

CHAPTER 6

SMALL ARMS AND THE GENEVA FORUM: DISARMAMENT AS HUMANITARIAN ACTION?

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SUMMARY

This paper briefly tells the story of the Geneva Forum and its evolving activities in support of the international process to curb illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. It considers the extent to which the Geneva Forum's activities and characteristics qualify it as "disarmament as humanitarian action"—that is, bringing humanitarian (especially field-based) perspectives to bear on small-arms related issues in ways that assist multilateral practitioners. Overall, this contribution has been significant, although not easily quantifiable. The Geneva Forum's impact has varied among different small arms actors, especially among governments. This paper also discusses differences in outlook between the New York and Geneva diplomatic environments, which have not always been conducive to multilateral progress in the small arms domain but which the Geneva Forum has sometimes helped to bridge.

INTRODUCTION

Multilateral disarmament and arms control negotiations have achieved scant success in recent years, despite pressing political imperatives. Where limited progress in this domain has been achieved over the last decade, it tends to have been accompanied by humanitarian approaches, including from international organizations, field-based practitioners, academic researchers and transnational civil society. One crucial element of these approaches is increased emphasis on the individual and the community as referent points for security, alongside traditional national security perspectives. Another aspect is the involvement of practitioners from the

field. This has enriched the work of government representatives by helping them to understand the challenges at hand and suggesting policy options to address them.¹

A prime example of “disarmament as humanitarian action” is the 1997 Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention.² Yet the Convention’s high profile, its status as a legally binding international treaty norm and the many dynamic characteristics unique to that process can obscure recognition of other forms of activity that contribute humanitarian perspectives of benefit to multilateral disarmament and arms control work. These contributions are not necessarily in the form of treaty processes or even formal mechanisms. A hallmark of humanitarian approaches to problem solving has been the focus on goals rather than process: this means they are often ad hoc, unofficial and, to some extent, self-selecting coalitions of the willing. Significantly, these lower profile activities are probably more typical of humanitarian approaches than the trail blazed by the Mine Ban Convention.

Some of these contributions, such as those of the Geneva Forum, have operated in *informal* support of official processes. In doing so, the Geneva Forum has helped in bringing humanitarian perspectives to bear on intergovernmental work traditionally dominated by national security considerations. The Geneva Forum is a joint initiative of the Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO) in Geneva, the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), and the Programme for Strategic and International Security Studies (PSIS) of the Graduate Institute of International Studies in Geneva.³ Although the Geneva Forum carries out activities on other themes as well, this paper analyses its activities on small arms and light weapons (referred to here as small arms, or SALW).⁴

This paper briefly tells the story of the Geneva Forum’s work on small arms issues, and evaluates its impact on the achievement and subsequent implementation and monitoring of the 2001 United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.⁵ Also considered is the extent to which disarmament as humanitarian action characterizes the Forum’s activities. To do so, it is first necessary to explain the Geneva Forum’s origins and the political context in which its work on small arms emerged.

THE ORIGINS OF INTERNATIONAL EFFORTS ON SMALL ARMS

By the middle of the 1990s it was becoming apparent to the international community that small arms violence was a problem of major dimensions in many societies around the globe, especially in the developing world.⁶ The humanitarian and developmental consequences of the spread, possession and use of small arms could simultaneously be cause and effect of intra-state conflict and internal collapse. But diffusion of small arms, as a global phenomenon, also defied easy characterization, taking place at the “interface of global and local arenas, in situations of inequality and insecurity, posing intricate challenges to national, regional and international actors.”⁷ Alarming, it was also becoming clear that “Even if one could turn off the small arms tap tomorrow, they would continue to circulate between conflicts, communities and combatants.”⁸ Small arms used in the Viet Nam conflict in the 1960s and 1970s, for example, were resurfacing decades later in insurgencies in Nicaragua, El Salvador and elsewhere.⁹

The small arms issue grew in prominence after the dispatch of a UN fact-finding mission to West Africa in 1994.¹⁰ In January 1995, it also emerged in the UN Secretary-General’s supplement to *An Agenda for Peace*.¹¹ In December 1995, the UN General Assembly adopted its first resolution on small arms, and requested a panel of governmental experts be set up.¹² This panel, which reported back in August 1997, found that:

virtually every part of the UN system was dealing in one way or another with the consequences of the armed conflicts, insecurity and violence due to the easy availability resulting from the excessive accumulation and recurrent use of small arms. Some of the most intractable armed conflicts being dealt with by the UN are those in which a recurring cycle of violence, an erosion of political legitimacy and a loss of economic viability have deprived a state of its authority to cope either with the causes or the consequences of the excessive accumulation, proliferation and use of small arms and light weapons.¹³

The panel’s report recommended that the UN convene “an international conference on the illicit arms trade in all its aspects, based on the issues identified in the present report.”¹⁴ This led to a further General Assembly resolution late in 1997, which asked the UN Secretary-General to seek the views of Member States on holding such a conference. The resolution also authorized another group of governmental experts and a

further small arms report.¹⁵ The group presented its report, which addressed the objectives, scope, agenda, dates and venue of the conference, in the second half of 1999.¹⁶ In December of that year, the General Assembly gave the go-ahead for the conference's preparatory process to commence from 2000, with the conference itself to take place in New York in July 2001.¹⁷

DIFFICULTIES IN THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE PROCESS

A UN conference on curbing the illicit trade in small arms now looked set to become a reality. But the work of the UN panel, the group of governmental experts and the ensuing preparatory process uncovered many difficulties that would have to be handled adroitly for the conference to prove of any real value in preventing, combating and eradicating the illicit trade in small arms. This was because, despite agreeing that a conference be held, many states harboured reservations. Briefly, these included:

- concerns about "hot button" issues proposed by the UN expert reports for inclusion in the conference's Programme of Action, for instance on aspects of civilian possession of weapons (a holy grail for the sport shooting lobby, especially in the United States), export controls, the marking and tracing of small arms and ammunition, problems with the definition of "excessive and destabilizing accumulations" of SALW, and distinguishing between legal and illicit weapons;
- concern among several developing countries, especially those without the capacity for indigenous production, about guarding their access to small arms;
- fears among some states (such as Algeria and China) that an international conference would be used to criticize them for alleged human rights violations; and
- concern by other states (including Australia, New Zealand and South Africa) about whether a multilateral process would sit well with existing activities designed to combat illicit trade in small arms at national, subregional or regional levels.¹⁸

Less well-documented problems stemmed from variations in approach between the diplomatic communities in New York and Geneva. These

communities of practice inevitably had different outlooks, despite the coordination between each country's diplomatic missions by its home authorities to a greater or lesser degree.¹⁹ New York diplomats had a tendency to view the small arms issue through the prism of wider United Nations politicking, especially in the Security Council. Most saw themselves as generalists or diplomatic operators, rather than specialists in disarmament or arms control concerns. In Egypt's case, for example, representatives from its mission in New York rather than Geneva had the guiding hand on small arms in the conference setting. Thus, the cohesiveness of the League of Arab States as a negotiating bloc in the conference process, as well as regional issues such as Palestinian access to weapons, were to the fore of Egypt's concerns.

Some capitals, however, saw the logic of giving the initiative to their Geneva-based disarmament and arms control specialists, since the UN conference process had been planted in the arms control domain. The reasoning behind this assignment was not self-evident: many experts in humanitarian and other fields argue that arms control approaches are actually of limited relevance to understanding and mitigating the human consequences of the illicit small arms trade because it is not a problem necessarily created by the consequences of wars. This means it is unlike other conventional weapons within the purview of traditional arms control, such as anti-personnel mines or explosive remnants of war.

Issues in the small arms domain often possess complex characteristics; as Liz Clegg points out:

in spite of the enthusiasm among the NGO community for an initiative on light weapons, there was a recognition from the outset that the problem of light weapons proliferation was in some ways even more intractable than that of land mines. Two basic facts make a simple "ban light weapons" campaign impossible: first, the fact that civilian ownership of small arms—handguns, rifles, shotguns and so on—is legal in countries throughout the world means that the need for controls on these weapons is not universally accepted; second, few would argue that light weapons do not have some legitimate uses under some circumstances—for example, when carried by forces engaged in peacekeeping operations. To be effective, a campaign to counter the proliferation of small arms needed objectives with greater nuance.²⁰

As will be shown, educating the arms control community about these differences was a concern for the Geneva Forum and its partners from an early stage.²¹

While wider political concerns also featured in the thinking of most Geneva-based disarmament diplomats, some of their New York-based colleagues were, nevertheless, inclined to perceive them as technocrats or “Geneva mafia”—parachuting into a New York process late, and not always cognizant of broader dynamics. Moreover, permanent representatives in New York usually had more political clout within their national bureaucracies than their Geneva-based equivalents. Naturally, they were inclined to support subordinates in their own missions in New York when push came to shove.²² But working-level diplomatic officers in the New York missions sometimes lacked an understanding of the substantive issues involved.

These differences in outlook and culture between the Geneva and New York diplomatic environments coloured perceptions and judgements. The tensions and irritation this engendered within delegations consisting of Geneva, New York and capital-based personnel during the conference preparation process were a hallmark of its negotiating dynamics. Working assumptions—even relative definitions of success or failure in the small arms conference process—could be perceived quite differently. Building of trust between practitioners was, therefore, an important challenge (as it is for all multilateral negotiations in some form)²³ and one often overlooked by outside commentators.²⁴

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), which are alternative sources of information and advice on many aspects of the acquisition, use and effects of small arms, and often a potent force for transparency and government accountability, were nevertheless largely marginalized from the UN preparatory process. Although NGO access to the conference was a source of extensive debate (it was strongly supported by the European Union, Norway and Canada, among others) many governments were highly suspicious of according NGOs any formal recognition or degree of substantive involvement in their negotiating work. These included China, the Russian Federation and a number of delegations from the Middle East. One reason for this suspicion was the heavy tilt toward the “north” by NGOs active in the small arms domain. There were also concerns that a

process outside the UN might emerge, mirroring the one that led to the Mine Ban Convention in which civil society played a driving role.

The NGO small arms community had begun to emerge from the mid-1990s, with individual NGOs focusing on one or more activities, including research, policy development, advocacy, public awareness and education, and implementing practical measures, often as part of “micro-disarmament” initiatives.²⁵ Although it was heterogeneous, the NGO community was generally split between two, largely antagonistic, poles. Batchelor characterized these as the “arms control community” and the “firearms community”. The former, grouped mainly under the umbrella of the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA), had very different aims from the latter, grouped around the World Forum on the Future of Sport Shooting Activities (WFSA). The WFSA, in stark contrast to IANSA’s constituents, basically aimed to encourage the international community to “leave alone” or “do little” to address small arms issues. Despite their fundamental differences, “[t]he one issue on which both IANSA and WFSA could agree, and on which they worked together during the PrepCom process, was to maximize the official role of NGOs in the Conference itself.”²⁶

Scope existed to bring these varying government and civil society perspectives together in an open forum. This was for a number of reasons:

- *To improve information exchange and understanding* between negotiators of different countries, and with different working bases.
- *To educate diplomats.* The small arms domain was new for many in the diplomatic community, and possessed complex characteristics with few parallels in other areas of disarmament activity that they had previously encountered. New knowledge and perspectives would ideally relate to practical experiences in the field: this would necessitate the involvement of transnational civil society, which, in a formal setting, is a tricky issue for some governments.
- *To provide direction and momentum to the formal conference preparatory process* in an inclusive manner that would not alienate governments nervous about its potential implications for them.

THE ROLE OF THE GENEVA FORUM IN THE LEAD UP TO THE CONFERENCE

Through a mixture of design and accident, the Geneva Forum helped to fulfil these roles through its activities in the lead up to the July 2001 conference. Key to this was the track record of interest and involvement that its founding partner organizations—UNIDIR, PSIS and QUNO—had in research on small arms issues, together with a history of familiarity and cooperation among their principal staff.

- UNIDIR's involvement in small arms work stretched back at least as far as 1994. Its Disarmament and Conflict Resolution project, led by Virginia Gamba, influenced the content of the 1995 General Assembly resolution authorizing the first panel of experts.²⁷
- The Graduate Institute's long-standing interest in small arms research contributed to the establishment of the Small Arms Survey in Geneva in 1999, intended (among other things) to act as a clearinghouse for the sharing of SALW-related information and dissemination of best practices.²⁸
- Meanwhile, the Quakers had long played an active role in small arms issues in Geneva, New York and the field, as part of their disarmament and peace-building activities. The close involvement of key QUNO staff in Geneva during the Mine Ban Convention negotiation process meant that the Geneva Forum was able to benefit from their insight in setting the direction and style of Geneva Forum activities leading up to the conference.²⁹

The Geneva Forum emerged in the context of the relationship between these three organizations. From the mid-1990s, cooperation began to snowball between PSIS and QUNO. Small arms issues were only beginning to develop a profile internationally, and PSIS and QUNO found that in both working at the forefront, they had common interests in bringing together multidisciplinary perspectives. A Canadian academic, Keith Krause, had recently arrived at PSIS, and he and Quaker Associate Representative David Atwood began to organize meetings on an ad hoc basis, initially to explain the work Krause had been involved with for the Canadian government on small arms in the emerging human security context. In 1998 PSIS and QUNO raised around 30,000 Swiss Francs from the Swiss government to continue these activities. Meanwhile, individual

diplomatic representatives from missions in Geneva, such as François Rivasseau of France, encouraged their efforts.

UNIDIR was also supportive of these joint activities. Its Deputy Director, Christophe Carle, established a record of cooperation with Atwood and Krause in his first few months in Geneva. A formal role for the Institute continued after a new Director, Patricia Lewis, was appointed in 1997. David Atwood recalled that, “That’s when we really realized the synergies of the three different types of organization, and were able to draw on each other’s resources.”³⁰

The name “Geneva Forum” emerged around this time as an umbrella description for their joint meetings in the Palais des Nations. Eventually, it made sense to put this collaboration on a more solid footing for logistical and fund-raising purposes. Although it had existed in practice since 1997, the Geneva Forum received special encouragement from the Ford Foundation, based in New York, in 2000. Ford Foundation representative Christine Wing had recognized the potential of the endeavour: approached with individual funding pitches by PSIS, QUNO and UNIDIR, Wing suggested that the three submit a joint proposal. Subsequent Ford Foundation funding—around US\$ 400,000 in total—underwrote the Geneva Forum’s work from 2000 until 2002. This afforded a crucial breathing space during which the Forum was able to focus on helping to manage the challenges attending the UN conference process, rather than on continual fund-raising.

All of the Geneva Forum’s founders were of one mind in wanting to inject perspectives from the humanitarian, development and human rights communities into disarmament work in Geneva, a theme reflected in the Forum’s proposal to the Ford Foundation.³¹ Another catalyst for the Geneva Forum’s emergence was, ironically, the deadlock that had emerged in the Conference on Disarmament (CD) after negotiations on the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty were concluded in 1996. With frustration growing among governments, and debate in that forum becoming increasingly sterile and ritualistic without agreement on a programme of work, informal outlets for debate and exchange of views appealed to many missions.

The Geneva Forum came along at the right time to capitalize on this. Its work covers the full gamut of disarmament and arms control activity, and

its overarching objective is “to contribute to international peace and security by building partnerships among and between governments, international organizations and NGOs on disarmament and arms control issues of common concern.”³² In reality, the Geneva Forum’s work has always had a strong small arms flavour—a focus that was almost exclusive until the framework eventually funded by the Ford Foundation emphasized synergy with other areas of disarmament work. Small arms-related activities during this period in the development of the Geneva Forum included meetings to examine the progress of regional small arms initiatives (particularly in Africa), public health approaches to alleviating the effects of small arms violence, tracking the flow of SALW, exploring the role of the UN, and potential measures to reduce illegal arms brokering.³³

A watershed occurred in November 2000. This was when the Geneva Forum assisted IANSA to facilitate a workshop in Geneva focusing on the challenges of the upcoming UN conference.³⁴ Governments and transnational civil society actors working on small arms issues were brought together in order to discuss questions such as “We’ve got the Vienna [Firearms Protocol] Process; who needs 2001?” and “Why do regional initiatives matter?” QUNO and one of its partners, the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), had hatched the idea for the meeting. They felt that the UN preparatory process was accelerating and that more effort was urgently needed to involve and motivate civil society “to use humanitarian issues as a form of leverage for arms control”, in order to influence governments before the die was cast through the Programme of Action.³⁵

In summing up the November 2000 Geneva Forum–IANSA meeting, the New York-based chair of the 2001 UN conference preparatory process, Ambassador Carlos Dos Santos of Mozambique, noted that it “introduces into the debate important information and expertise, as well as experience gained on the ground. Even at the UN 2001 conference, I do not think that there will be such a high level of interaction.” Dos Santos was proved correct: NGOs were shut out of conference proceedings for most of the time.³⁶ By catalysing intensified NGO activity, the Geneva Forum–IANSA meeting helped to inject greater humanitarian, public health and developmental perspectives into the UN conference process. In addition, IANSA was, for the first time, able to bring its members together in one place for campaign coordination and strategy, which had an important effect on its subsequent campaigning during the UN conference period.

A further key instance of the usefulness of activities sponsored by the Geneva Forum was a residential seminar held over three days in June 2001. Organized in cooperation with the Biting the Bullet consortium, it brought together a diverse group of governments and NGOs to discuss the main issues of contention for the July conference (issues identified during earlier Geneva Forum activities). Over half of the government representatives came from their ministries of foreign affairs and missions in New York, and the rest from the permanent missions in Geneva. The seminar itself was concerned with a number of substantive issues, including small arms management; controlling the transfer, use and possession of small arms; enhancing cooperation and information exchange; and scope, definitions and other key debates.³⁷

Intense diplomacy was also going on in the margins of the meeting over the presidency of the upcoming UN conference. The issue of choosing the president was not just procedural. For months, a struggle had unfolded between rival candidates that had, arguably, diverted the attention of the diplomatic negotiators from the substantive issues at hand and threatened to cause a crisis at the outset of the conference. Japan had fielded its candidate for the conference presidency, Tokyo-based Ambassador Mitsuro Donowaki, early on. The Non-Aligned Movement—with sympathy from some developed countries—wanted one of its own, the highly respected Colombian Ambassador in Geneva, Camilo Reyes Rodríguez, to preside over the conference. The United Kingdom completed the field with its own candidate, recently retired Ambassador to the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, Sir Michael Weston, confident that the countries of the European Union (EU) would support his candidacy.

Accounts differ over where and when the deal securing Reyes's presidency was finally done.³⁸ However, the Geneva Forum seminar afforded a timely opportunity for some of the key government representatives to meet and discuss their difficulties face to face, as one of the last scheduled opportunities before the conference the following month. In this way, it almost certainly contributed to settling the issue of the presidency before a fight over this question spilled over into the UN conference itself.

THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE AND ITS AFTERMATH

Achieving a Programme of Action at the July 2001 UN Conference was very difficult.³⁹ The relief that an agreed Programme did emerge was tempered by the disappointment of many about its content. Neither NGOs nor governments were overwhelming in their praise. Heavy-handed tactics by key delegations such as the United States resulted in modest proposals concerning civilian possession and armed non-state actors being cut from the draft Programme in the final hours of the meeting. This left some delegations embittered. NGOs were scathing about the many areas in which they considered the Programme of Action lacked ambition, criticism perhaps fuelled by their frustration at being marginalized at the conference's formal proceedings. Reyes himself noted during the final adoption of the Programme of Action on 21 July that:

While congratulating all participants for their diligence in reaching this new consensus, I must, as President, also express my disappointment over the Conference's inability to agree, due to the concerns of one State, on language recognizing the need to establish and maintain controls over private ownership of these deadly weapons and the need for preventing sales of such arms to non-State groups.⁴⁰

Nevertheless, the Programme of Action did represent a concrete, if modest, advance. It was a major step forward compared with the rudimentary level of international attention that small arms issues received just a few years before. The Programme of Action committed the world's governments to implementing its actions, consistent with their own activities at the national, subregional and regional levels, even if some presently lacked the available resources (or, others, the abiding intention) of fulfilling it, and even if it was not legally enforceable.

The Programme was also an achievement seen in light of the substantive complexities that small arms issues present to the disarmament and arms control community, as well as to the development of common understandings for negotiation between the differing diplomatic cultures of New York, Geneva and national capitals. Although certainly not alone in contributing through its informal activities to this emergence of common understanding, the Geneva Forum can, with justification, also claim some credit for facilitating a more positive atmosphere in the lead up to the UN conference.

THE “GENEVA PROCESS” ON SMALL ARMS

A widespread fear among the Geneva Forum’s partner organizations, some governments and the NGO arms control community on small arms was that after relief subsided among governments over the conclusion of the political deal, small arms issues would slip far down the international agenda. The Programme of Action had agreed on a formal follow-up mechanism, which consisted of rather minimal biennial meetings to monitor the level of its national implementation in 2003 and 2005. Other than these low-key intergovernmental meetings in New York (to which the NGOs would, again, have limited—although gradually increasing—access), there were no official follow-up measures at the multilateral level to maintain the attention of politicians and policy makers on national and regional implementation.⁴¹

Meanwhile, thanks in part to the growing familiarity and experience of Geneva’s diplomatic community with small arms issues and the presence of organizations such as the Small Arms and Demobilization Unit of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNIDIR and the Small Arms Survey, a recognizable small arms community had developed in Geneva. It dawned on this community that the Geneva Forum might prove to be an acceptable facilitator for continuing focused interaction on small arms issues. The Geneva Forum had appointed a full-time coordinator, Patrick McCarthy, in late 2000 and was, in fact, already undertaking further activities designed to bring together the diplomatic community and practitioners to look at the implementation of the Programme of Action.⁴²

In February 2002, with the assistance of Ambassador Reyes, the Geneva Forum’s organizers put together a “Framework Document”. In describing the scope for a Geneva-based small arms initiative, the document noted:

There is widespread recognition of the need for an informal forum in which key actors—e.g. representatives of states, intergovernmental bodies, and NGOs—could meet on a regular basis to share information about current initiatives, highlight areas for concerted action and generally act as an ongoing forum to promote, facilitate and monitor implementation of the Programme of Action and to maximise the opportunity presented by the reporting exercises of the biennial meetings.

In view of this, the Framework Document proposed “to harness this critical mass of small arms expertise by creating a forum of committed Geneva actors that would meet on a regular basis” in support of the Programme of Action.⁴³ The document was distributed among some 15 permanent missions in Geneva for their reactions.

In retrospect, the utility of such an unofficial process is easily seen. But, at the time, it was hard for the Geneva Forum and its partners to predict the likely reaction of governments such as the United States—countries that showed little interest in this type of process, judging by the character of their statements in the lead up to, and at, the UN conference in 2001.⁴⁴ Moreover, a month after the UN conference in New York, the United States rejected the draft protocol on biological weapons in Geneva, and prompted a further diplomatic crisis in December 2001 at the Biological Weapons Convention Review Conference by introducing killer amendments to its draft final document. Meanwhile, the CD remained in deadlock.

In fact, reaction to an informal small arms process to promote and monitor implementation of the Programme of Action from 15 states, including the United States, proved to be generally positive. A first exploratory meeting, organized by the Geneva Forum with governments on 17 May 2002, produced “incredible enthusiasm”, according to its chair.⁴⁵ Participating were representatives from the Missions of Australia, Belgium, Canada, Chile, Colombia, France, India, Ireland, Japan, Kenya, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, South Africa, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, the United Kingdom and the United States, as well as the Biting the Bullet project, the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, Small Arms Survey, the UN Department for Disarmament Affairs, UNDP, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Forum’s three founding partners.

Initially, the Geneva Forum and its founding partners had assumed that governments would be reluctant to agree to any but off-the-record discussions on implementation and monitoring of the Programme of Action. This proved not to be the case. Rather, governments preferred a transparent record of the meetings prepared by the Geneva Forum. Worries that governments would be reluctant to buy into a process, however informal, involving NGOs and international organizations were allayed by Canada’s disarmament ambassador in Geneva, Christopher Westdal, who agreed to chair the next two meetings of the “Geneva Process”. This also helped to

establish the principle early on that governments should assume some responsibility for management and direction setting of the Geneva Process.

The Geneva Process met nine times between its launch in May 2002 and the convening of the first UN Biennial Meeting of States (BMS) in July 2003 in New York. Besides Canada, subsequent meetings were also chaired by QUNO, the Small Arms Survey and Ambassador Reyes. Although participation by governments was intended to be “open ended”, those wishing to participate in the work of the Geneva Process were asked to indicate support for the “core principles” of the initiative, set out in the Framework Paper—principles that “do not constitute a barrier to participation as much as a modest hurdle to be cleared”, in the view of the Geneva Forum.⁴⁶

During this period, the mechanism’s core activities were established:

- *Implementation of the Programme of Action.* Geneva Process meetings are thematic, for instance on optional guidelines for implementation of the Programme of Action, establishing national points of contact, strengthening state capacity, reporting, and regional approaches to tackling the illicit trade in small arms.
- *Monitoring of the Programme.* This consists of three components. First, a part of each meeting of the Geneva Process is dedicated to an open forum for reporting on implementation activities by participating governments or others (with reports included in each meeting’s subsequent aide mémoire). Second, a UNIDIR researcher collates independent information from around the world (mainly from news sources) on implementation-related activities. This information is, in turn, collated in a report circulated to all Geneva Process participants, and briefly outlined in the meetings. Third, this paper and the *aide mémoire* are then sent to the Small Arms Survey for inclusion in an online database.⁴⁷

The Geneva Process’s monitoring component is not fully fledged. The Small Arms Survey has noted that “only a limited number of countries and organizations participate. Its independent data-gathering capacity is also modest. Nor has the Geneva Process sought to analyse or evaluate the information it has generated in any systematic way.”⁴⁸ But this information has been fed into other monitoring initiatives, such as the *Red Books*

produced by IANSA and the Biting the Bullet project, which take in-depth looks at the state of implementation of the Programme of Action from civil society perspectives.⁴⁹ And it has kept states themselves informed about the activities of others.

Between May 2002 and the first BMS, the Geneva Process's participation expanded to include 25 governments, in addition to the eight international and regional organizations and the eight NGOs involved. As the process has developed, its founding partners and past and present chairs, including those from governments, have also monitored its development at an informal level and helped to shape the agenda for ongoing discussions. Moreover, the approaching BMS in July 2003 constituted an opportunity for participants to cast a critical eye on the work of the Geneva Process. Basically, the question posed by its organizers was whether the process should continue after the BMS. The general response was that it should. But there was also a desire among many participating governments to focus less on the specifics of implementation and expand discussions to broader issues associated with the illicit trade in small arms. This was a far cry from the caution expressed at the beginning of the Geneva Process.

Since the 2003 BMS, the Geneva Process has met nearly 20 times, and the Geneva Forum has attempted to respond to this demand for broader scope. Attention to implementation and monitoring associated with the UN Programme of Action has been maintained. In addition, discussions on thematic issues have expanded to include expositions on the NGO "Arms Trade Treaty" initiative, the Vienna Firearms Protocol, the state of research on "demand-side" factors in small arms proliferation, Man-Portable Air Defence Systems (MANPADS), raising global public awareness of the humanitarian consequences of the illicit small arms trade and the draft international treaty on tracing and marking of small arms. Meanwhile, another four countries (Germany, Mexico, Finland and Israel) have joined the Geneva Process.

Despite their interest in expanding the range of issues to be covered within the rubric of the Geneva Process, the attentions of government representatives understandably returned to more specific issues associated with the UN process late in 2004. In February 2005, Ambassador Pasi Patokallio of Finland, the chair-designate of the upcoming BMS, was invited to talk with participants in the Geneva Process about that meeting—an

event that was, by some accounts, more successful than his own consultations for the BMS.⁵⁰

A key development for the Geneva Process in 2005 was increased coordination and cooperation with New York-based initiatives also concerned with promoting implementation of the Programme of Action. In addition to the ongoing work of the UN Department for Disarmament Affairs and the Coordinating Action on Small Arms (CASA),⁵¹ these initiatives include the Group of Interested States (GIS) in Practical Disarmament Measures, chaired by Germany. The GIS, which meets four or five times each year, was established on the basis of a 1997 UN General Assembly resolution on the “Consolidation of Peace through Practical Disarmament Measures”.⁵² McCarthy has noted that, from its inception, the GIS “viewed itself as exactly that—an initiative of *states* to address the proliferation and misuse of small arms and to promote implementation of the UN Programme of Action”, although since late 2004 it has increasingly involved NGOs.⁵³ The GIS acts as a marketplace, putting donor countries in direct contact with countries, international organizations and NGOs with practical projects in search of resources.⁵⁴

Another initiative of note is the New York Small Arms Forum, which grew out of informal luncheons between representatives of a few governments, international organizations and NGOs in the New York setting. The New York Forum first met after the 2003 BMS, developing around a core group of nine missions (Canada, Colombia, Finland, Germany, Japan, Mexico, Sierra Leone, South Africa and Sweden). It also involved the UN Department for Disarmament Affairs and three NGOs—Amnesty International, Oxfam International and QUNO in New York. By some accounts, the Quakers were crucial in establishing this group and assisting it logistically. The meetings of the New York Small Arms Forum are open to participation by other interested states, and independent experts from civil society are often invited to contribute to its discussions.

While the GIS remained a highly focused initiative, slight tensions were sometimes apparent between the New York Forum and the Geneva Process, despite the strong thread of continuity offered by the Quakers, whose offices in both cities kept closely in touch. Once again, this seems to have stemmed from the different communities of practice among diplomats in the two multilateral centres. Moreover, some NGOs also failed to

capitalize on ways in which the respective processes complemented, rather than competed with, one another.

This, however, began to change from late 2004. With the 2005 BMS approaching, François Rivasseau, who by now had re-entered the Geneva diplomatic scene as the French ambassador for disarmament, met for discussions with members of the New York Forum on the margins of the UN First Committee in order to promote cooperation between the two initiatives, at the behest of the Geneva Process. The Geneva Process was already sharing its reports with the New York Forum, via the Quaker Office there. Members of both the New York Forum and Geneva Process agreed that the margins of the 2005 BMS would provide an ideal opportunity to expand this cooperation.

As a result of this wish to draw the two initiatives into closer collaboration, the two mornings of Geneva Process/New York Forum meeting in New York on the margins of the BMS were chaired by Sierra Leone's Deputy Permanent Representative and Mexico's Ambassador for Disarmament in Geneva. These joint discussions brought together representatives of governments, international organizations and NGOs in both places to explore broader issues associated with the 2006 Review Conference—issues that were outside the limited ambit of the biennial meetings. Moreover, the meeting signalled a new level of cooperation between Geneva and New York at the informal level, which looks likely to continue through further joint work in the lead up to the 2006 UN Review Conference.

DISARMAMENT AS HUMANITARIAN ACTION?

This brief and unofficial history of the Geneva Forum's activities related to small arms shows it has assisted the UN process to curb illicit trade in small arms in several respects. Also, it reveals the significant extent to which the Geneva Forum's principal organizations, and the individuals behind the Forum, were motivated by humanitarian concerns. Clearly, the Geneva Forum's evolution, from early ad hoc activities on small arms to the current Geneva Process, has been a mixture of foresight, accident and serendipity. There appears to have been a desire to focus attention on the security of individuals and communities from the outset, and to bring a broader range of perspectives on small arms issues into what, in terms of the thinking of

many governments, was (and still is) often a national security debate situated in the arms control domain. This begs the question as to how successful the Geneva Forum has been as a form of disarmament as humanitarian action. Have evidence and field-based perspectives on small arms influenced the multilateral arms control community? The answer hinges upon which constituents are being referred to.

In the early phases of the UN conference process, when suspicions ran high among many states about the roles civil society actors would or could legitimately play, the Geneva Forum provided one useful mechanism for interaction between the humanitarian community, diplomats and other policy makers. As well as having educational value, the Geneva Forum's activities helped in promoting information exchange on substantive and political issues as the 2001 UN conference approached, and built trust between negotiators. The structure of the UN process itself was such that, had informal mechanisms like the Geneva Forum not existed, NGOs would probably have had less impact and been even more marginalized than they were.

After the 2001 UN conference, the Geneva Forum was able to gather momentum for the Geneva Process on small arms from missions in Geneva because it had already demonstrated its usefulness: from the point of view of partnerships and other structures, diplomats tend to like what they know. Bleak diplomatic circumstances made Geneva's conservative diplomatic community more receptive to an untried alternative approach. Acceptance also stemmed from several years of patient and discreet trust-building with governments by the Geneva Forum and its founders, and this ultimately formed the basis on which it could launch the Geneva Process. Seen in this light, the activities and gradual institutionalization of the Geneva Process represent an iterative development of the informal interaction between governments and others begun in the mid-1990s.

External factors have also played a role throughout. For instance, at some point between 2000 and 2002, a tipping point was reached at which a large number of governments active on small arms issues recognized that dialogue on a continual basis with international organizations and NGOs was useful. Some countries, such as Canada, Norway, Switzerland and many in the EU, had grasped this point earlier. Once the Programme of Action was agreed—for all its deficiencies in ambition or scope—many other countries began to be more comfortable about such a dialogue. In

part, this was because the tracks had now been laid toward implementation and monitoring of the Programme of Action, although other initiatives, like negotiating an international agreement on marking and tracing of small arms and calls for a treaty on arms brokering, also existed. And, in part, it was because some governments recognized that civil society interest would be important in keeping small arms issues on the international agenda, as well as in achieving the goals of the Programme of Action.

Nevertheless, government–civil society partnerships remain strictly within bounds. At the informal level, these partnerships have burgeoned, as the New York Forum and the activities of the GIS illustrate. This collaboration is important because, in the New York context, small arms issues have become more politicized, and there are signs of diminishing enthusiasm for the 2006 UN conference. Meanwhile, within the formal UN domain:

NGOs are struggling to integrate themselves more fully into the Biennial Meeting process. While they have succeeded in making their voices heard through the specific “NGO sessions” set aside for them at the 2001 conference and at biennial meetings, they have not yet succeeded in having NGO voices added to the broader thematic debates that take place at these meetings. As a result, NGOs remain largely isolated in the formal UN process.⁵⁵

In other words, interest in informal processes, such as the Geneva Forum, in which humanitarian and other approaches can be introduced, should not obscure the reason that they are necessary in the first place—because of the limits on substantive dialogue, interaction and trust-building in official processes. The constraints are both procedural and political. Consequently, the Geneva Forum’s activities supplement the limited dialogue and input of transnational civil society into international decision-making on small arms issues, but are not a substitute. In fact, it should be recognized that a key selling point of these forms of informal activity for governments is that they offer dialogue with international organizations, NGOs and others without the need for concessions on allowing greater roles for them in decision-making settings.

While the educative and information exchange roles of informal mechanisms such as the Geneva Process are more or less accepted by governments, the prospect of their contributing direction and momentum

to the UN process is more contentious among some states and more difficult to measure.⁵⁶ For its part, the Geneva Forum *does* regard the process as a “means of maintaining and enhancing the political will to address the illicit trade in small arms.”⁵⁷ But its activities have certainly not constituted a “core group” of states analogous to the one that helped to propel international negotiations on the Mine Ban Convention during the 1990s. Such a core group has never emerged in the small arms international context. Perhaps this is because of the greater complexity of these issues internationally (preventing the emergence of a simple message, like a ban, to unite behind) and the myriad sensitivities of many governments, despite the harmful humanitarian consequences of the illicit small arms trade. It was also never the intention of the Geneva Forum’s progenitors, whose aim was to have an open process. The Geneva Process, in particular, “was intended to be a partnership process, not an adversarial one”, according to one of its founders.⁵⁸

Meanwhile, the Geneva Process has gradually introduced broader humanitarian and other approaches into its activities, with a view to preparing its participants for the 2006 Review Conference in New York and beyond. A large amount of research has been conducted on small arms issues in recent years, and the Geneva Forum’s earlier, ongoing activities, as well as the Geneva Process, have helped to showcase some of this.⁵⁹

Ostensibly, this broader focus has been in response to calls from governments within the process, but it is pursued in the awareness that some participating governments may be pushed beyond their comfort zones. And, from around mid-2004, there have been signs it is doing just that. While their diplomatic representatives continue to monitor its activities and report back to their home authorities, some countries, such as China, Israel, the Russian Federation and the United States, are often rather passive in Geneva Process meetings. On the whole, this has resulted in debate that is less frank than it could be. Yet some of these same countries are likely to hold strongly divergent positions on specific issues at the 2006 meeting.

These strains point to the reality of the Geneva Process’s discussions, which accommodate diverse viewpoints. Without a formal mandate or dependence upon formal consensus it has, in principle, considerable freedom of action. Conversely, in lacking watertight official legitimacy, it is difficult for the Geneva Process to be ambitious without leaving behind

some participating governments, on whose goodwill it depends and with whom it was intended to engage and involve.

Correspondingly, the Geneva Forum's humanitarian contribution in terms of convincing states to adopt humanitarian concepts and approaches is still unclear. Human security concepts became officially embedded in the foreign policies of countries such as Canada, Norway and Japan from the 1990s, and many other high- or middle-income countries have inculcated aspects of humanitarian approaches into their national or regional policies on small arms. Some of these measures followed on from agreement of the Programme of Action. But many aspects of these approaches are still regarded with suspicion or cynicism by some others, such as the United States, China and the Russian Federation—countries that participate in the Geneva Process.⁶⁰ The introduction of human security perspectives in that process may make little difference to the positions of these countries in New York in 2006, even if they understand better the positions of others as a benefit to them of their participation.

However, the Geneva Forum's contribution to the Geneva small arms community, including missions, international organizations and NGOs, is clearer. Since January 1999, when the author arrived on the Geneva scene, general understanding about small arms issues among diplomats and the tempo of research and advocacy-related activity have been transformed. In good measure this is because the Geneva Forum has helped to provide a framework for interaction and information exchange between these diverse actors, from which all have benefited. Beneficiaries also include authorities in capitals, informed by their representatives in Geneva, as well as through the Geneva Forum's own regular reporting. The steady expansion of the Geneva Process is testament to this success. Accompanying this expansion, however, is the risk that the Geneva Process will lose its organic character and become dilute.⁶¹ Another risk is that it will become a closed shop, with the usual faces presenting their perspectives—a tendency that at least one participant the author spoke with felt was occurring as the Geneva Process has matured.

For the broader arms control community, including missions and NGOs interested in small arms issues in New York, there is substantial scope for capacity-building in the lead up to the 2006 Review Conference and beyond involving the Geneva Process. Some progress has been made, for example through greater coordination and cooperation involving the

Geneva Process and New York Forum. Continued efforts will depend on available resources and how successfully these new types of partnership are sustained beyond initial optimism.

Issues associated with the illicit trade in small arms differ from many of the traditional topics handled in the arms control domain. Understanding illicit trade and its consequences with a view to framing effective policy responses depends, to a large extent, on recognizing that this phenomenon is shaped by an aggregation of widely differing and local, individual interconnections. This is still poorly understood in research terms (it is not easy to collect data on illicit small arms trafficking) and the illicit trade's dynamic characteristics may well be counter-intuitive to arms control negotiators and others. Mastering it will require looking at individual intent and local perceptions of insecurity and why people want to have, and to use, guns. In other words, it entails recognizing individuals as additional referent points for security.

One of the Geneva Forum's biggest contributions over the long run has been in consistently showing the arms control community that there is a major human security dimension to their work, which requires multidisciplinary thinking and input from a wide range of perspectives if the Programme of Action is to be successfully implemented. It is not a message all participants in the Geneva Forum's activities on small arms understand—or want to hear. This makes it no less difficult to quantify the Geneva Forum's influence. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that its work on small arms does count as disarmament as humanitarian action.

Notes

- ¹ See John Borrie, "Rethinking Multilateral Negotiations: Disarmament as Humanitarian Action", in John Borrie and Vanessa Martin Randin (eds), *Alternative Approaches in Multilateral Decision Making: Disarmament as Humanitarian Action*, Geneva: United Nations, 2005, pp. 7–37.
- ² *Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction*, 18 September 1997.

- ³ For general information about the Geneva Forum and its partner organizations, go to <www.geneva-forum.org>.
- ⁴ There is, as yet, no agreed international definition of SALW. Perhaps the most widely used is that of the 1997 United Nations Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms in its report. According to this report, “small arms” includes revolvers and self-loading pistols, rifles and carbines, submachine guns, hand-held under-barrel and mounted grenade launchers, portable anti-aircraft guns, portable anti-tank guns, recoilless rifles, portable launchers of anti-tank missile and rocket systems, portable launchers of anti-aircraft missile systems, and mortars of calibres of less than 100mm. Although various UN expert groups since 1997 have included ammunition and explosives as SALW, many governments are reluctant to do so.
- ⁵ Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, in UN document A/CONF.192/15, of 9–20 July 2001.
- ⁶ One of the first major policy documents to recognize this, as well as the need for “new dimensions of human security” was the United Nations Development Programme in its *Human Development Report 1994*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1994.
- ⁷ Small Arms Survey, *Small Arms Survey 2001: Profiling the Problem*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001, p. 234.
- ⁸ Ibid.
- ⁹ Robert Muggah and Peter Batchelor, “Development Held Hostage”: *Assessing the Effects of Small Arms on Human Development—A Preliminary Study of the Socio-Economic Impacts and Development Linkages of Small Arms Proliferation, Availability and Use*, New York: UNDP, April 2002, at <www.undp.org/bcpr/smallarms/docs/development_held_hostage.pdf>.
- ¹⁰ *UN Sahara-Sahel Advisory Mission Report*, Part 1, Executive Summary, 1995.
- ¹¹ *Supplement to An Agenda for Peace: Position Paper of the Secretary-General on the Work of the Organization on the Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the United Nations*, General Assembly document A/50/60-S/1995/1, 25 January 1995.
- ¹² General Assembly resolution A/RES/50/70 of 12 December 1995.
- ¹³ David Biggs, “United Nations Contribution to the Process”, *Disarmament Forum*, 2000, no. 2, pp. 25–37, p. 26.
- ¹⁴ *Report of the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms*, General Assembly document A/52/298 of 27 August 1997.

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- ¹⁵ UN General Assembly resolution A/RES/52/38 of 8 January 1998.
- ¹⁶ *Report of the Group of Governmental Experts on Small Arms*, General Assembly document A/54/258 of 19 August 1999.
- ¹⁷ UN General Assembly resolution A/RES/54/54 of 10 January 2000.
- ¹⁸ For more detailed discussion of the differences in viewpoint and discussion of the 2001 Conference, see “Reaching Consensus in New York: the UN 2001 Small Arms Conference”, in *Small Arms Survey, Small Arms Survey 2002: Counting the Human Cost*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, chapter 5, pp. 203–33.
- ¹⁹ A community of practice, as used here, simply means a group of people who, over a period of time, share in some set of social practices geared toward some common purpose.
- ²⁰ Elizabeth Clegg, “NGOs Take Aim”, *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, January/February 1999, vol. 55, no. 1, pp. 49–51, p. 49.
- ²¹ Conversation with C. Buchanan, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue in Geneva, 26 August 2005. Buchanan, as part of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom in Geneva at the time, assisted in organizing the November 2000 Geneva Forum–IANSA meeting, and remains active on small arms issues and in the Geneva Forum’s small arms activities in her current role.
- ²² Conversation with Jean du Preez, 19 August 2005. Du Preez was Counsellor for disarmament matters at the South African Permanent Mission in New York throughout the 2001 UN Conference preparatory period.
- ²³ For a broader comparison involving six recent multilateral processes, see V. Martin Randin and J. Borrie, 2005, *op. cit.*, pp. 67–129.
- ²⁴ The author was a governmental negotiator in the 2001 UN conference process.
- ²⁵ According to David Biggs, the concept of micro-disarmament was introduced into the disarmament lexicon in January 1995, when the UN Secretary-General, in his supplement to *An Agenda for Peace* described it as “practical disarmament in the context of the conflicts the United Nations is actually dealing with, and of the weapons, most of them light weapons, that are actually killing people in the hundreds of thousands”. See D. Biggs, 2000, *op. cit.*, p. 26.
- ²⁶ Peter Batchelor, “NGOs and the Small Arms Issue”, *Disarmament Forum*, 2002, no. 1, pp. 37–40, p. 39.
- ²⁷ See, for example, Swadesh Rana, *Small States and Intra-State Conflicts*, UNIDIR research paper no. 34, Geneva: UNIDIR, 1995.

- ²⁸ For more information about the Small Arms Survey, see <www.smallarmssurvey.org>.
- ²⁹ See for instance, David C. Atwood, "NGOs and Disarmament: Views From the Coal Face", *Disarmament Forum*, 2002, no. 1, pp. 5–14.
- ³⁰ Author's interview with David C. Atwood, 8 August 2005.
- ³¹ This unpublished proposal noted, for instance, that there was "little coordination between the disarmament community and the humanitarian/human rights community, although disarmament and security are essential for the promotion of human rights, humanitarian approaches and development, and vice versa", in *Catalysts and Synergies: Building Multilateral Peace and Security Partnerships in Geneva: A 17-month (initial) project proposal by the Geneva Forum for the Ford Foundation*, July 2000, p. 1.
- ³² The Geneva Forum's mandate is posted on its web site: <www.geneva-forum.org>.
- ³³ Information about several of these meetings, including reports, is available at <www.geneva-forum.org>. Geneva Forum later produced two volumes containing articles based on many of the presentations given during this period. See the Geneva Forum (ed.), *The Geneva Forum: Seminars on Small Arms*, Geneva: UNIDIR, volumes I and II.
- ³⁴ See Geneva Forum, *Conference Report: Setting Course for the 2001 Conference on Small Arms*, Palais des Nations, Geneva, 9 November 2000. The conference itself was sponsored by IANSA, the Small Arms Survey, the Geneva NGO Committee for Disarmament, the Geneva Forum and its founding partners, the Biting the Bullet project (International Alert, British American Security Information Council and Saferworld) and Geneva Action Network on Small Arms.
- ³⁵ Conversation with Cate Buchanan, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, 26 August 2005.
- ³⁶ Geneva Forum, 2000, op. cit., p. 23.
- ³⁷ This residential seminar in Jongny sur Vevey, Switzerland, was organized jointly by the Geneva Forum and the Biting the Bullet project from 21 to 23 June 2001, and was entitled, "Advancing the Agenda of the UN Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects".
- ³⁸ Some contemporary observers recall the essentials of a formula being worked out on the margins of the Jongny sur Vevey residential seminar. Others insist that this occurred later in New York, for instance, just days before the UN conference proper in informal plurilateral meetings

involving permanent representatives of key states in the Non-Aligned Movement, the United Kingdom and Japan.

- ³⁹ For the official report of the meeting see *Report of the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, New York, 9–20 July 2001*, UN document A/CONF.192/15 of 9–21 July 2001.
- ⁴⁰ Camilo Reyes Rodriguez, *Statement by the President of the Conference after the adoption of the 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, op. cit., annex.
- ⁴¹ The first Biennial Meeting of States was convened in New York in July 2003, and chaired by Ambassador Kuniko Inoguchi of Japan. The second was held in July 2005, and chaired by Ambassador Pasi Patokallio of Finland. Several regional, subregional and national initiatives were also underway.
- ⁴² The Geneva Forum held meetings on “Following Up the UN Conference on Small Arms & Light Weapons: The Programme of Action and Beyond” on 25 October 2001; “Following up on the UN Small Arms Conference: Some Examples of Effective Action” on 14 November 2001; and “Implementing the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms: What needs to be done?” on 7–8 February 2002.
- ⁴³ Geneva Forum, *The Geneva Process on Small Arms—Framework Document*, at <www.geneva-forum.org/Activities/salw/genevaprocess/framework.htm>.
- ⁴⁴ See Small Arms Survey, 2002, op. cit., pp. 203–33.
- ⁴⁵ Author’s conversation with David C. Atwood, 8 August 2005.
- ⁴⁶ Geneva Forum, *Summary Presentation—The Geneva Process on Small Arms: Promoting and Monitoring Implementation of the UN Programme of Action*, p. 1, at <www.geneva-forum.org/Activities/salw/genevaprocess/background.htm>.
- ⁴⁷ The Geneva Forum and the Small Arms Survey established an online database on measures taken to implement the UN Programme of Action following its adoption. According to the Small Arms Survey, the database includes documents circulated as part of the Geneva Process; statements and reports from various regional and international meetings; national reports and statements submitted in conjunction with the BMS; as well as various press sources on small arms-related action. The database is accessible at <www.smallarmssurvey.org/databases.htm>.

- ⁴⁸ Small Arms Survey, *Small Arms Survey 2004: Rights at Risk*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004, p. 262.
- ⁴⁹ The Biting the Bullet project, a collaboration of the NGOs Saferworld and International Alert, together with the University of Bradford, produced reports in 2003 and 2005. For more information on this project and its reports, see <www.saferworld.co.uk/publications/biting%20the%20bullet.htm>.
- ⁵⁰ Issues discussed at this meeting included deadlines for national written reports, the structure of the BMS, thematic debate, NGO participation, the form of the Chair's report, and broader issues of coordination and the UN process in the longer term.
- ⁵¹ CASA was established by the UN Secretary-General in 1998, and is comprised of 16 UN departments, agencies, funds and programmes.
- ⁵² This resolution had 64 co-sponsors.
- ⁵³ See Patrick McCarthy, "Towards a New Diplomacy? Government-Civil Society Partnerships Promoting the Implementation of the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms: Paper prepared for presentation at the International Conference of NGOs "A Farewell to Small Arms", Tokyo, 7-8 May 2005, p. 6.
- ⁵⁴ Information about the Group of Interested States can be found at <disarmament2.un.org/casa/gis/gis-april2005.htm>.
- ⁵⁵ P. McCarthy, 2005, op. cit., p. 8.
- ⁵⁶ For instance, US Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security John Bolton told the UN conference in 2001 that the United States would not support the promotion of international advocacy activity by international or non-governmental actors. (This was a point that mystified many negotiators at the time). Many countries, for instance in the League of Arab States, as well as China and the Russian Federation, while less overt, were nevertheless hostile to greater roles for civil society actors within the formal UN conference process. For an overview, see Small Arms Survey, 2002, op. cit., pp. 217-19.
- ⁵⁷ Geneva Forum, *Summary Presentation*, op. cit., p. 3.
- ⁵⁸ Conversation with David C. Atwood, 8 August 2005.
- ⁵⁹ For example, at its twenty-first meeting in late June 2005, the Geneva Process heard presentations concerning the effects of small arms availability on the delivery of humanitarian relief. These findings, based on a global survey of 2,000 humanitarian staff in the field, were published by the Small Arms Survey and the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue. See Cate Buchanan and Robert Muggah, *No Relief*:

Surveying the Effects of Gun Violence on Humanitarian and Development Personnel, Geneva: Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue/ Small Arms Survey, 2005.

⁶⁰ Recently, there have been views expressed from within the defence community in the United States that the value of human security to military interests be re-examined, not least because it will allow Washington to better align its “hard” military capabilities with the “softer” humanitarian capabilities of others. See Dan Henk, “Human Security: Relevance and Implications”, *Parameters*, US Army War College Quarterly, vol. XXXV, no. 2, Summer 2005, pp. 91–106.

⁶¹ As of 25 August 2005, 29 governments formally participated in the Geneva Process: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Finland, France, Germany, India, Ireland, Israel, Japan, Kenya, Mali, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Peru, Russian Federation, South Africa, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, United Kingdom and United States. Eight UN and other international and regional organizations also took part: the European Commission, International Committee of the Red Cross, United Nations Department for Disarmament Affairs, UNDP, Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, UN High Commissioner for Refugees, UNIDIR and the World Health Organization. In addition, eight NGOs were also regular participants: HDC, IANSA, International Alert, PSIS, QUNO, Saferworld, the Small Arms Survey and the World Council of Churches.