

**Freedom**

from

**FEAR**

**The world is now in the fifty-fifth year without war among the major powers—the longest such period in the entire history of the modern system of states. In the area of Europe that now comprises the European Union—where most modern wars started—a security community has emerged: an association of states characterized by dependable expectations that disputes will be resolved by peaceful means.**

**Moreover, nearly five decades of cold war—sustained by a nuclear balance of terror that could have annihilated us all instantly—have passed. Some observers have lamented that fact, claiming that bipolarity was stable, predictable and helped keep the peace. But that was hardly true in the developing world: there the cold war was a period of frequent armed conflict fuelled by both sides in the bipolar world. Once the cold war ended, that source of external political and material support ceased to exist.**

Freeing the United Nations from the shackles of the cold war also enabled it to play a more significant role. The 1990s saw an upsurge both in our peacekeeping and in our peacemaking activities: three times more peace agreements were negotiated and signed during that decade than in the previous three combined.

The frequency of inter-state warfare has been declining for some time. (For the corresponding decline in refugee numbers, see figure 6.) Economic globalization has largely eliminated the benefits of territorial acquisition, while the destructiveness of modern warfare has increased its costs. The near-doubling in the number of democracies since 1990 has been equally important, because established democratic states, for a variety of reasons, rarely fight each other militarily (see figure 7).

Wars since the 1990s have been mainly internal. They have been brutal, claiming more than 5 million lives. They have violated, not so much borders, as people. Humanitarian conventions have been routinely flouted, civilians and aid workers have become strategic targets, and children have been forced to become killers. Often driven by political ambition or greed, these wars have preyed on ethnic and religious differences, they are often sustained by external economic interests, and they are fed by a hyperactive and in large part illicit global arms market.

In the wake of these conflicts, a new understanding of the concept of security is evolving. Once synonymous with the defence of territory from external attack, the requirements of security today have come to embrace the protection of communities and individuals from internal violence.

The need for a more human-centred approach to security is reinforced by the continuing dangers that weapons of mass destruction, most notably nuclear weapons, pose to humanity: their very name reveals their scope and their intended objective, if they were ever used.

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## Security begins with prevention

As we look ahead, we can see real risks that resource depletion, especially fresh-water scarcities, as well as severe forms of environmental degradation, may increase social and political tensions in unpredictable but potentially dangerous ways.

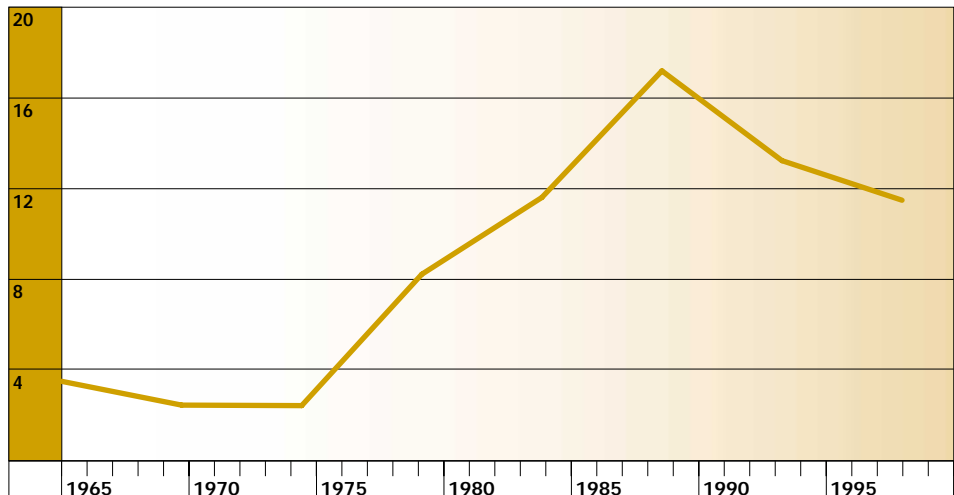
In short, these new security challenges require us to think creatively, and to adapt our traditional approaches to better meet the needs of our new era. But one time-honoured precept holds more firmly today than ever: it all begins with prevention.

### Preventing deadly conflicts

There is near-universal agreement that prevention is preferable to cure, and that strategies of prevention must address the root causes of conflicts, not simply their violent

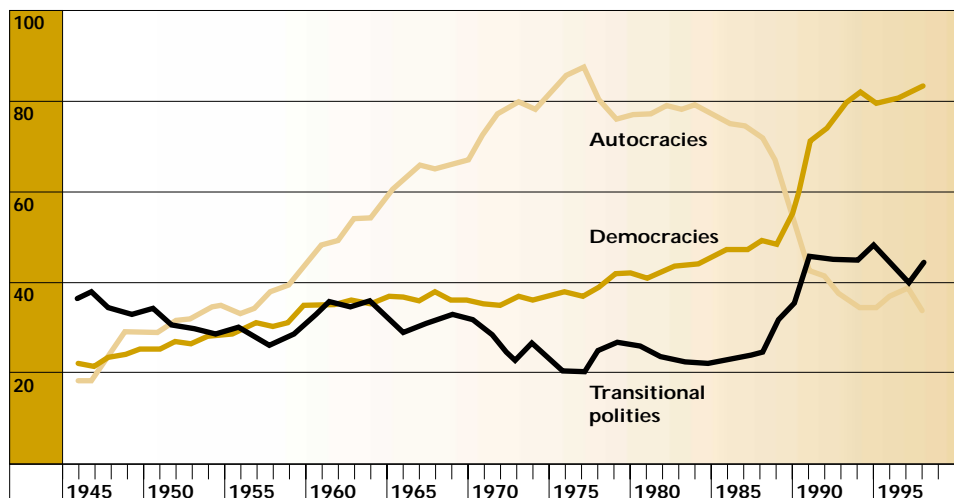
**Figure 6**  
Global refugee  
population,  
1965–1998  
(Millions)

Source: UNHCR, 2000.



**Figure 7**  
Democratic,  
autocratic and  
transitional polities,  
1946–1998

Source: Marshall, derived from data from the Polity III dataset, Center for International Development and Conflict Management, University of Maryland, 1999.



symptoms. Consensus is not always matched by practical actions, however. Political leaders find it hard to sell prevention policies abroad to their public at home, because the costs are palpable and immediate, while the benefits—an undesirable or tragic future event that does not occur—are more difficult for the leaders to convey and the public to grasp. Thus prevention is, first and foremost, a challenge of political leadership.

If we are to be successful at preventing deadly conflicts, we must have a clear understanding of their causes. Not all wars are alike; therefore no single strategy will be universally effective. What is different about the wars that people have suffered since the beginning of the 1990s?

Several major conflicts in the past decade were wars of post-communist succession, in which callous leaders exploited the most primitive forms of ethnic nationalism and religious differences to retain or acquire power. Some of those conflicts have already receded into the history books—along with those leaders—and it is to be hoped that the remainder soon will. The majority of wars today are wars among the poor. Why is this the case?

Poor countries have fewer economic and political resources with which to manage conflicts. They lack the capacity to make extensive financial transfers to minority groups or regions, for example, and they may fear that their state apparatus is too fragile to countenance devolution. Both are routine instruments in richer countries.

What this means is that every single measure I described in the previous section—every step taken towards reducing poverty and achieving broad-based economic growth—is a step towards conflict prevention. All who are engaged in conflict prevention and development, therefore—the United Nations, the Bretton Woods institutions, governments and civil society organizations—must address these challenges in a more integrated fashion.

We can do more. In many poor countries at war, the condition of poverty is coupled with sharp ethnic or religious cleavages. Almost invariably, the rights of subordinate groups are insufficiently respected, the institutions of government are insufficiently inclusive and the allocation of society's resources favours the dominant faction over others.

The solution is clear, even if difficult to achieve in practice: to promote human rights, to protect minority rights and to institute political arrangements in which all groups are represented. Wounds that have festered for a long time will not heal overnight. Nor can confidence be built or dialogues develop while fresh wounds are being inflicted. There are no quick fixes, no short cuts. Every group needs to become convinced that the state belongs to all people.

Some armed conflicts today are driven by greed, not grievance. Whereas war is costly for society as a whole, it nevertheless may be profitable for some. In such cases, often the control over natural resources is at stake, drugs are often involved, the conflicts are abetted by opportunistic neighbours, and private sector actors are complicit—buying ill-gotten gains, helping to launder funds and feeding a steady flow of weapons into the conflict zone.

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***To strengthen protection, we must reassert the centrality of international humanitarian and human rights law***

The best preventive strategy in this context is transparency: “naming and shaming”. Civil society actors have an enormous role to play in this regard, but governments and the Security Council must exercise their responsibility. Greater social responsibility on the part of global companies, including banks, is also essential.

Finally, successful strategies for prevention require us to ensure that old conflicts do not start up again, and that the necessary support is provided for post-conflict peace-building. I regret to say that we do not fully enjoy that level of support in most of our missions.

While prevention is the core feature of our efforts to promote human security, we must recognize that even the best preventive and deterrence strategies can fail. Other measures, therefore, may be called for. One is to strengthen our commitment to protecting vulnerable people.

**Protecting the vulnerable**

Despite the existence of numerous international conventions intended to protect the vulnerable, the brutalization of civilians, particularly women and children, continues in armed conflicts. Women have become especially vulnerable to violence and sexual exploitation, while children are easy prey for forced labour and are often coerced into becoming fighters. Civilian populations and infrastructure have become covers for the operations of rebel movements, targets for reprisal and victims of the chaotic brutalities that too often follow breakdowns in state authority. In the most extreme cases, the innocent become the principal targets of ethnic cleansers and *genocidaires*.

International conventions have traditionally looked to states to protect civilians, but today this expectation is threatened in several ways. First, states are sometimes the principal perpetrators of violence against the very citizens that humanitarian law requires them to protect. Second, non-state combatants, particularly in collapsed states, are often either ignorant or contemptuous of humanitarian law. Third, international conventions do not adequately address the specific needs of vulnerable groups, such as internally displaced persons, or women and children in complex emergencies.

**To strengthen protection, we must reassert the centrality of international humanitarian and human rights law. We must strive to end the culture of impunity—which is why the creation of the International Criminal Court is so important. We must also devise new strategies to meet changing needs.**

New approaches in this area could include establishing a mechanism to monitor compliance by all parties with existing provisions of international humanitarian law. Stronger legal standards are needed to provide for the protection of humanitarian workers. Consideration should also be given to an international convention regulating the actions of private and corporate security firms, which we see involved in internal wars in growing numbers.

Greater use of information technology can also help to reduce the pain and burdens of complex emergencies for the people involved; one example is a programme

called “Child Connect”, which helps reunite children and parents who have been separated in wars and natural disaster (see box 7).

Of one thing we may be certain: without protecting the vulnerable, our peace initiatives will be both fragile and illusory.

### Addressing the dilemma of intervention

In my address to the General Assembly last September, I called on Member States to unite in the pursuit of more effective policies to stop organized mass murder and egregious violations of human rights. Although I emphasized that intervention embraced a wide continuum of responses, from diplomacy to armed action, it was the latter option that generated most controversy in the debate that followed.

Some critics were concerned that the concept of “humanitarian intervention” could become a cover for gratuitous interference in the internal affairs of sovereign states.

In wars and natural disasters children often get separated from their parents and reuniting them can pose an immense challenge for aid agencies. The International Rescue Committee’s “Child Connect” project was designed to solve this problem. The project uses a shared database open to all the agencies in the field seeking to reunite lost children with their parents. These agencies can submit data and photographs of unaccompanied children as well as search requests from parents. Search procedures that once took months can now be completed in minutes, saving both children and parents much heartache.

For Child Connect to realize its potential, all the tracing agencies in a region need to be able to submit and review the lost-and-found data on a regular basis. The easiest way to do this, of course, is via the Internet, but armed conflicts rarely occur in places with robust Internet or communications infrastructures.

In Kosovo, the International Rescue Committee created a shared satellite/wireless Internet network in Pristina ([www.ipko.org](http://www.ipko.org)). Every United Nations agency, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, several national missions, and the majority of non-governmental organizations are connected to the Internet 24 hours per day via the network.

Because the marginal cost of this technology is so low, the project is also able to provide free Internet access to the university, hospital, libraries, schools, local media and local non-governmental organizations. So not only are international organizations getting robust communications links and saving money, they are helping to support Kosovar civil society and build a long-term Internet infrastructure for Kosovo. The project has now been turned over to an independent local non-governmental organization that is already completely self-sustaining.

This project can serve as a model for future humanitarian emergencies. By building a shared Internet infrastructure, international organizations will benefit from more reliable communications at a much lower cost and they will be able to take advantage of shared access to databases and other Internet-based applications to improve their effectiveness.

When the crisis ends, the infrastructure can be left in place and local people trained to maintain it.

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**Box 7**  
**Child Connect:**  
**Using the**  
**Information**  
**Revolution to find**  
**lost children**

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Others felt that it might encourage secessionist movements deliberately to provoke governments into committing gross violations of human rights in order to trigger external interventions that would aid their cause. Still others noted that there is little consistency in the practice of intervention, owing to its inherent difficulties and costs as well as perceived national interests—except that weak states are far more likely to be subjected to it than strong ones.

I recognize both the force and the importance of these arguments. I also accept that the principles of sovereignty and non-interference offer vital protection to small and weak states. But to the critics I would pose this question: if humanitarian intervention is, indeed, an unacceptable assault on sovereignty, how should we respond to a Rwanda, to a Srebrenica—to gross and systematic violations of human rights that offend every precept of our common humanity?

We confront a real dilemma. Few would disagree that both the defence of humanity and the defence of sovereignty are principles that must be supported. Alas, that does not tell us which principle should prevail when they are in conflict.

Humanitarian intervention is a sensitive issue, fraught with political difficulty and not susceptible to easy answers. But surely no legal principle—not even sovereignty—can ever shield crimes against humanity. Where such crimes occur and peaceful attempts to halt them have been exhausted, the Security Council has a moral duty to act on behalf of the international community. The fact that we cannot protect people everywhere is no reason for doing nothing when we can. Armed intervention must always remain the option of last resort, but in the face of mass murder it is an option that cannot be relinquished.

### **Strengthening peace operations**

With the end of the cold war confrontation and the paralysis it had induced in the Security Council, the decade of the 1990s became one of great activism for the United Nations. More peace operations were mounted in that decade than in the previous four combined, and we developed new approaches to post-conflict peace-building and placed new emphasis on conflict prevention.

While traditional peacekeeping had focused mainly on monitoring ceasefires, today's complex peace operations are very different. Their objective, in essence, is to assist the parties engaged in conflict to pursue their interests through political channels instead. To that end, the United Nations helps to create and strengthen political institutions and to broaden their base. We work alongside governments, non-governmental organizations and local citizens' groups to provide emergency relief, demobilize former fighters and reintegrate them into society, clear mines, organize and conduct elections, and promote sustainable development practices.

International assistance to rebuild the economy is an essential complement to this work. People will quickly become disillusioned with fledgling institutions, and even the peace process itself, if they see no prospect for any material improvement in their con-

dition. Post-conflict peace-building has helped to prevent the breakdown of numerous peace agreements, and to build the foundations for sustainable peace.

We can claim significant successes among our peace operations in the last decade or so, beginning with Namibia in the late 1980s, and including Mozambique, El Salvador, the Central African Republic, Eastern Slavonia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and, at least partially, Cambodia. We also encountered tragic failures, none more so than Rwanda and the fall of Srebrenica and the other safe areas in Bosnia. The many reasons for those failures, including those attributable to the United Nations Secretariat, are discussed frankly and in considerable detail in two reports I issued late last year.

The structural weaknesses of United Nations peace operations, however, only Member States can fix. Our system for launching operations has sometimes been compared to a volunteer fire department, but that description is too generous. Every time there is a fire, we must first find fire engines and the funds to run them before we can start dousing any flames. The present system relies almost entirely on last minute, ad hoc arrangements that guarantee delay, with respect to the provision of civilian personnel even more so than military.

Although we have understandings for military standby arrangements with Member States, the availability of the designated forces is unpredictable and very few are in a state of high readiness. Resource constraints preclude us even from being able to deploy a mission headquarters rapidly.

On the civilian side, we have been starkly reminded in Kosovo and East Timor how difficult it is to recruit qualified personnel for missions. Where do we find police officers quickly, or judges, or people to run correctional institutions—to focus only on law enforcement needs? A more systematic approach is necessary here as well.

To bring greater clarity to where we stand and how we can hope to progress with regard to United Nations peace operations, I have established a high-level panel, which will review all aspects of peace operations, from the doctrinal to the logistical. It will suggest ways forward that are acceptable politically and make sense operationally.

I expect that the panel's report will be completed in time to enable the Millennium Assembly to consider its recommendations.

### Targeting sanctions

During the 1990s, the United Nations established more sanctions regimes than ever before. Sanctions, an integral element of the collective security provisions of the Charter, offer the Security Council an important instrument to enforce its decisions, situated on a continuum between mere verbal condemnation and recourse to armed force. They include arms embargoes, the imposition of trade and financial restrictions, interruptions of relations by air and sea, and diplomatic isolation.

Sanctions have had an uneven track record in inducing compliance with Security Council resolutions. In some cases, little if any effort has gone into monitoring and enforcing them. In many cases, neighbouring countries that bear much of the loss from

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ensuring compliance have not been helped by the rest of the international community and, as a result, have allowed sanctions to become porous.

When robust and comprehensive economic sanctions are directed against authoritarian regimes, a different problem is encountered. Then it is usually the people who suffer, not the political elites whose behaviour triggered the sanctions in the first place. Indeed, those in power, perversely, often benefit from such sanctions by their ability to control and profit from black market activity, and by exploiting them as a pretext for eliminating domestic sources of political opposition.

Because economic sanctions have proved to be such a blunt and even counter-productive instrument, a number of governments, and numerous civil society organizations and think tanks around the world, have explored ways to make them smarter by better targeting them. Switzerland has led an effort to design instruments of targeted financial sanctions, including drafting model national legislation required to implement them, and Germany is supporting work on how to make arms embargoes and other forms of targeted boycotts more effective. The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Canada have also contributed to the debate on how to target sanctions more effectively.

**These efforts are now sufficiently well advanced to merit serious consideration by Member States. I invite the Security Council, in particular, to bear them in mind when designing and applying sanctions regimes.**

### **Pursuing arms reductions**

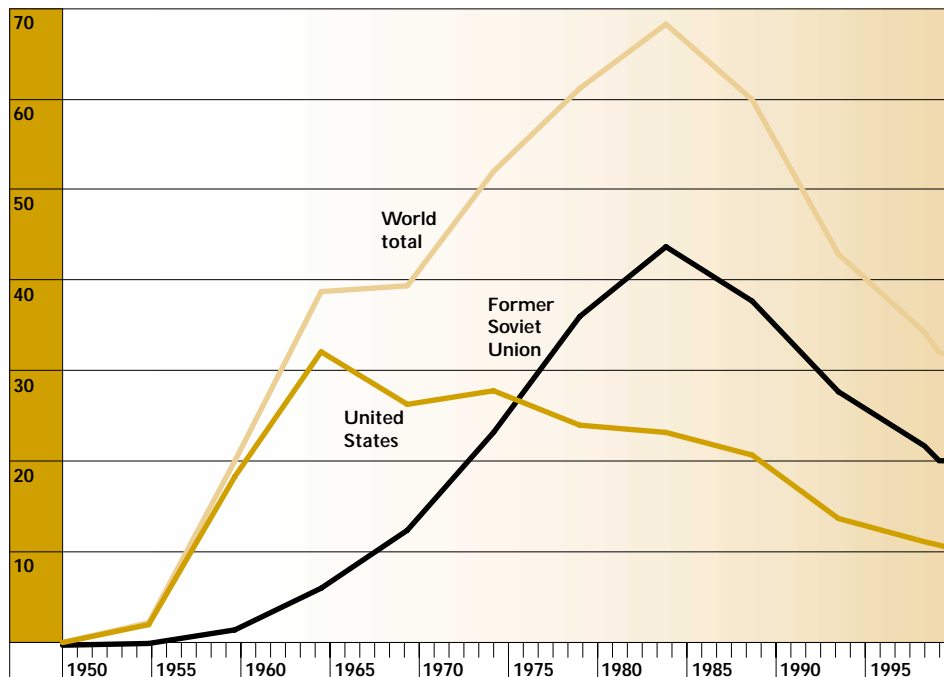
The post-cold-war era has seen both gains and setbacks in the realm of disarmament. On the positive side, the Ottawa Convention banning landmines and the Chemical Weapons Convention have both entered into force. The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty has been concluded, nuclear safeguards have been strengthened and nuclear-weapon-free zones now embrace all of the southern hemisphere. Nuclear weapons numbers have almost halved since 1982, and world military expenditures declined by some 30 per cent between 1990 and 1998 (see figures 8 and 9).

The rest of the picture is much less encouraging. Little meaningful progress has been achieved in limiting the proliferation of small arms. The nuclear non-proliferation regime has suffered major blows as a result of clandestine nuclear weapon programmes, the nuclear tests in South Asia and the unwillingness of key states to ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

Advances in biotechnology are increasing the potential threat posed by biological weapons, while negotiations on a verification regime for the Biological Weapons Convention are being unnecessarily prolonged. For three years in a row now, the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva has not engaged in any negotiations because its members have been unable to agree on disarmament priorities.

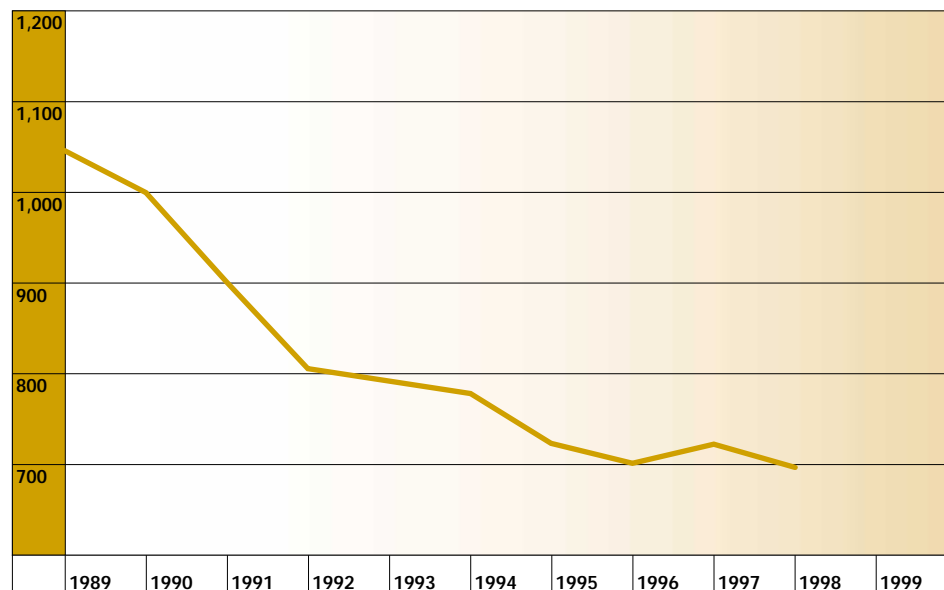
I cannot here review the entire arms control spectrum. Instead, I focus on two categories of weapon that are of special concern: small arms and light weapons, because

they currently kill most people in most wars; and nuclear weapons, because of their continuing terrifying potential for mass destruction.



**Figure 8**  
Nuclear stockpiles,  
estimated, 1950–2000  
(Thousands of weapons)

Source: Natural Resources Defense Council, 2000.



**Figure 9**  
World military  
expenditures,  
1989–1998  
(Billions of United States  
dollars—constant  
1995 dollars)

Note: 1991 estimated.  
Source: Stockholm Peace Research  
Institute, *SIPRI Yearbook 1999*.

***Small arms proliferation is not merely a security issue; it is also an issue of human rights and of development***

### **Small arms**

The death toll from small arms dwarfs that of all other weapons systems—and in most years greatly exceeds the toll of the atomic bombs that devastated Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In terms of the carnage they cause, small arms, indeed, could well be described as “weapons of mass destruction”. Yet there is still no global non-proliferation regime to limit their spread, as there is for chemical, biological and nuclear weapons.

Small arms proliferation is not merely a security issue; it is also an issue of human rights and of development. The proliferation of small arms sustains and exacerbates armed conflicts. It endangers peacekeepers and humanitarian workers. It undermines respect for international humanitarian law. It threatens legitimate but weak governments and it benefits terrorists as well as the perpetrators of organized crime.

Much of the cold war's small arms surplus finished up in the world's most dangerous conflict zones and, as the number of weapons in circulation increased, their price declined, making access to them ever easier even in the poorest countries. In parts of Africa in the mid-1990s, for example, deadly assault rifles could be bought for the price of a chicken or a bag of maize. Reducing the toll caused by these weapons will be difficult, not least because of the extraordinary number in circulation, which some estimates put as high as 500 million.

An estimated 50 to 60 per cent of the world's trade in small arms is legal—but legally exported weapons often find their way into the illicit market. The task of effective proliferation control is made far harder than it needs to be because of irresponsible behaviour on the part of some states and lack of capacity by others, together with the shroud of secrecy that veils much of the arms trade. Member States must act to increase transparency in arms transfers if we are to make any progress. I would also urge that they support regional disarmament measures, like the moratorium on the importing, exporting or manufacturing of light weapons in West Africa.

Even if all arms transfers could be eliminated, however, the problem posed by the many millions of illicitly held small arms already in circulation in the world's war zones would remain.

Because most conflict-prone poor countries lack the capacity to detect and seize illicit weapons, a more promising path may be the use of market incentives. Outright buy-back programmes may simply stimulate arms imports from neighbouring countries, but non-monetary reimbursement schemes have worked in Albania, El Salvador, Mozambique and Panama. In return for weapons, individuals may receive tools, such as sewing machines, bicycles, hoes and construction materials, and entire communities have been provided with new schools, health-care services and road repairs.

Not only governments but also the private sector can and should help fund such programmes. This would be both a helpful and an appropriate contribution by major international corporations that have a presence in conflict-prone regions.

Controlling the proliferation of illicit weapons is a necessary first step towards the non-proliferation of small arms. These weapons must be brought under the control of

states, and states must be held accountable for their transfer. The United Nations is convening a conference on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in 2001, in which I hope civil society organizations will be invited to participate fully.

**I urge Member States to take advantage of this conference to start taking serious actions that will curtail the illicit traffic in small arms.**

The many recent expressions of concern about small arms proliferation are a welcome sign that the importance of the issue is being recognized, but words alone do nothing to prevent the ongoing slaughter of innocent people. Dialogue is critical, but we must match the rhetoric of concern with the substance of practical action.

### **Nuclear weapons**

Let me now turn to nuclear weapons. When the bipolar balance of nuclear terror passed into history, the concern with nuclear weapons also seemed to drift from public consciousness. But some 35,000 nuclear weapons remain in the arsenals of the nuclear powers, with thousands still deployed on hair-trigger alert. Whatever rationale these weapons may once have had has long since dwindled. Political, moral and legal constraints on actually using them further undermine their strategic utility without, however, reducing the risks of inadvertent war or proliferation.

The objective of nuclear non-proliferation is not helped by the fact that the nuclear weapon states continue to insist that those weapons in their hands enhance security, while in the hands of others they are a threat to world peace.

If we were making steady progress towards disarmament, this situation would be less alarming. Unfortunately the reverse is true. Not only are the Strategic Arms Reduction Talks stalled, but there are no negotiations at all covering the many thousands of so-called tactical nuclear weapons in existence, or the weapons of any nuclear power other than those of the Russian Federation and the United States of America.

Moreover, unless plans to deploy missile defences are devised with the agreement of all concerned parties, the progress achieved thus far in reducing the number of nuclear weapons may be jeopardized. Confidence-building is required to reassure states that their nuclear deterrent capabilities will not be negated.

Above all else, we need a reaffirmation of political commitment at the highest levels to reduce the dangers that arise both from existing nuclear weapons and from further proliferation.

**To help focus attention on the risks we confront and on the opportunities we have to reduce them, I propose that consideration be given to convening a major international conference that would help to identify ways of eliminating nuclear dangers.**

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