

First Committee

Topic Area B: Consolidation of Peace Through Practical Disarmament Measures

Disarmament remains one of the United Nations primary objectives. Practical disarmament measures are means to link weapons control, particularly small arms control, to peacekeeping and post-conflict settlement with appropriate assistance from the United Nations system. The work undertaken on practical disarmament measures and small arms control represent integrated and mutually reinforcing efforts to achieve lasting disarmament.

Consolidation of Peace through Practical Disarmament Measures first appeared on the General Assembly (GA) agenda in 1996. The following year, the GA established the Group of Interested States (GIS) to support the GA's goals on practical disarmament. The goal of the GIS is to facilitate ongoing practical disarmament efforts by building on efforts already in progress and by working at both the international level and directly with States in the midst of post-conflict disarmament and reconstruction. By establishing the GIS, the General Assembly acknowledged the importance of small arms control, demining, demobilization, and reintegration of former combatants in post-conflict settings and hoped to provide a framework to provide concrete assistance to States.

The GIS continues to meet on and report to the GA on a regular basis. The meetings are open to all States, interested UN partners and non-governmental organizations. Recent agenda items have included a small arms trade treaty, briefings for the GA First Committee, and the International Small Arms Control Standards.

Related to practical disarmament, the General Assembly passed the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects in 2001. The Programme of Action also included practical solutions for national legislation and controls for the collection and destruction of illegal weapons and measures to assist states in preventing the illegal transfer of small arms. Since its adoption, the GA has hosted biennial meetings of States to consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action. The most recent biennial meeting was held in 2010 and focused on national, regional and global implementation strategies for the Programme of Action; the main topics of discussion at the fourth biennial meeting were four themes: border management, international cooperation and assistance, the International Tracing Instrument and follow-up mechanisms within the Programme of Action. The Fourth Biennial Meeting final report stressed the importance regional mechanisms to support the implementation of the Programme of Action.

The GA also adopted the International Tracing Instrument (ITI) in 2005 which is an additional effort to address international small arms control. Under the ITI, Member States agreed to the marking, record-keeping and tracing objectives in the Programme of Action. The Programme of Action and ITI are significant milestones in international efforts to control small arms, there are remaining challenges with implementation. Specifically, the Programme of Action does not offer a specific framework to provide international or regional assistance nor is it a legally binding instrument. Additionally, many Member

States lack the financial and technical resources necessary for small arms control. There is also recognized need for better coordination at the regional level to enhance law enforcement efforts, marking and tracing efforts, record-keeping, and border protection.

At the international level, the General Assembly has stressed the need to include United Nations-mandated peacekeeping missions, when appropriate, in practical disarmament measures for small arms. More recently, the GA has begun to consider practical disarmament measures, assistance to States for curbing the illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons, and the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in a more holistic manner. At the GA's request, the Secretary-General submitted a report in the 65th session that addressed all three topics. Moving forward, the General Assembly will continue to support the work of the Group of Interested States and also stress the importance of evaluating assistance provided to states and explore collaborative processes to support small arms control at both the national and international level.

Questions to consider from your government's perspective on this issue include

- What efforts are being made by the UN, the GIS and regional governments to implement practical disarmament measures?
- How can the UN help support the GIS in completing the goal of implementing practical disarmament?
- What new programs and projects should the GIS and the UN undertake in order to effectively implement practical disarmament measures in other conflict regions?

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UN Documents

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A/RES/65/67

A/C.1/65/PV.21

A/CONF.192/2006/RC/9

A/CONF.192/BMS/2010/3

A/CONF.192/15

Additional Web Resources

<http://www.un.org/disarmament/> - United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs

<http://www.poa-iss.org/MGE/> - Open Ended Meeting of Governmental Experts

www.ngocdps.org - NGO Committee on Disarmament, Peace, and Security

<http://www.unidir.org/html/en/home.html> - United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research