (II.36) “request the Secretary General of the UN, within existing resources, through the DDA, to collate and circulate data and information provided by States on a voluntary basis and including national reports, on implementation by those states of the Programme of Action.”</p> <p>II.36. To request the Secretary-General of the United Nations, within existing resources, through the Department of Disarmament Affairs, to collate and circulate data and information provided by States on a voluntary basis and including national reports, on implementation by those States of the Programme of Action.</p>

	<p>III.5 “ States and international and regional organizations should, where appropriate, cooperate, develop and strengthen partnerships to share resources and information on the illicit arms trade in SALW in all its aspects.”</p> <p>Also relevant to transparency is the general commitment to research (III.19): “States, regional and sub-regional and international organizations, research centres, health and medical institutions, the United Nations system, international financial institutions and civil society are urged, as appropriate, to develop and support action-oriented research aimed at facilitating greater awareness and better understanding of the nature and scope of the problems associated with the illicit trade in SALW in all its aspects.”</p>
<p>h) [assistance for demand reduction] to provide increased international support and resources for programs and initiatives to promote social justice and advance human security as conditions essential to development, and to promote social, economic and political conditions conducive to long-term peace, stability and development;</p>	<p>III. 4. "States and appropriate international and regional organizations should, upon request by the affected States, consider assisting and promoting conflict prevention. Where requested by the parties concerned, in accordance with the principles of the United Nations Charter, States and international and regional organizations should consider promotion and assistance of the pursuit of negotiated solutions to conflicts, including by addressing their root causes."</p> <p>III.18. With regard to [post conflict situations in particular], States should, as appropriate, made greater efforts to address problems related to human and sustainable development, taking into account existing and future social and developmental activities and should fully respect the rights of the States concerned to establish priorities in their development programmes.</p>
<p>i) [assistance] to provide financial, technical, and political support for the effective implementation of the above measures and policies;</p>	<p>Financial and Technical Assistance:</p> <p>I.13 stressed the “urgent necessity for international cooperation and assistance, including financial and technical assistance...”</p> <p>III.3 “States and appropriate international and regional organizations, should, upon request of the relevant authorities, seriously consider to render assistance, including technical and financial assistance where needed, such as the Small Arms Fund, to support the implementation of the measures to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in SALW in all its aspects as contained in the Programme of Action.”</p> <p>2. International Cooperation:</p> <p>III.1 States “recognize that States need close international cooperation to prevent, combat and eradicate this illicit trade.”</p> <p>III.2 general commitment to broad cooperation.</p> <p>III.6 regarding capacity building in relevant areas: “States and international and regional organizations should seriously consider assisting interested States, upon request, in building capacities in areas including the development of appropriate legislation and regulation, law enforcement, tracing and</p>

	marking, stockpile management and security, destruction of SALW and the collection and exchange of information.”
j) to put in place effective follow-up and accountability processes.	Section IV 1. a) To convene a Conference no later than 2006 to review progress made in the implementation of the Programme of Action, the date and venue to be decided at the 58 th session of the General Assembly; b) To convene a meeting of States on a biennial basis to consider the national, regional and global implementation of the Program of Action;
The CCIA policy also expresses the hope that the 2001 conference would “recognize the humanitarian consequences of the proliferation of small arms.”	The POA document includes significant recognition of the humanitarian impact of SALW, especially in paras 2-4 of the Preamble. States express concern that “the illicit manufacture, transfer, and circulation of SALW and their excessive accumulation and spread in many regions of the world” have “a wide range of humanitarian and socio-economic consequences and pose a serious threat to peace, reconciliation, safety, security, stability and sustainable development at the individual, local, national, regional and international levels” Added to that are concerns about “the implications that poverty and underdevelopment may have for the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects” [i.e. poverty and development produce demand for SALW]. States declare their determination to “reduce the human suffering caused by the illicit trade in SALW in all its aspects” and recognize that the trade in SALW in all its aspects “sustains conflicts, exacerbates violence, contributes to the displacement of civilians, undermines respect for international humanitarian law, impedes the provision of humanitarian assistance to victims of armed conflict and fuels crime and terrorism.” Particular concern for the “devastating consequences on children, many of whom are victims of armed conflict or are forced to become child soldiers, as well as the negative impact on women and the elderly.”

Notes

i. The final product of the conference is the “Draft Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects” (UN Document A/Conf.192/L.5/Rev.1), divided into four sections – I. Preamble; II. Preventing, combating and eradicating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects; III. Implementation, international cooperation and assistance; IV. Follow-up to the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

ii. At the August 2, 2001 UN Security Council session on small arms, the United Kingdom reported that it has established a comprehensive small arms and light weapons reduction programme, allocating £19.5 million over a three-year period in support of the implementation of the Programme and the follow-up to the Conference.

FINAL DOCUMENT OF THE MICRODISARMAMENT CONSULTATION May 1998 Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Towards a Culture of Peace

The processes driving the diffusion and use of small arms¹ in the world are many and complex. They vary from setting to setting, from region to region. They include such factors as the lack of personal security, economic and social deprivation and lack of opportunity, the failure of governing structures, cultural views on the role of men in society, religious intolerance and many others. To the extent that these elements are successfully addressed, “demand” for small arms will be reduced. Only if they are addressed will the reality of physical violence be lessened.

But the widespread availability of small arms in and of itself fuels and exacerbates the social impact of these factors and worsens their physical, psychological and social consequences. Hence, it is increasingly understood that factors related to the availability of small arms must also be directly and effectively addressed at all levels of society. The analysis and directions suggested by the group, which are briefly summarized here, have been made with this framework of understanding in mind.

The Christian Church in its many manifestations in the world is actively engaged in society in working towards building a culture of peace. Therefore, it already can be seen to be working to reduce the causes driving the widespread diffusion of small arms. However, given the pivotal ways in which the availability of guns impacts on society, effective social witness by the Church towards a culture of peace must also focus on small arms. Many avenues were identified demonstrating how churches can be effectively involved in the control and reduction of small arms.

Existing Initiatives that Address the Proliferation and Trafficking of Small Arms

In recent years awareness has greatly increased of the specific challenges posed by the proliferation of guns and other light weapons, and by illicit arms trafficking. A wide range of initiatives have been taken to try to address these problems, operating at all levels - local, national, regional and global. The group reviewed and discussed these existing initiatives, and the opportunities for further development and action.

At the local level, there are many examples of initiatives to control and reduce the availability and use of guns, involving community groups, local authorities, churches, NGOs, aid agencies, institutes, police and other locally-based bodies. Indeed, they typically form a key part of projects to prevent crime and violence and build peace and development. There are, for example, many projects throughout the world aimed at: collecting or destroying guns; reducing or preventing youth involvement in crime and gun violence; persuading armed groups to stop the killing; reversing cultures of violence; re-integrating ex-combatants after conflicts; and developing cooperation between police and the community. The WCC and its

¹ Whilst there are a variety of definitions of the term small arms, for the purposes of this document, they are defined as including all weapons that are person-portable. In addition to guns and rifles of all calibers, this would also include shoulder-fired rocket and missile launchers, and anti-personnel landmines. A recent United Nations report provided the following definitions: **small arms** includes revolvers and self-loading pistols, rifles and carbines, sub-machine guns, assault rifles and light machine guns; **light weapons** includes heavy machine guns, hand-held under-barrel and mounted grenade launchers, portable anti-aircraft missile systems (sometimes mounted) and mortars of calibers less than 100 mm; **ammunition and explosives** includes cartridges (rounds) from small arms, shells and missiles for light weapons, mobile containers with missiles or shells for single-action anti-aircraft and anti-tank systems, anti-personnel and anti-tank hand grenades, landmines and explosives. From “Report of Governmental Experts on Small Arms,” A/52/298, United Nations, 27 August 1997.

member churches are very often centrally involved in such efforts, for example through its “Peace to the City” campaign.

At the national level, the wide availability and use of (legally- and illegally-held) small arms presents a potent challenge to many states’ capacity to ensure the security of citizens, promote economic and social development, or even govern parts of their territory. There have been, for example, noteworthy programmes recently to strengthen national gun controls in the UK, Australia, Mali, South Africa, Brazil, and several other countries, often stimulated by horrific massacres or high murder levels. Some countries (such as the USA, Belgium, Czech Republic, and Namibia) are also taking more action to prevent their territories from being used as a source or transit route for illicit or destabilizing arms shipments. An increasing number of governments (including several EU member states, Canada, USA and Norway) have developed programmes to strengthen the capacity of countries in regions of conflict to prevent or control light arms and illicit trafficking, or to assist with the collection and destruction of ‘surplus’ arms.

At the international level, it is useful to distinguish between several different levels of action. There are global and regional programmes, and also initiatives to develop international support for regional actions. Finally, many bilateral or trilateral cooperative arrangements have developed between two or three neighbouring countries.

Since the end of the Cold War, and particularly over the last two years, there has been significant progress towards the development of a global framework for action against small arms proliferation. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, UN General Assembly Resolutions developed a policy agenda focusing on potentially destabilizing effects of arms accumulations and transfers, their possible impact on economic and social development, and concerns about illicit or covert arms trafficking. The UN agenda emphasized strengthening national controls, promoting restraint, and enhancing openness and transparency in arms transfers (including the establishment in 1992 of the UN Register of Conventional Arms).

In 1995, concerns about small arms came explicitly to the fore, with the publication of the UN Secretary-General’s report ‘*Supplement to An Agenda for Peace*’ - an addendum to his 1992 *Agenda for Peace* - which highlighted the need for ‘microdisarmament’. The following year, a UN Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms was established to report on: the types of small arms and light weapons being used in conflicts; the nature and causes of flows and accumulations of such weapons and their impacts; and some possible ways and means of tackling the problem. The UN Panel produced an important report, published in summer 1997 and endorsed by the General Assembly. A new follow-on UN Group of Experts begins to meet in May 1998, to examine international efforts to address the problem of light arms proliferation and illicit trafficking and to prepare a framework for possible coordinated global action. It is due to report in summer 1999. In 1998 several efforts have emerged to establish a coalition of ‘like-minded’ states, to accelerate the development of such a global action programme.

At the same time, a range of UN and other global bodies have also been developing programmes to address these issues. Building on a series of UN General Assembly Resolutions on illicit arms trafficking, the UN Economic and Social Council’s (ECOSOC) Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice has surveyed firearms regulations and adopted a resolution to strengthen such regulations for the purposes of crime prevention and public safety. Together with Interpol, it is examining ways of strengthening efforts to combat illicit possession, trafficking and use of firearms. The G-8 has endorsed a programme to establish an international convention to address this problem.

In parallel with this, the UN Development Programme and the World Bank have been developing programmes to support security sector reform, gun-collection, border controls, demobilization and re-integration of ex-combatants, and the capacity of police and other

institutions to maintain citizen and community security. The UNDP in particular has become closely involved in supporting the 'security first' approach to development assistance and peacebuilding, in which balanced and integrated programmes to address both security and development concerns are developed in conflict-prone areas.

At the regional level, several important initiatives have developed recently. Following a national initiative by Mali for UN assistance to tackle small arms proliferation, a group of countries in the Sahara-Sahel, West Africa, have developed a regional action programme to control arms flows and develop harmonized national gun controls, and soon hopefully to launch a regional moratorium on light and small arms transfers. In Southern Africa, initial steps have been taken to develop regional cooperation on border controls, policing, tackling arms trafficking, and gun collection and disposal.

In Europe, on the initiative of the Netherlands, EU states adopted in June 1997 a framework 'Programme for Preventing and Combatting Illicit Trafficking in Conventional Arms'. This has subsequently been developed during the UK's presidency of the EU in 1998. At the same time the UK has pushed forward with negotiations to establish an EU Code of Conduct on Arms Transfers which elaborates the criteria for limiting arms transfers and establishes information exchange and consultation mechanisms on implementation. The new Code of Conduct should be agreed in June 1998.

In the Americas, the Organisation of American States agreed in November 1997 on a far-reaching 'Inter-American Convention Against the Illicit Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives and Other Related Materials'. This establishes substantial commitments to strengthen collective controls on arms transfers and efforts to combat arms trafficking, and is probably now the most highly developed regional agreement of its kind. Closely associated with it is an effort, coordinated by the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission, to establish a harmonized systems of import and export controls on arms and ammunition based on agreed best practice. The Mercosur group of South American states are reportedly developing sub-regional cooperation to further strengthen efforts in this area.

The problem of small arms proliferation is global. Regional action plans and agreements are very important, but they can greatly benefit from outside cooperation and assistance. Initiatives to provide such outside support, and to link global and regional programmes are therefore particularly significant. Perhaps the first contemporary example is the cooperation between Mali and its neighbouring West African states and the international community. Since 1995, the UN (and especially the UNDP) has established precedent-setting programmes to shape and support efforts by Sahara-Sahel countries to promote 'microdisarmament' and control arms flows. Individual donor countries, such as the Netherlands, the USA and Japan, have also been actively involved, and most recently Norway launched its Norwegian Initiative on Small Arms Transfers (NISAT) to support the possible establishment of a West African moratorium on light arms transfers.

Similarly, it is a key part of the EU Programme to Combat and Prevent Illicit Arms Trafficking to develop EU programmes to support efforts by countries in regions in conflict. In line with this, during its EU presidency in the first half of 1998, the UK sponsored a conference for officials from Southern Africa and EU countries to develop a draft action plan for tackling light arms proliferation and illicit trafficking in Southern Africa and to identify ways in which the EU could help. An action plan was agreed, and it is hoped that the next SADC/EU ministerial meeting will use it to establish a cooperative programme.

Finally, it is important to note the significance of bilateral and trilateral initiatives at the international level. There are many examples, such as agreements to combat illicit trafficking between: Mozambique, South Africa, and Swaziland; Mali and Niger; Mexico and the USA; India and Sri Lanka; and Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay.

In a sense, such arrangements between two or three countries form the bedrock on which wider regional and international cooperation can be built. In practice, however, international initiatives in this area have developed simultaneously at all levels - global, regional, international/regional, and bi/trilateral - and can be mutually re-enforcing. For example, bilateral cooperation can be facilitated and made more effective if it takes place within the framework of regional or global agreements, and with practical support from outside.

The group emphatically agreed that local, national, regional and international initiatives should be seen as mutually reinforcing. Work at all levels should, in principle, be supported; this is true for the churches as for all other concerned groups. Churches play a key role in many local projects to prevent or tackle the impact of small arms proliferation, and these projects should be developed and encouraged. The WCC and its member churches should play an important role in promoting useful national and international actions. Although the existing initiatives, as outlined above, are promising, it is important not only to work to ensure effective implementation but also to generate new initiatives.

Developing Policy Responses to the Problems of Small Arms

The group noted the devastating consequences associated with the unregulated and unrestrained proliferation of small arms and, building on previous statements by the WCC relating to restraint in the international transfer, sale, and acquisition of arms, emphasized the need for enhanced controls and improved regulation over the transfer and ownership of small arms. Accordingly, the group called for the development of policy responses with a view to controlling and reducing the availability, circulation and use of small arms. These measures to control small arms are proposed in the context of a basic recognition that fundamental to the control of small arms are measures to promote social, economic and political conditions that provide for the safety of individuals and societies and thus reduce the demand for weapons. Churches have a special role in supporting the development of positive social climates that address the individual and collective needs of societies threatened by conflict.

In examining these existing initiatives, the group identified a number of ways in which churches should contribute to ongoing processes whose purpose is to control and reduce the availability, circulation and use of small arms. Accordingly, the group identified four broad areas where policy and action should be developed:

- i) Improved domestic regulation of firearms;
- ii) Improved controls governing the production and transfer of small arms;
- iii) Measures to address the illicit transfer of weapons;
- iv) Measures to remove weapons from post-conflict situations, and to ensure their destruction as part of a broad framework peacebuilding.

i) Domestic Regulation and Control of Small Arms

The group recognized that the widespread and unregulated availability of small arms within civil society is a major contributing factor to insecurity and can contribute to a culture of violence. Possible measures identified included:

- A review of existing state controls over the civilian ownership of small arms, and an examination of ways in which such controls can be strengthened;
- Improved co-ordination and co-operation between states to ensure that laws are applied uniformly across regions;
- The promotion of compliance with such laws;
- Strengthened regulations governing the use of small arms by state officials to ensure that official security and law enforcement practice, including the use of small arms for security purposes, is consistent with international human rights standards and good governance;

- The need to ensure transparency and accountability among security forces, in order to promote and respect principles and practices of good governance.

ii) Export Controls

The WCC has already called for restraint in the production, sale, and transfer of arms; in view of the particularly destructive impact that small arms are having on societies around the world, there is a need for particular restraint in the manufacturing and transfer of small arms.

- Ways and means should be found of promoting the international adoption and adherence to strict codes of conduct on arms transfers, which take into account and enhance such principles as the protection of human rights, the promotion of international peace and stability, the promotion of transparency, accountability and good governance.

iii) Combatting Illicit Trafficking

The group also acknowledged that in all regions of the world, a sizeable proportion of small arms transfers are conducted illicitly, and are therefore not subject to formal established processes of control. This is a particular problem in regions of conflict. It was also acknowledged that, to date, a number of initiatives have focused primarily on the illicit transfer of arms. While this is a welcome development, it is also important to note the linkages between the illicit and the licit trade in arms, and to begin to tackle the licit trade in its own right, as noted in ii) above.

- Existing policy initiatives addressing the illicit transfer of arms should be supported and developed;
- Co-operation should be fostered between states so that such initiatives can be extended to the broadest possible level.

iv) Reduction of Small Arms

While controlling the supply of small arms is an important priority, excessive existing accumulations of weapons are, in many societies, actively contributing to violence, conflict, and insecurity. The group therefore examined a number of existing programmes to remove arms from societies, and discussed means by which these and other programmes should be developed. It is important that such processes be located within a comprehensive, multi-faceted approach to raise awareness, developing norms of non-ownership of small arms, and building a culture of peace. Specifically, there is a need for:

- Support for existing programmes aimed at removing weapons from society, at all levels. In particular, demobilization programmes should ensure that former combatants are adequately reintegrated into civil society;
- The removal and destruction of surplus weapons, particularly in post-conflict societies.

The Witness of the Church: Ways and Means

The WCC can seek to be involved in a number of ways - by identifying key regulatory changes that need to be supported; by building alliances with other agencies (other faiths, elements of civil society, national and international agencies, etc.); by using existing programmes (such as justice, peace and economic and social development programmes); by developing and supporting non-violent alternatives in the management of conflict. In addition, the consultation recommended that small arms issues should become a core focal point of the WCC Programme to Overcome Violence and its work on disarmament.

The WCC should undertake a thorough exploration, analysis, and explication of the theological and ethical foundations for its work on the problem of small arms and illicit arms trafficking.

i) Raising awareness

A requirement for addressing the problems of the availability and use of small arms is a basic understanding of the nature and scope of the issue. This is important both within Church constituencies, amongst other faiths and civil society as a whole. In this respect, churches have a role to play in critically addressing the role of small arms, and in making known the role these weapons play in fuelling conflict and insecurity at all levels of society. In this way, churches can help establish the widespread proliferation and use of small arms as a public health issue that requires urgent attention.

At a fundamental level, churches should reaffirm their commitment to the Biblical values that undergird the pursuit of justice and the development of social and political institutions that provide the physical and spiritual well-being of all people, without resort to the use of weapons for security. The WCC should urge member and associated churches to address small arms issues through pastoral work, and through educational and teaching programmes (from seminaries to institutes of higher education). The WCC should accept a particular role of publicizing and bringing to prominent attention the work of churches in support of gun recovery and microdisarmament efforts, e.g. by organising monitoring missions, reporting related events and programs, finding supportive funding, and so on.

The WCC should examine and raise awareness of the linkages between small arms and other issues, such as economic and social development, crime and insecurity, justice, impunity, post-conflict reconstruction, etc.

The WCC should also examine issues of concern in different regions associated with the widespread availability and use of small arms. These would include drought, crime, poverty, and drugs. The WCC should examine ways in which these linkages can be addressed.

ii) Improved Domestic Regulation Of Small Arms

- Churches should support initiatives set out in the **Existing Initiatives** section of this document, and should promote and support policy initiatives set out in the **Developing Policy Responses to the Problem of Small Arms** section;
- Churches should promote non-violence training, and lobby for codes of conduct among police;
- Churches should promote links between state security institutions and civil society to improve confidence and transparency.

iii) Improved Controls Governing The Production And Transfer Of Small Arms

The WCC should seek to engage concerned parties - (both national and international) to participate in the existing policy initiatives set out in the **Existing Initiatives** section of this document, to ensure their implementation, and to engage in a process of information exchange in order that best practices might be identified to form the basis of broader, more inclusive international initiatives.

iv) Measures to Remove Weapons from Post-conflict Situations, and to Ensure Their Destruction as Part of a Broad Framework of Peacebuilding

The WCC should broaden its current involvement in post-conflict situations to promoting disarmament and demobilization initiatives. Ideally, this will involve co-ordination with other national and international organisations, as well as elements of civil society as part of planned and co-ordinated local, national, or regional initiatives:

- Churches have a critical role to play in reintegrating ex-combatants into civil society, where ties and norms will often have been disrupted. They should ensure that support for such programmes is comprehensive, structured, coordinated and sustained;
- Churches must also work towards the provision of just economic and social structures to promote viable alternatives to the use of small arms, and prevent the re-emergence of conflict;
- Churches also have a role to play in promoting the public destruction of small arms as part of comprehensive peace-building programmes. To this end, the churches should become involved in public outreach and media campaigns to ensure awareness of the programmes, and should work at the 'grassroots' level to ensure support for the initiatives.

v) *Gun Recovery*

The group felt that the churches should become involved in promoting non-possession of guns. There are a number of ways in which non-possession of guns could be promoted and pursued:

- At a basic level, churches should be promoted as 'gun-free zones' - both as buildings and, more generally the ideal of gun-free Christian homes should be promoted among members of the congregation;
- Women should be mobilized to take up this issue;
- Alternatives to gun ownership should be promoted as part of a sustained move towards a culture of peace;
- Mechanisms should be used to promote arms reduction and to enable ordinary citizens to become involved in campaigning for this;
- Public campaigns should be used to remove weapons from parishes, involving education, outreach campaigns linked into the Church calendar and appropriate events, and the media;
- WCC and its member churches should offer support to gun recovery programmes - for example buy-back, turn-in, and exchange programmes. This support should take the form of funding, awareness raising and other support, such as the use of churches as collection points.

vi) *Youth*

Gun violence affects youth disproportionately and youth are substantially involved in the perpetration of gun violence: this goes all the way from youth gangs in Rio or Los Angeles to child soldiers in Liberia. There is a need to recognize this not only as a local phenomenon, but as one having regional and international dimensions. Particular efforts suggested include:

- The WCC and its member churches should also seek to engage youth groups, and should support international and national campaigns related to the child soldiers issue;
- The serious threat to children should be used as a campaigning issue around which to promote disarmament.

vii) *Partnerships/Linkages Between Different Groups*

- The WCC and its member churches should identify and engage relevant groups concerned with and affected by small arms proliferation;
- The WCC and its member churches should develop alliances and networks with other faith communities and elements of civil and state society (including the health community, police, women's groups);
- The WCC and its member churches should engage other involved parties, including producers and trades unions.

viii) Victim Support

Churches are theologically committed to engaging clearly in support of the victims. This means to be in solidarity with the survivors/victims and serve them by:

- Helping to establish victim support agencies;
- Addressing the issue critically from their perspective.

Conclusions

The points of possible action by the WCC and its member churches cited here are only illustrative of a rich discussion. Further detail can be found in the full records of the consultation. The essential point is that the members of the consultation were clear that there is indeed a major role for the churches to play in small arms awareness and in small arms control and reduction at all levels of society, from the local to the international. A major commitment by the WCC to this work should play a very important part in the global struggle to lessen the violence, lower the number of victims, and build a more peaceful world community.

Members of the consultation wish to take special note of the importance this encounter in Rio has had in their own thinking and understanding in the area of the control and reduction of small arms. In calling this meeting, the World Council of Churches has therefore already made an important contribution to the emergence of concerted global action in this area. The group is certain that the new learning which has taken place and the new partnerships which have emerged will grow and deepen because of the opportunity which this meeting has provided. For this, the participants express profound gratitude to the WCC's Programme to Overcome Violence, as well as Saferworld and Viva Rio, for what these organisations have enabled them to do here.

*Rio de Janeiro
May 1998*

Consultation on Ecumenical Action on Small Arms In West Africa

November 26 – 28, 2002

Abokobi, Ghana

A stimulating and successful consultation on ecumenical action on small arms in the West African region was held November 26-28 in Abokobi, near Accra, Ghana. The conference, organized by the Fellowship of Christian Councils and Churches in West Africa (FECCIWA) and the World Council of Churches (WCC), provided an opportunity for churches in West Africa to develop a clear and cohesive action plan towards reducing the proliferation -- and dealing with the negative human consequences -- of small arms in the region.

The consultation brought together participants from member churches and national councils of churches in West Africa, FECCIWA, FECCLAHA (Fellowship of Christian Councils and Churches in the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa) and AACC (All Africa Council of Churches). Representatives from the West African Action Network on Small Arms (WAANSA), International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA) and resource persons from peace and human security organizations also participated. The agenda included a series of seminars from respected speakers on the sub-regional, international and ecumenical dimensions of the issue of small arms, followed by round table discussions to share experiences and lessons learned from national situations. Deliberations reflected the fact that the main concern of the churches is to address the social and political factors that contribute to a demand for small arms in the first place.

The resulting Programme of Action, adopted as a working document, offers practical and positive means by which the churches can effectively tackle armed violence in West Africa, in areas such as awareness raising, improved controls and legislation, reduction and removal of small arms, increased involvement of women and youth, victim support and strengthened linkages and partnerships.

Ms. Salpy Eskidjian, WCC Programme Executive for International Affairs, Peace and Human Security, highlighted the ecumenical role in dealing with the issue of small arms, stating that “churches are often left to deal with consequences of small arms, acting as a first point of contact for individuals who have suffered from the adverse consequences of small arms proliferation”. As such, she said, “the church has a moral and ethical obligation to stop the proliferation of small arms.” She extended to FECCIWA and its members the WCC’s full support, solidarity and prayers.

Mr. Baffour D. Amoa, the Secretary-General of FECCIWA, expressed the “need for the engagement of ECOWAS...in the issue of armed violence” to “make sure that budgets reflect a bias, not for military expenditures, but for social and health elements” and urged the churches to advocate towards those ends. He further expressed the need for churches to pursue practical goals, as opposed to empty rhetoric, and committed FECCIWA to provide information and capacity-building assistance to member national councils.

2003 Programme of Action (PoA) to Curb the Proliferation of SALW in West Africa	<i>Churches</i>	<i>National Councils of Churches</i>	
Objectives	<i>Tasks and Strategies</i>		
1. Raise Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Create Bible study groups - Create women and youth groups - Host retreats - Host camp meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Organize seminars and conferences - Share information - Perform symbolic actions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use media: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Educate journalists -Participate on radio programmes -Create jingles - Disseminate publications: Information booklets, leaflets, posters and stickers - Share information and resources among and between NCCs - Organize marches and other events on July 9th, International Small Arms Day - Target awareness raising in rural areas - Designate a small arms contact person within each NCC and ensure to report back to FECCIWA regularly
2. Improved domestic legislation on Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Advocacy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Advocacy - Train security personnel - Monitor legislation and its enforcement - Train civil society 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Organize a workshop on domestic legislation - Organize media campaigns - Lobby government and parliament
3. Improved Controls Governing the Production and Transfer of Small arms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Advocacy - Provide information and documentation - Provide education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Advocacy - Provide information and documentation - Provide education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Seek to have one member representing ENSA (Ecumenical Network on Small Arms) in National Commission on Small Arms - Network and alliance build (eg National Action Network on Small Arms - NANSAs) - Create and disseminate

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - publications - Host workshops - Work with traditional leaders for border control
4. Removal of Weapons from Post-Conflict Situations and Ensuring Their Destruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sensitize the public - Advocacy - Implement buyback programmes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sensitize the public - Advocacy - Implement buyback programmes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Work with government and UN missions to develop “swords into ploughshares” buyback schemes and destruction of SALW programmes - Work with media for sensitization - Lobby governments
5. Reduction of Small Arms in Non-Conflict Zones	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Advocacy - Sensitize the public - Educate for no tolerance for civilian use of small arms (except for legitimate purposes with strict controls, e.g. hunting) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Advocacy - Sensitize the public - Support creation of gun-free zones 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide information - Create stickers to publicize gun-free zones
6. Youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Deglorify culture of violence/machismo - Redirect energy of youth to positive, non-violent alternatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Encourage and develop national programmes to bring youth together from different communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Organize recreational activities e.g. computer training, sports programmes, music lessons - Call on youth to launch a campaign against small arms - Provide training workshops and capacity building for youth - Introduce peace education courses in schools - Provide advocacy training to youths so they work with churches and police
7. Women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Involve women as leaders in peace and human security issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Encourage women’s departments working on gender issues and domestic violence to also become involved in struggle against small arms - Equip women to lead struggle against small arms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Put small arms on the agenda of women’s meetings - Provide training workshops and capacity building for women - Link with other women’s groups internationally
8. Partnerships/ Linkages Between Different Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identify and engage with relevant groups concerned with small 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identify and engage with relevant groups concerned with small 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Meet and talk with other organisations - Work with business

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - arms proliferation. Lobby arms producers, traders and trade unions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - arms proliferation. Lobby arms producers, traders and trade unions - Network with other civil society organisations: public health groups; women's groups, other religious groups, human rights groups; peace institutes, security centres, police; political parties and legislatures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - community and public figures including celebrities - Engage with National Action Networks on Small Arms (NANSA) as well as the West Africa Action Network on Small Arms (WAANSA) and the International Action Network on Small Arms(IANSA)
9. Victim Support and Reintegration/Rehabilitation of Ex-Combatants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide ministry and counseling to victims - Provide alternatives and education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Train trainers in churches and civil society 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Network to support one another
10. Refugees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide ministry and counseling to refugees and internally displaced persons - Provide alternatives and education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support refugee programmes 	

2003 Programme of Action (PoA) to Curb the Proliferation of SALW in West Africa	<i>Fellowship of Christian Councils and Churches in West Africa</i>	<i>All Africa Council of Churches</i>	<i>World Council of Churches</i>	
<i>Objectives</i>	Tasks	And	Strategies	
1. Raising Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Create website on micro-disarmament - Hold an annual sub-regional conference 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Create website on micro-disarmament - At upcoming AACC General Assembly, ensure that small arms is a Council focus through organizing sub-regional workshops on small arms, and providing informational 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Create ENSA listserv - Lead a survey of church work on small arms with AACC and FCCs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide information, training and facilitate networking on sub-regional, regional and international levels

		<p>materials in English, French and Portuguese</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Before AACC General Assembly, consider how to involve and encourage North and Central African regions to work on small arms 		
2. Capacity Building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Host workshops and accommodate resource sharing on a sub-regional level - Focus capacity building workshop on achieving ECOWAS advocacy objectives (listed in advocacy section) - Seek co-operation and assistance from national councils as appropriate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Host workshops and accommodate resource sharing on a regional level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide resources to FECCIWA and AACC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide and funnel necessary resources towards advocacy agenda
3. Advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lobby ECOWAS to: - Implement ECOWAS moratorium; - Respect code of conduct; - Harmonise legislation within the sub-region; - Improve border control; - Control and repatriate mercenaries; - Reprioritize government expenditures; and - Put money towards implementation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lobby African Union to focus on reprioritization of government expenditures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lobby UN, governments, inter-governmental bodies and missions in Geneva and New York - Lobby to reprioritize government expenditures - Develop advocacy strategy and actions for 2003 UN Review Conference - Promote SALW agenda with churches, ecumenical 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Advocate that governments: - Promote good relations between heads of states for confidence and trust building - Call for accountability from international arms manufacturers

	of UN PoA and other practical disarmament programmes		organizations and supply countries	
4. Partnerships and Linkages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Engage with WAANSA and IANSA - Network with other sub-regional civil society organisations, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - public health organisations; -women’s groups, other religious groups, human rights groups and peace institutes; - security centres and police - Dialogue with arms producers and dealers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Network with other continental civil society organisations and NGOs working on SALW - Engage with IANSA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Network with other international NGOs working on SALW - Engage with IANSA - Increase church and ecumenical action on SALW through ENSA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promote and strengthen co-operation among and within ecumenical organizations
5. Programme and Policy Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop 2003-2005 consolidated programme budget on SALW in co-operation with AACC and WCC - Adopt policy on small arms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop 2003-2005 consolidated programme budget on SALW in co-operation with FCCs and WCC - Adopt policy on small arms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop 2004-2005 consolidated programme and budget on microdisarmament with AACC and FCCs - Fundraise - Provide core information materials on small arms to NCCs, AACC and FECCIWA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure communication is open and transparent at every level, both at the planning and reporting stage - Develop plans for a roundtable with NCCs and agencies engaged in SALW

**OVERVIEW OF GREAT LAKES AND HORN OF AFRICA
SUB-REGIONAL CONSULTATION PROCEEDINGS
23-24 October 2000, Nairobi, Kenya**

The Ecumenical Consultation on Small Arms and Light Weapons was organized by FECCLAHA, in collaboration with the World Council of Churches and Norwegian Church Aid. The consultation was held on 23-24 October 2000 held at Limuru Conference Centre, Kenya

Participants were drawn from:

Member Councils and Churches from Sudan, Uganda, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi, Tanzania and Kenya.

Representatives from international organisations: WCC, the International Committee of the Red Cross, Pax Christi International, Life & Peace Institute, Norwegian Church Aid, the Christian Council of Mozambique, the Mennonite Central Committee and DanChurchAid.

Regional Church organisations and NGOs: the All Africa Conference of Churches, Ebenezer Ministry International (DRC), Africa Peace Forum (Nairobi) SAACID (Somalia), Research Center for Civics and Human Rights Education (Ethiopia), Small Arms and Light Weapons in IGAD Countries (SALIGAD) (Kenya), Nairobi Peace Initiative, Jesuit Refugee Service, and Sudan Focal Point (Nairobi).

Kenyan organisations and institutions represented: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, the Kenya Police Department; Christian Police Association, the Kenya Human Rights Commission, World Vision Kenya; Catholic Justice and Peace Commission, and Action Aid Kenya.

During the deliberations, a number of issues were raised. These are summarized below:

The biblical reflections challenged churches to become strategists in resolving conflict, by taking up their responsibility of seeking accountability from the political leaders on their policies and actions.

This is the first time the churches have come together to understand the nature and the scope of the problem of small arms and light weapons in the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa. The church must commit itself to addressing the problem in its entirety.

The Kenyan Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation acknowledged the urgency of the issue and expressed appreciation that the churches were coming on board to engage the problem of small arm proliferation with other stakeholders. He highlighted the Nairobi Declaration as an important policy framework for governments in the region.

Countries in the region need to learn from the devastating experience of Somalia, and take an interest in the political developments in that country, which have implications for peace in the entire region.

Churches need to take an interest in security matters and not shy away from engaging in dialogue with policy makers.

Churches in the region can learn from the experiences of disarmament and demobilization in other parts of Africa, such as Mozambique.

Churches should commit themselves to concrete action at different levels, as identified in the group discussions.

The WCC Decade to Overcome Violence (2001-2010) offers a platform for engagement by the churches in issues such as the proliferation of small arms.

*FECCLAHA, in co-operation with Norwegian Church Aid, has further held a meeting on *Developing a Regional Strategy for Advocacy on Small Arms* in March 2002, as well as a *Cross-Border Consultation on Proliferation of Small Arms* in May 2002 with co-operation from Pax Christi Netherlands.

**FINAL STATEMENT OF THE LATIN AMERICAN ECUMENICAL
CONSULTATION, “TACKLING ARMED VIOLENCE IN LATIN
AMERICAN SOCIETIES: THE ISSUE OF SMALL ARMS”
25-28 July 2000, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil**

The Latin American ecumenical consultation on small arms calls on churches to renew their commitment to addressing, as a matter of urgency, the problems of violence in Latin American society and, in particular, to addressing issues of armed violence and the diffusion and misuse of small arms in their societies.

The meeting, involving representatives of churches throughout Latin America, as well as representatives of the international church and civil society in Latin America and beyond, noted with gratitude the increased international attention to the global small arms problem. Participants called on the international community, including governments, civil society and churches, to also address the conditions that lead to violence, especially the global diffusion of small arms and light weapons. Participants pledged to work within local, national, regional and international contexts, ecumenically and in cooperation with other elements of civil society, to build awareness of the United Nations Conference on Small Arms in 2001 and to promote measures designed to advance international commitment and cooperation toward the effective control of firearms, small arms and light weapons.

The meeting was organized by the World Council of Churches (WCC) in cooperation with the Latin American Council of Churches (CLAI) and Viva Rio, a local NGO, as part of their joint effort to give priority to issues of micro-disarmament within the context of the Decade to Overcome Violence : Churches Seeking Reconciliation and Peace (2001-2010) and to facilitate and encourage the churches’ ongoing attention to the small arms problem. Participants noted with appreciation the leadership of the World Council of Churches in the efforts of international civil society to curb the supply and misuse of small arms and to reinvigorate efforts to build the kinds of social, economic, and political conditions conducive to sustainable human security and to reducing the demand for small arms.

The consultation welcomed the Antigua Declaration of June 29, 2000 on the proliferation of light weapons in Central America and commends it, including the policy recommendations, to governments and civil society throughout Latin America. Churches are encouraged to refer to the Antigua Declaration in the context of developing policy proposal relevant to 2001 UN Conference.

Small Arms and Violence in the Latin American Context

The consultation heard from scholars and researchers from all of the subregions of Latin America (the Southern Cone, the Andean sub-region, and Central America and Mexico). The information and analyses presented on small arms issues in Latin America indicate the profoundly disturbing presence, spread and impact of armed violence in Latin American societies. Small arms diffusion affects regional and sub-regional stability as well as national crime rates. Latin America, the gathering was told, is burdened with extraordinarily high rates of homicide by international standards. As one participant put it, “Crimes that once shocked us are now only statistics.”

While parts of the region, notably Colombia, have high rates of crime that are closely linked to entrenched political conflict, in Latin America generally the small arms problem is very closely linked to, and manifest in, drug trafficking, other crimes and desperate local social and economic conditions.

Arms production facilities within the region contribute to the diffusion of small arms and, in addition, the region has a legacy of large stocks of weapons, accumulated during the Cold War period, which now circulate within countries and throughout the region. Peace agreements in Central America for the most part failed to make effective provision for the collection of surplus guns, and the current lack of coordination of national gun control policies mean that illicit trafficking is widespread.

The consultation addressed the wide variety of factors that contribute to current high levels of armed violence, noting particularly the process of rapid urbanization as well as social and economic marginalization. Economic inequality and exclusion from the international economy are also significant in producing the desperate social and economic conditions in urban communities that provoke a demand for guns in Latin America.

While the demand for small arms is generated through a broad range of social, economic and political circumstances, it is in local communities that it finds its most immediate expression -- on the streets of urban slums, where guns are all too often viewed as a personal solution to endemic and systemic social and economic disintegration. The consultation emphasized that in Latin America, as elsewhere, the reduction of armed violence and especially the reduction of the availability of guns requires a reduction in the demand for guns, which in turn requires real social and economic transformation, in local communities and beyond.

Responding to the Small Arms Crisis

A first step toward mobilizing an effective response to the small arms crisis in Latin America must be a two-fold acknowledgement: first, that the crisis exists and that, while it has complex roots, it has deep local manifestations that must be addressed at the local level; and, second, that effective attention to the problem at the local level is aided by international initiatives designed to address the small arms problem at a global level.

The consultation noted that while the solutions must be local, attempts to forge international norms and standards for restricting weapons transfers, possession and use are essential to setting a constructive context for local efforts. Thus the consultation welcomed in particular the adoption by the Organisation of American States (OAS) in 1997 of the *Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and other Related Materials*. The convention commits states in the region to introduce a wide range of gun-control measures and to pursue regional cooperation toward more effective controls on the transfer, possession and use of small arms.

Similarly, the consultation welcomed current efforts to broaden and extend key provisions of the OAS convention through negotiations within the United Nations towards a *Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition, supplementing the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime*. Once agreed, this Firearms Protocol will establish common international standards and promote international cooperation in their application with regard to weapons transfers. As such, it will facilitate more effective tracing of firearms.

The consultation also welcomed the forthcoming (in 2001) *United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and light Weapons in all its Aspects*. This conference promises to be a major opportunity for the international community to further advance international norms and standards for effective control on the transfer, possession and use of firearms.

The consultation endorsed the initiative of the Noble peace laureates to promote an International Code of Conduct on international arms transfers as a key element in the effort to restrict weapons flows and to encourage and establish international norms and standards against firearms possession and use.

In welcoming these international initiatives as well as initiatives in other regions, the consultation affirmed the importance of encouraging international values and norms in support of the effective control of small arms, and called for the prominent engagement of civil society and especially the churches in efforts to support and strengthen these initiatives. The churches in Latin America are urged to encourage their governments to ratify and implement the OAS convention, to support negotiations on the UN Protocol to promote the most effective controls possible, and to participate in the 2001 conference.

The consultation emphasized that, despite welcoming regional and international efforts, much more needs to be done to implement genuine hemispheric cooperation in support of gun control. Policy coordination in response to the small arms crisis has lagged far behind economic coordination and integration in the region.

The consultation identified a range of additional policy measures that should be taken by governments within regional and national contexts. Three sub-regional working groups developed policy measures relevant to each of the sub-regions, with the Southern Cone group paying particular attention to legislative measures, including current efforts to ban the possession and commerce of firearms in Brazil, as well as the need to strengthen inter-state cooperation in law enforcement measures on the sub-regional level within the *Mercosur* integration context. The Central American group focussed on public education and advocacy measures, while the Andean group addressed national policy and legislative issues as well as public awareness raising programmes.

Prominent among the measures discussed is the need for reform of security sectors. The consultation expressed concern about the “re-militarization” and the “para-militarization” of security and security forces. Of particular concern is rapid growth in the use of private security firms, with serious implications for national sovereignty in some instances, and with far-reaching consequences for states' and citizens' full enjoyment of natural resources, human rights, and self-determination. The consultation called for the reassertion of publicly accountable security institutions under the direct authority of states. In addition, states are called on to address problems of corruption within police forces, and to encourage the modernization of police training and procedures, including the establishment of special units within police forces to deal more effectively with domestic and family violence.

While the consultation acknowledged that addressing the root causes of the social and micro-conflicts that generate the demand for firearms in Latin American societies is a slow and arduous process, it recognized that such efforts are necessary and central to effective and long-term firearms control and to the reduction of armed violence. At the same time, the pursuit of gun control cannot wait until entrenched social and economic problems are successfully dealt with. Gun control must be pursued immediately and urgently, even in the

context of ongoing social and economic disintegration. Indeed, the consultation asserted that measures to control firearms are themselves important for social reconstruction and creating cultures of peace.

The consultation urged that in all measures to control firearms and promote social and economic conditions conducive to peaceful communities, human security values, community empowerment, mechanisms for the peaceful resolution of conflict, and post-conflict peace-building must become central strategies and commitments.

The Role of Churches

The problem of armed violence and the diffusion of small arms in Latin America cannot be effectively addressed without the involvement of the churches of the region. The consultation encouraged the churches to acknowledge their responsibility to engage directly in public policy dialogue and advocacy. In that engagement the church must also work with other sectors of society. Churches have a special responsibility to bring central moral and ethical perspectives to bear on the social and political pursuit of microdisarmament.

In the course of addressing issues of armed violence, peace-building must become a central, active and strategic focus of the mission of the church. And within that mission, small arms control must be held up as an urgent objective requiring the active witness of the church.

The church was urged to train leaders within the community to give prominence to small arms issue and to build a broad capacity within the church to enable it sustain its presence both in policy development (at local, national, and international levels) and in direct community action and peace-building.

The consultation pointed to the Decade to Overcome Violence: Churches Seeking Reconciliation and Peace (2001-2010) as providing the churches with an essential framework for coordinated action, at local to international levels. In this context, a broad range of church action was discussed and recommended.

Churches have deep roots in local communities and thus are especially well positioned to address the issues of micro-conflict. Churches know the people's needs, and can understand the insecurities that lead some to seek security through guns. It is important that the churches directly connect their work to communities' needs, seeking to create gun-free zones in which the resolution of conflicts can be more constructively pursued. The consultation learned about the WCC "Peace to the City" Network, and envisioned participation in networks of cities where churches are active in addressing issues of armed violence and gun control.

The church has a calling to stand in solidarity with persons and communities which are subject to ongoing violence. Solidarity action includes the development of campaigns that mobilize citizen participation and promote the entrenchment of cultures of peace.

The churches are also well-positioned to give leadership in efforts to raise awareness of the nature and extent of the small arms problem and of the urgent need for gun control measures. The gathering and dissemination of reliable information is essential, and churches were encouraged to support research efforts within civil society and the academic community, including research on issues such as the magnitude of gun availability and the physical and

psychological consequences of gun proliferation. The consultation emphasized the role of the media in shaping public knowledge and attitudes and encouraged engagement with the media in explorations of responsible media coverage of violence and small arms issues.

Churches belong to a major international fellowship, and churches in Latin America are encouraged to become part of the already initiated Ecumenical Network on Small Arms (ENSA). ENSA links to the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA) and through these and other relationships, the churches of Latin America are urged to work ecumenically and cooperatively with civil society organisations and research institutions.

Consultation participants were moved by the tragic realities of gun violence, and yet they concluded the Rio meeting energized by the knowledge that their work to address the small arms problem is carried out in the context of a growing international community of concern and action. In summing up the consultation's call for decisive and sustained church action, participants decided the call could be boiled down to one clear assertion: **"IT'S TIME FOR THE CHURCHES TO SAY NO TO GUNS."**

July 28th, 2000

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
