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### Presentation to the Secretary General's Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters 16 July 2003

#### *"Disarmament and Human Security: Back to Basics or a New Paradigm?"*

Ambassador Gryshchenko, Under-Secretary General Abe, excellencies, distinguished members of the Advisory Board, colleagues,

I have had the opportunity to address you a number of times in the past. It is my personal honor to have such an occasion again today. We are always grateful for this opportunity. I wish to thank the organizers (Mr. Wang Xiao Yu in particular) for the early engagement with us, advising us of the topics that you are covering in your semi-annual meetings as you seek input from the NGO community.

I don't usually like to begin a presentation such as this with an apology, but I am, to be truthful, something of a back-stop presenter on the topic of "Disarmament and Human Security" today. As you have heard me a number of times before, we had hoped to have Ms. Cate Buchanan of the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue to speak to you. She has been working very closely with the Human Security Network on advancing the understanding of what a human security perspective points to with regard to priority areas of action on small arms and light weapons. Unfortunately, she was unable to be here this week.

While I have generally considered that my own work (particularly in the areas of landmines and small arms) as motivated by a human security orientation, as I have thought about what I might say to you today, I realize that I have rarely attempted to be very specific about what I mean. But I have also realized that I am probably not the only one. One of the key points which I would like to make today is that it has perhaps been far too easy to adopt the language of "human security" without fully thinking it through in terms of implications for our traditional disarmament practices. My thoughts on this are preliminary and they are certainly inadequately researched at this stage, and for this I apologize. But perhaps they will provoke some discussion, which is, after all, the aim of this exercise.

What I would like to do is to take the topic "Disarmament and Human Security" rather literally, to explore a bit what this relationship might be. I do not intend in this short presentation to go into the full spectrum of factors now considered to make up the meaning of "human security". What I'd like to do is to look at what is demanded of "disarmament" if we adopt such a human security perspective.

I have somewhat facetiously entitled this talk "Disarmament and Human Security: Back to Basics or a New Paradigm?" I shall perhaps not be the only one in the room who is underwhelmed by the call to take a "human security" perspective on the disarmament challenges facing our over-

militarized world, a perspective which seems to suggest that the appropriate paradigm should now be on focusing on the security of people and not just the security of states. Is this not what the enterprise should be about anyway? In the way we look at disarmament, how has state security come to be seen as something different from and superior to the obligation of state's to protect one's citizens and help them to maximize their human potential? Or has it? How is it that our concepts of "security" have become so narrow that our disarmament processes seem to fail to articulate this (human security) as a central aim of any state's search for security? Have we really strayed so far? Why should it be necessary for our very own UNIDIR to feel the need to develop an approach in its work "Disarmament as Humanitarian Action" in which a statement like "We care about disarmament because we care about the security of people", is seen as necessary and central, rather than banal and obvious?<sup>1</sup> What is different now about a "human security" perspective on disarmament, which was not there in some form in the whole evolution of international humanitarian law over the decades of the last century, the foundations of the UN system, or even in the major emphasis of the 1970s on "disarmament and development", for example?

Is the whole "human security" perspective not just providing for us a new way of articulating the underpinning value goals at the base of the founding of the United Nations system, with all its current manifold programmes and activities aimed at human betterment? For most NGO activists, many governments, and a range of UN and other international structures working for disarmament (whether nuclear or biological or chemical or conventional), I would submit that it is indeed the so-called "human dimension" which drives this work. In a way, it seems tragic, and rather pathetic, that a "human security" perspective now needs to be advocated, precisely because of the failure of states to keep their eye on the order of priority in security policy.

But this is probably too simplistic (or at least too cynical—cynicism being an occupational hazard these days for those who toil in this disarmament vineyard).

Having made this call for "back to basics" in disarmament, the call for thinking from a "human security" perspective can, of course, help us return to those basics and try to put them again at the centre of our badly-skewed disarmament diplomacy. Each generation does need reminders about what it should be all about. The Millennium Development Goals and the calls from the Commission on Human Security help define for our time the particular needs and have called for specific actions, just as a generation ago the UN Conferences of the 1970s, including the First UN Special Session on Disarmament, and the Club of Rome studies of the 1980s laid out perceived needs and priorities for appropriate action.

The "human security" label can be useful in describing a range of behaviours, needs and processes, now seen as being required. Some of these are a reflection of the particular kinds of security challenges relatively new to this era (for example, the dominance of internal conflict and the rise of non-state armed groups) and some are perennials (for example, the economic impacts of arms expenditures and the importance of military/industrial complexes).

How can this "human security" label be useful to us in our disarmament thinking? This can perhaps best be illustrated from the small arms and light weapons arena, since it is within this arena that the failure to "put people first" has become so painfully obvious. (A similar story can be told in looking at the far less complicated case of the evolution of appropriate action on anti-personnel landmines).

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<sup>1</sup> "Disarmament as Humanitarian Action," UNIDIR, February 2002, viii.

I have just returned from New York from the first Biennial Meeting of States reporting on progress in implementing the 2001 Programme of Action (PoA) on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons. It would be a gross misrepresentation of that Programme of Action to argue that the “human dimension” wasn’t both a motivating factor and an object of what was achieved in 2001. One has only to read the powerful language of the Preamble. And, no doubt, the particular steps which are articulated in the PoA, if fully enacted, should have a profound impact on the levels of armed violence in our world, most of which is received and perpetrated by civilians, a clear “human security” goal. But it is also true to say that this document was largely structured from the point of view of the traditional disarmament paradigm of states.

But the focus on small arms and light weapons has begun to demand a broader perspective and that perspective was very much more present in NY last week than it has been in the past. We can call this a “human security” perspective for convenience sake.

What it says is that, if “the real objective is not just fewer guns, but safer people,”<sup>2</sup> as the Canadian researcher Don Hubert has put it, then we need to do a number of things, and these things are beginning to happen, even if they haven’t yet received the kind of priority in national, regional, and global actions that would appear necessary to achieve sustainable conditions where people are safer. These are, I would submit, appropriate places where “disarmament and human security” interface.

1. There is a need to understand better the impact of the proliferation and widespread availability and misuse of SALW. This means moving beyond mere numbers, to better understanding of the economic, development, humanitarian, human rights, conflict, gender, public safety, health, children and other impacts. These needs and the new knowledge of such impacts were very much on present last week, through a major increase in the sophistication of the research displayed (e.g. the Small Arms Survey Yearbook theme on “Development Denied”; the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue’s study on “Putting People First: Human Security Perspectives on Small Arms Availability and Misuse”, the important messages of UN agencies such as WHO, UNDP, UNHCR, UNIDIR, and UNICEF, as well as in the testimonies inside and outside the hall of NGOs from around the world. Suggested also in this package is the need for greater attention to the understanding of factors which drive the “demand” for small arms and light weapons.<sup>3</sup>
2. A human security perspective also suggests that armed violence and the factors behind it need to be “mainstreamed” into other “human security” needs related more to “freedom from want” than “freedom from fear”, such as development, human rights, democratic reform, refugees and migration, identity and culture. Equally, such perspectives need to be built into our understanding and articulation of approaches and policies particularly relevant to small arms management and reduction.

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<sup>2</sup> Don Hubert, “Small Arms Demand Reduction and Human Security,” Ploughshares Briefing 01/5, Project Ploughshares, 2001, 1.

<sup>3</sup> Small Arms Survey 2003: Development Denied, Oxford University Press, 2003; “Putting People First: Human Security Perspectives on Small Arms Availability and Misuse,” Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, 2003; “In the Line of Fire: Surveying the Perceptions of Humanitarian and Development Personnel of the Impacts of Small Arms and Light Weapons,” Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue and Small Arms Survey, 2003; “Curbing the Demand for Small Arms: Focus on Southeast Asia,” Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue and the Quaker United Nations Office, 2003.

3. This multidisciplinary nature of the small arms problematique has often been commented on, but is not yet fully reflected in the agenda of perceived policy needs aimed at the reduction of armed violence or in the levels of political will presently available for substantial action. Hence, a “human security-informed” “disarmament” agenda on small arms and light weapons would, e.g. for example need to: (1) increase the emphasis on security sector reform; (2) implement existing norms, such as the Basic Principles on the Use of force and Firearms and the UN Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials; gain wider accession to the world’s only treaty to curb firearms trafficking, the Firearms Protocol of the Transnational Crime Convention; (3) curtail civilian possession of firearms; (4) incorporate community safety criteria into development assistance; (5)choke the supply of weapons transfers to abusive and inappropriate end-users, be they recognised state forces, paramilitaries or armed insurgent groups (e.g. note the development of the Arms Transfer Treaty being proposed by a range of humanitarian and human rights NGOs); (6) provide assistance to the victims and survivors of gun violence, who have been disabled and traumatised, and to communities where gun violence has disrupted the social fabric of communities.<sup>4</sup>

These are but examples. In the cases of landmines and small arms and light weapons, a “human security” framework has helped to fill out the picture of a broadened set of “disarmament”-related priorities, even though there is still much to be done to fully understand the underpinning relationships.

Such a “framework” should also call new attention to disarmament concerns beyond those related to landmines and small arms. And this does seem to be the case in the emerging work of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons in its work on “explosive remnants of war”. Equally, the initiative by the ICRC in its Appeal on “Biotechnology, Weapons and Humanity”, calling on governments to adopt a high level political declaration to existing norms and committing to specific preventive action, attempts to call states to heed their commitments. The proposed Arms Transfer Treaty, reiterating the human rights and international humanitarian law norms which ought to act as a constraint and guide for arms transfer practices, is another example. Missing so far, except in limited ways, are active “human security” frameworks for judging emerging weapons technologies and factors which should limit these. Actual and threatened developments in the field of nuclear weapons are currently in danger of losing nearly entirely a “human security” dimension in terms of motivations for action.

I began this presentation with the title “Disarmament and Human Security: Back to Basics or New Paradigm”. “Back to basics”? Yes, to the extent that the adoption of such a framework can help us to instil new energy in the underpinning purposes enshrined in the UN Charter and UN institutions and in accompanying international human rights and international humanitarian law which have “people” as well as “states” as their object. “A New paradigm”? Yes, to the extent that there are new factors shaping the way people are affected. “Freedom from fear” and “freedom from want” in 2003 call for new multi-disciplinary approaches into which “disarmament” factors clearly have to be integrated.

There is one clear direction which a “human security” perspective has helped to highlight which now appears as true in “disarmament” related dimensions of “human security” as in the range of other

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<sup>4</sup> This list is taken from a series of suggested “people-centred policies” in the publication of the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue “Putting People First,” 2003, p. 48.

“human security” priorities which groups like the Human Security Network and the Commission on Human Security note. This is that this is not only multi-level work (community, nation, region, international) but also multi-actor work based on strategic partnerships. New partnerships are being formed to respond adequately to critical challenges. In the disarmament field, the best example so far is the anti-personnel landmine work. A responsive and responsible “disarmament” approach to “human security” beyond landmines will be one which expands the currently limited set of relationships between the states and civil society organizations, partnerships necessary for effective understanding (research), evaluation (of existing programmes), evolution of new policies and approaches (lobbying) and the implementation of these and already agreed conventions and treaties.

Thank you.

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