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A Broader Outlook: Progress on Demand Issues at the UN Second Biennial Meeting on Small Arms¹

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Sidebar: The Choice

“...We can continue much as we have done and focus on attempting to control and curtail supplies of small arms. Our alternative way forward is to recognize and develop those aspects of the Programme of Action that are currently underdeveloped, notably the call to simultaneously address demand for small arms. If we work together to achieve that through supporting and evaluating efforts to prevent armed violence, we can extend the impact of the Programme of Action well beyond the disarmament sphere and directly affect the lives and prospects of millions around the world.”

Dr. David Meddings, Statement of the World Health Organization to the Second Biennial Meeting of States

Background

From the earliest discussions at the UN on controlling the spread of small arms, one of the most common analytic metaphors was that, just like the movement of other less lethal commodities, small arms trafficking was a matter of supply and demand. For most of the period since the mid 1990s, the formal negotiations at the UN about small arms control have been dominated by supply aspects, a focus on shrinking the availability of the hardware itself. This is the normal approach taken to controlling other kinds of armament, from nuclear warheads to fighter aircraft and its procedures and methodologies are familiar to arms control institutions and specialists who staff them.

Nevertheless, an increasing number of analysts, policy makers and field organizers have been urging the international community to give equal attention to the demand side of the small arms trade. They know that more than half the world's small arms are in the hands of civilians and are considered valuable tools by those who acquire and keep them. This perceived need won't disappear, even if governments can shrink the available supply. And given the very large number of small arms now in circulation, there is always likely to be lots of such weapons available somewhere for people who think them desirable or even essential.

¹ United Nations Second Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, held at UN Headquarters, New York, 11-15 July 2005

So, along with efforts to curb the supply there will need to be parallel and equally important programmes that are aimed at lessening the perceived value of and need for the weapons – i.e., programmes that seek to lessen demand.

While demand issues have not been the dominant focus of international small arms control efforts, particularly at the level of international policy negotiation, they have never been entirely ignored. The UN Programme of Action² (PoA) on small arms, the central international control instrument negotiated in 2001, includes a number of references to key demand issues.³ Early drafts of the PoA included an even larger number of paragraphs related directly or indirectly to demand issues and these ideas were supported by a considerable number of statements and reports by UN member states, multilateral agencies and NGOs. Their point of view — that taking a comprehensive, supply *and* demand approach was essential to the successful control of small arms proliferation — was increasingly supported by practical evidence from the field. This body of information has only increased in the years since 2001 and has been the subject of numerous reports, briefings and workshops presented to the international community. The First UN Biennial Meeting of States on small arms (BMS), mandated by the PoA in 2003, included formal statements and sidebar meetings that focused on demand issues. Attention to these issues was even more apparent at the Second Biennial Meeting of States (BMS2) held in New York, July 11-15, 2005, although such attention was still less than that given to supply-side issues.

Evidence of Demand issues at BMS2⁴

A very large number of UN Member States and agencies, along with a representative sample of NGOs took part in the BMS2. More than 140 national reports were submitted to the UN in 2004 and 2005 in time for the BMS2 and over 69 states, 8 regional or sub regional groups, and numerous agencies and NGOs addressed the formal sessions and presented information events. So the week provided a useful snapshot of typical international attitudes and trends related to small arms control.

Sidebar: Demand Briefings at the BMS2

- “Missing Pieces” book launch, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue
- “Women Under Fire,” IANSA Women’s Network
- “Securing Development,” UNDP /BCPR/SADU/UK
- “Who Takes the Bullet” launch, Norwegian Church Aid, Peace Research Institute Oslo
- “At the Root: Conflict Management and Small Arms Demand,” Quaker UN Office

² 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.192/15)

³ For a complete list of demand issues in the UN PoA see Jackman, D. (2004) “Conflict Resolution and Lessening the Demand for Small Arms: Summary Report of a Research Seminar Organized by the Quaker United Nations Office (Geneva) and Africa Peace Forum (Nairobi).” Quaker United Nations Office, Geneva, pp. 12-13.

⁴ The following analysis is based on statements delivered during the formal sessions of the BMS2, informal notes taken during these sessions and a review of “sidebar” activities (panels, briefings, book launches, etc.) presented in New York during the same time period.

- “Men, Women & Gun Violence,” UNIFEM, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue
- “Operational support to SALW control,” SEESAC, Saferworld
- “CASA Database,” UN Department for Disarmament Affairs, UN Department for Economic and Social Affairs
- “Briefing on UN Integrated DDR Standards,” UN Interagency Working Group
- “Security when the State Fails,” Pax Christi Netherlands
- “Gun Violence in non-war settings,” Sou da Paz, Viva Rio, COAV

In general, there was a broad increase in attention devoted to demand issues compared to the record at the 2001 conference and at the BMS in 2003.⁵ A larger number states, agencies and NGOs expressed support for demand issues, many of them commenting on the need for a more comprehensive, supply and demand approach, others referring to more specific demand initiatives or themes. In all, more than 77 states (including 3 regional organizations and 5 multilateral agencies) addressed demand themes of one kind or another. Eight or more of these statements were by states that had not spoken out on the issue at previous UN meetings. There was also a wider geographic distribution of states referring to demand issues, with comments from countries in every major region and with very strong support particularly from Western Europe and the Americas. Perhaps most valuably for the development of demand issues in upcoming UN deliberations, there was a considerable development in the *quality* of the statements given by strong advocates of a demand approach. This was evident in: a) the clearer and more explicit use of demand terminology, b) references to the need for a balanced and comprehensive supply *and* demand approach, and c) analysis and practical examples that related demand to civilian perceptions of insecurity.⁶

Levels of Support

The references made to demand issues in the various statements to the BMS2 can be divided roughly into three groups expressing either a strong, moderate or minimal level of support.

In the category of “strong” supporters were those that: a) used the term “demand” directly and/or described the theme as centrally important; b) encouraged comprehensive, multi-dimensional demand programming; and c) listed a variety of demand-related initiatives. This group included some 52 states and organizations, including the roughly 40 states in or associated with the EU, plus Norway, Canada, Kenya and others. Five multilateral organizations (WHO, DDA, UNDP, UNICEF, ICRC) offered very comprehensive and vigorous support for a balanced supply and demand approach based on their practical experience. This approach was also supported by many of the NGO members of IANSA and was underlined very strongly on the final day of the BMS2 by its Chairman Pasi Patokallio in his concluding statement. (See the quote below.)

⁵ A list of states, agencies and NGOs that referred to demand issues at the BMS2 sessions is appended to this report.

⁶ See, in particular, the statements by the EU, Norway, Canada, WHO, CASA/UNDP, CASA/UNICEF and the Chairman’s summary statement.

[Sidebar:] A Comprehensive Approach

“Much has been said here of the need for a comprehensive approach. And quite rightly so. Small arms trafficking, proliferation and misuse impact on security, on development and on human rights....

There is a clear need for stronger demand-side measures. Aligning action against small arms trafficking, proliferation and misuse with broader development goals make sense and already works in many places. Weapons for development programmes with strong community focus and local participation also work. Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes certainly work better when women are involved as equals in decision-making and in receiving the benefits, and when the special needs of children are taken into account throughout the process.

Simply put, the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals also requires effective action on small arms.

Weapons collection and destruction programmes in affected communities are necessary, with immediate and public destruction of surrendered or confiscated weapons acting as a confidence-building measure. But disarming only works if people feel secure without weapons and trust their police and security forces. That is not often the case. Security sector reform is therefore also a vital demand-side measure in those cases. The implementation of all of these demand-side measures I have briefly mentioned already benefit from international cooperation and assistance. But more is required, both in terms of the political will in affected countries to deal effectively with the causes of demand and in terms of human and financial resources, both internal and external, to match that political will on the part of recipient countries.”

From the concluding statement by the Chairman of the Biennial Meeting of States, Ambassador Pasi Patokallio, Second Biennial Meeting New York, 15 July 2005, p.2

The “moderate” category of supporters drew together those who referred in their statements to the need for action on several demand themes, but who did not link these explicitly to a demand approach. This group included 12 states (including the 6 members of MERCOSUR) and states from South Asia (Pakistan and Bangladesh), the Caribbean (Trinidad), Japan and the Holy See. In addition, UNIDIR and the UN Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict directly addressed groups of issues related to demand themes.

The “minimal” category of supporters identified states that mentioned one or two demand issues in isolation. This group includes the African Union group, four individual African states (Mali, Nigeria, Egypt and Angola), several Asian states (Cambodia, China, Iran and Jordan), Albania and the USA. While it’s unlikely that the states in this category would take the lead on a broad demand initiative in forthcoming UN deliberations, they might be supporters of initiatives that focus on single demand themes, such as conflict resolution actions, improved DDR, or an economic development focus.

Prominent Demand Issues

Looking at those BMS2 statements that showed “strong” or “moderate” support for demand issues, one can make some further generalizations about what aspects of demand might receive broad positive attention in upcoming UN meetings, in particular at the Prepcom and Review Conference in 2006.

Clearly there are a number of states and agencies that are already approaching small arms control in a **comprehensive** way that **links supply and demand** aspects in **multi-dimensional programmes**. Relating demand to **civilian perceptions of insecurity** and the use of a **human security focus** are both mentioned frequently. Further, there is considerable support for **linking development and security** programming and connecting these to the achievement of the **Millennium Development Goals**. There is also a significant list of lessons learned related to **development themes** and also in relation to **arms for development** programmes. Linkages with building **conflict resolution capacity** and institutions, reformed approaches to **DDR** (especially the **reintegration** component and **youth focus**); and **Security Sector Reform** (especially **community policing**) all receive frequent references. Programmes that support a **culture of peace**, with a focus on strong **community involvement**, participation of **civil society**, and inclusion of attention to **trauma healing and reconciliation** are all mentioned repeatedly in national and agency statements.

It is useful to see that the list of priorities above is very similar to ones that have been developed over the past six years by several independent NGO research and dialogue projects based on regional and thematic consultations and workshops in most regions of the world.⁷ There is a considerable level of convergence on the content of an expanded “demand agenda” to be included in any new UN instruments related to small arms control. What may be difficult will be reaching sufficient political momentum to assure that this detailed agenda can be taken up in a comprehensive (rather than piecemeal) fashion.

Sidebar: SALW Demand as a Development Issue

“In addition to addressing the supply side of the issue by ensuring that arms are only in the hands of those who would use them responsibly, we strongly encourage greater attention to the demand side by supporting the type of violence prevention programming described so eloquently earlier this week by the WHO, that addresses the underlying issues that can lead to violence – thus avoiding the problem in the first place.

Equally important are activities of a more traditional development nature that help create the conditions where peoples’ essential needs are met, and thus are less inclined to resort to violence.

When an affected country does not have adequate resources available to properly address the problem, appeals for support should be made to the international community.

⁷ For example see the workshop reports on demand subjects listed by the Quaker UN Office at www.quno.org; and at recent reports by Norwegian Church Aid (“Who Takes the Bullet” 2005), Pax Christi Netherlands (“Security When the State Fails: Community Responses to Armed Violence” 2005) and the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (“Missing Pieces” especially Theme 6 “Motivations and Means: Addressing the Demand for Small Arms” 2005).

Given the multi-dimensional nature of the problem, requests should be directed to disarmament, humanitarian, and development actors.

Where circumstances warrant, we strongly recommend inclusion of SALW programming in the Official Development Assistance programs of donor countries, UN Common Country Assessments and Development Assistance Frameworks, the Country Assistance Strategies of International Financial Institutions including the World Bank, and Regional Development Banks. Similarly, into the programs of NGOs and other civil society actors.”

Intervention at the BMS2 on the Human Development Theme, Canadian Delegation, 15 July 05

Looking Ahead to the Review Conference in 2006

What do these trends suggest for the successful promotion of demand issues at the UN Review Conference in 2006? While it is much too early to be definitive and there is still much that might happen at the upcoming UN First Committee session in October 2005 and at the Conference PrepCom in January 2006, the experience at the BMS2 indicates the following observations are likely to be true.

- The present level of support is quite strong for the promotion of an expanded demand agenda and its inclusion in active programming and any new UN instruments. There is a reasonably solid core of support from roughly a third of UN member states, including the EU, MERCOSUR and a number of other influential states (Canada, Norway, Japan). With more focused educational and diplomatic work one might add support from many members of the Africa Group (possibly with help from Kenya, Uganda, and Nigeria) and there are significant expressions of interest from states in the Caribbean, South Asia and possibly the Pacific sub regions.
- Currently there is no identified “Friends of Demand” grouping in the UN community, although one might easily identify a likely core group of interested states, NGOs and multilateral agencies. Making progress on demand issues, particularly for a major conceptual reworking of whatever document is added to the UN PoA in 2006, will require the creation of such a group. At the very least an informal, active network will need to begin working during fall 2005.
- However, for any new demand-related approaches to be incorporated into whatever annexes or other documents are negotiated at the UN Review Conference in 2006, there needs to be *unanimous* support among Member States. Current levels of support are still far from this goal. At present, many states, including large proportions of several regional groups, do not give demand issues a high priority, and in some cases do not refer to them at all. In contrast, almost all the states addressing the BMS2 remarked on such supply-side issues as the recent negotiations on marking and tracing and the upcoming opportunity to explore brokering issues. In the pressure to settle on some steps that will show progress in 2006 (and given the traditional opposition of some states to move beyond a focus limited to supply issues) it is likely that a “new” priority area such as the demand theme may not achieve full consensus

support. There still seem to be too many major or regional powers for whom a demand focus is either undesirable or of very low priority. Given this basic core of resistance, a proposal for a comprehensive text focused on a demand approach may be opposed or easily traded away.

- Nevertheless, Some demand issues might find their way into new UN agreements on SALW in connection with other specific and more widely supported issues. The demand “agenda” is very wide and touches on many issues, most of which are already present in the existing PoA. Using this as a basis, proponents of progress on demand issues might address some of these on a selected basis. If treated as individual proposals, not as part of a large “demand package,” several of these might receive wide support.
- The increasing attention at the BMS2 to practical demand programming on the ground confirms that there is widening support for the implementation of new demand programmes, particularly as part of development, post-conflict reintegration, national small arms and conflict management programmes. These kinds of larger, practical initiatives can move ahead (indeed are moving ahead) without an explicit mandate in a UN PoA on small arms. Nevertheless, such demand programming would benefit from a much higher level of cooperation among agencies, states and civil society than we see today. Such integrated programming is far from easy. Creating processes that link national and regional planning across these issue areas is essential, if we are to see real improvements in long term human security on the ground. Anything we can do in an improved instrument on small arms to expand the mandate for institutional collaboration may have a very large impact.

[Sidebar:] **Post-Conflict Development and Small Arms Demand**

“In many post-conflict contexts, the continued availability of small arms and light weapons beyond the signing of a peace agreement means that economies cannot be restarted and livelihoods regained due to the continuing insecurity causes by small arms. In these contexts, suffering is prolonged and the ability of a country to regenerate is considerably hindered.

In this context, the role of the development community is three-fold:

- It can provide specific forms of development-oriented assistance designed to provide agents of violence with alternatives to violence-based livelihoods. Such assistance is important both as incentives for voluntary disarmament targeting both individuals and communities (for instance in weapons for development programmes), but also as a means to ensure the sustainable reintegration of former agents of violence into normal social and economic life;
- It can support communities in rebuilding societies and economies after conflict and armed violence, and in regaining essential livelihoods. In this respect, development programmes (and particularly community recovery and reintegration) constitute the broader framework, and are an essential corollary for, for small arms and armed violence reduction activities. In this regard, the development community plays an important role in linking small arms to UN and national development frameworks and processes (including PRSPs, CCA/UNDAFs and national development plans);

- The development community also has an important role to play in consolidating the gains achieved through disarmament or small arms reduction activities by strengthening capacities at local and national levels to prevent, and reduce the incidence, or re-occurrence of violence (through strengthened weapons licensing controls, for instance) as well as strengthening the capacities of public and non-governmental institutions in providing development-oriented services and assistance that could address some of the socio-economic factors underlying violence.”

From the Statement by Peter Batchelor, Team Leader, Small Arms and Demobilization Unit, UNDP on Development Cooperation and Implementation for the Panel Presentation by the United Nations Coordinating Action on Small Arms (CASA), New York, 12 July 2005 (pp. 3-4)

Appendix:

Listing of Statements that referred to SALW Demand Issues

(* marks a new expression of interest since 2001 conference)

A. Strong Support for Demand Issues

(Use the term “demand” directly and/or describe the theme as centrally important; offer comprehensive demand programming)

- EU states (40, presented by UK) – development, MDGs, DDR
- UK (individually) – fitting SALW into broader development goals
- Kenya* – conflict resolution, community policing, development...
- Uganda* – “demand” work in Karamoja
- Colombia – “demand,” culture of peace, DDR
- Canada – development and security, DDR, human security
- Norway – development and security, DDR, SSR, peace education, insecurity & demand
- WHO – central focus on “demand” and unified approach, “insecurity”, social investment
- IANSA – trauma healing, policing, economic alternatives, gender, DDR, peace education,....
- CASA/DDA general statement mentions
- CASA/UNICEF – supply *and* demand, lists reasons for acquisition, lists successful programmes
- CASA/UNDP -- Development Cooperation and Implementation
- ICRC – supply *and* demand, comprehensive national programming, youth focus
- Chairman’s final statement – supports a “comprehensive approach” that explicitly links supply and demand, and devotes several paragraphs to “demand” issues.

B. Moderate Support for Demand Issues

(Refer to action needed on several demand themes)

- Pakistan – conflict, DDR
- Brazil – culture of peace, awareness programmes related to collection

- Bangladesh* – DDR, reconciliation, development, injustice as root cause
- Japan – conflict prevention, peacebuilding in ODA, consolidation of peace in Africa
- MERCOSUR* (6 states) – demand, perception of violence as part of awareness
- Trinidad* – extensive listing of youth programming during thematic section
- Holy See – culture of peace, children, development, community based work
- UN SRSG on Children and Armed Conflict – community base, civil society, elders
- UNIDIR – weapons for development, poverty reduction, trauma

C. Minimal Support

(Some mention of one or more demand themes but no focus on demand as an issue)

- AU (presented by Nigeria) -- DDR
- Nigeria* – conflicts, economic challenges, “belonging”
- Cambodia – weapons for development
- Mali – poverty, development, root causes
- Egypt – root causes, conflict?
- Jordan – Arab-Israeli root conflict
- Albania* – arms for development, culture of peace
- Angola – DDR
- USA – weapons destruction as a CBM
- Iran – problems rooted in crime, particularly drug trafficking
- China* – economic development is necessary, root cause

D. Potential Support

(No mention of demand issues, but situation might suggest support on specific themes)

- Indonesia – conflict res.
- Sri Lanka – conflict res.
- Tanzania – civil society, national plan
- South Africa – youth
- Guatemala – national plan
- Switzerland – development, DDR

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