

CONFIDENCE-BUILDING MEASURES AS TOOLS FOR DISARMAMENT AND DEVELOPMENT¹

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Introduction

Confidence-building measures are increasingly being used to address today's disarmament challenges, including efforts to control the use of small arms and light weapons.

The aim of disarmament is to contribute to international peace and security and the need for security is recognised as one of the foundations for development. The 1987 report of the International Conference on Disarmament and Development noted that in the 'relationship between disarmament and development, security plays a crucial role'.² Disarmament and development are mutually reinforcing and progress can be achieved by various means, including improving the security situation, as 'progress in any of these three areas would have a positive effect on the others'.³ This is especially true for those countries emerging from conflict, where providing security (and therefore disarming fighting factions) becomes a precondition for development. The 2003 Human Development Report has identified violent conflict as a key obstacle to achieving the millennium development goals.

Confidence-building measures

Confidence-building measures (CBMs) are usually defined as tools that adversarial states can use to reduce tensions and avert the possibility of military conflict. These

tools include communication, constraints, transparency, and verification measures. Traditionally in arms control, CBMs either precede the negotiation of formal arms control agreements or are added to these agreements to strengthen them. However, CBMs have evolved and are found outside the framework of treaties. At international level, there are two important confidence-building measures: the Instrument for Reporting Military Expenditures and the UN Register of Conventional Arms.

In other contexts, the definition of CBMs has been expanded, or redefined, to meet a changing security environment. Increasingly the concept of CBMs is being used in practical applications to address the same challenges as the past but in very different environments. In recent years CBMs have been applied in post-conflict peace-building situations, in efforts to reduce armed violence and in finding means to address instability and insecurity. Often these CBMs have been used to address the proliferation and misuse of small arms and light weapons. This group of weapons poses one of the biggest arms-related challenges to peace and security for many countries – especially in Africa. Efforts to reduce small arms and light weapons have led to other uses for CBMs, including disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration efforts (DDR), weapons collection programmes, and post-conflict peace-building.

A range of disarmament-related CBMs remain important in reinforcing norms against the spread of weapons and reducing tensions between states. Thus on one level it is important to look at the range of CBMs that are actively used through international treaty mechanisms. However, CBMs at that level are relatively well understood and recognised and therefore this commentary illustrates the more recent use of CBMs to encourage disarmament and bring about development through focusing on the role of CBMs in the field of conventional arms, especially small arms and light weapons.

Why are CBMs important to disarmament and development?

Some may question why confidence-building measures are relevant to disarmament and development. In the 1991 resolution 'Transparency in Armaments' the General Assembly reiterated its conviction that arms transfers in all their aspects deserved serious consideration, *inter alia*, because of their potential effects in further destabilising areas where tension and regional conflict threaten international peace and security as well as national security; their potentially negative effects on the progress of the peaceful and social development of all peoples; and the danger of increasing illicit and covert arms trafficking. This conviction led to the establishment of the UN Register of Conventional Arms and was reiterated in the 2000 Millennium Declaration, which identified peace, security and disarmament as its key objectives.

The effective use of CBMs can be an important component in making disarmament, and by extension development, sustainable. An increasing body of research illustrates how ineffective disarmament contributes to insecurity and impedes development. A report published by the World Bank in 2000 found that there is a high probability of conflict returning to areas that have recently suffered conflict. Linkages have also been made between those countries or regions that have been inadequately disarmed and the resumption of armed conflict or violence. Therefore finding ways of achieving effective disarmament becomes an important condition for achieving sustainable development – and CBMs play an important role.

CBMs can assist in promoting disarmament and development in various ways:

Communication

In his report on the Prevention of Armed Conflict the UN Secretary-General noted how transparency arrangements, in the context of disarmament, serve to reduce the risk of misunderstandings that lead to conflict. Illustrations of such experiences can often be found during disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration programmes. For example, in Sierra Leone, a process of 'simultaneous disarmament' was instituted to build the confidence of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) and the Civil Defence Force (CDF) in the disarmament process. This involved negotiating with the two parties to identify disarmament sites, scheduling disarmament and, most importantly, ensuring that disarmament of RUF and CDF combatants in proximate areas took place as simultaneously as possible.

Regional approaches

Another approach to CBMs is to recognise the impact they can have at national, regional or global levels. An illustration of a confidence-building measure that functions on a sub-regional level is the Moratorium against the Import, Export and Manufacture of Light Weapons, which was first adopted by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in 1998. The moratorium, which grew from an early effort by the UN to assist countries in West Africa in combating the illicit trafficking in arms, recognised the destabilising effect the unregulated spread of weapons was having on countries in the sub-region. In response, it provides for the exchange of information among states in the region on intentions to import, export or manufacture weapons. While the implementation of the moratorium has been affected by ongoing conflict in the sub-region, the spirit of building confidence among countries in the region remains.

Transparency

Transparency is probably one of the best-known confidence-building measures. The Instrument for Reporting Military Expenditures and the UN Register of Conventional Arms were both

developed in recognition of the need to open these opaque areas to greater visibility. Both instruments are important, largely because the information is provided by governments and is accessible via the UN to other states.

The Instrument for Reporting Military Expenditures was established through a General Assembly resolution (35/142 B) in 1980. The standardised reporting form invites aggregate and detailed data on expenditures incurred on personnel, operations and maintenance, procurement and construction, and research and development. An alternative simplified reporting form seeks aggregate data on personnel, operations and procurement. Reporting is based on available data for the latest fiscal year.

Participation by states has grown in recent years. In 2002 a total of 82 national submissions were recorded, while 110 states have reported at least once. This is a significant increase from the 1980s and 1990s, when an average of 30 reports were received each year.

The Register of Conventional Arms was established in 1991. States are encouraged to provide annually data on imports and exports of conventional arms in seven categories covered by the register and to provide background information regarding their military holdings, procurement through national production and relevant policies. On average, more than 90 countries report to the register annually, capturing the bulk of the global arms trade in the category of weapons covered by the register, as almost all significant suppliers and recipients of these weapons submit reports regularly. The recent decision by the General Assembly to broaden the scope of information provided in the register to expand the threshold for mortars, include man-portable air defence systems, and encourage voluntary reporting on small arms transfers will be an important element in strengthening this transparency mechanism.

Efforts to increase transparency in the arms trade at regional level have also progressed, for example in the Americas and across the countries that participate in the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). The concept of a sub-regional arms register that could circulate agreed information among a smaller group of countries has been mooted in West Africa, although with few tangible results.

Confidence-building measures at work

Disarmament, in the words of Jayantha Dhanapala, former UN Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, has moved from a 'dry technical field into a classic cross-cutting issue – a collective good with real benefits'.⁴ Recent disarmament efforts – especially those captured by the concept of 'practical disarmament' often rely on CBMs for their implementation and sustainable effect. While these efforts may be framed in different ways, for example as development efforts, crime prevention interventions or post-conflict peace building, the reality is that any such approach has a direct effect on development.

A few examples illustrate this point.

Weapons for development

Some of the earliest weapons for development programmes were conducted in Central America in the early 1990s. Subsequently programmes that link the collection of weapons from communities to development projects have grown, often conducted in the framework of United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) programmes.

These programmes include:

- The 1992 programme of the Nicaraguan government for countrywide weapons collection. Financing was provided for micro-development projects, through seed money.
- The 'Tools for Arms' programme run by the Christian Council of Mozambique started in 1992. In this programme, which is still running, weapons that are brought in are exchanged for tools and machinery, ranging from axes to sewing machines to ploughs and tractors.
- The weapons for development programme in Gramsh, Albania, broadened the concept of weapons for development by identifying projects that would have lasting benefits for communities (rather than individuals). The Gramsh project led to similar approaches in other countries.

Disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration

The successful implementation of the disarmament phase of disarmament, demobilisation

and reintegration (DDR) programmes is increasingly being viewed as an important element in building lasting stability in a country that is emerging from conflict. Given the propensity of countries to lapse into conflict, finding sustainable ways of removing weapons becomes important. To achieve effective disarmament as part of DDR programmes, confidence-building measures are often used. The practice in Sierra Leone (above) is an example.

Current DDR planning in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi recognises the need to build the confidence of fighting parties in the disarmament process. In addition, the need to recover weapons that may stay outside the formal disarmament process is more widely recognised. Thus, in Sierra Leone, a community arms collection and destruction programme was initiated that specifically collected weapons from civilians who were not part of the DDR programme and focused on collecting weapons (for example hunting rifles) that were excluded from the DDR exercise.

Sub-regional cooperation

In southern Africa, efforts to support development in the sub-region are increasingly being realised in efforts to reduce the availability of small arms and light weapons. Two examples illustrate this point:

- *Operation Rachel*: In 1995 the governments of South Africa and Mozambique agreed to cooperate to locate and destroy arms caches in Mozambique. These caches were identified as providing weapons for criminal use in both countries, increasing insecurity and affecting efforts at development. Operation Rachel, which continues to this day, has collected and destroyed more than 28 000 weapons and four million rounds of ammunition.
- *Operation Qeto*: In 2001 the governments of South Africa and Lesotho collaborated to destroy surplus weapons from Lesotho in South Africa. The framework for this cooperation was under the Southern African Development Community (SADC), as well as a bilateral initiative between the two governments to implement a strategic partnership that will assist Lesotho to move from least developed country status within five years. The clusters for cooperation

include stability, economic, social and good governance issues. A total of 3 844 weapons and assorted equipment were destroyed in this joint initiative.

Conclusion

Today a range of confidence-building measures are available and are being actively used to promote disarmament and achieve development in countries emerging from conflict. CBMs remain important and can continue to be applied in innovative ways.

Support for the Register of Conventional Arms and the Instrument on Military Expenditure needs to be sustained and countries should continue to participate in these undertakings, the only existing international transparency instruments. In addition, other forums for sharing information, such as the Organisation of American States, OSCE and ECOWAS should be actively used and recognised for the role they can play in promoting confidence between states.

Confidence-building measures can also be considered in efforts to break the cycle of insecurity and poverty that affects so many countries. For example, when conducted transparently and with open communication, weapons collection and destruction programmes can assist in reducing insecurity (both real and perceived) and making development efforts more effective. However, it is important to realise that disarmament can also create instability, and careful planning and assessment of influencing factors need to be carried out before initiating any type of disarmament programme.

Notes

- 1 This commentary is based on a presentation made to the United Nations Group of Experts on Disarmament and Development in 2004. A version of the paper presented has been published by the UN Department for Disarmament Affairs in November 2004.
- 2 Conf.130/39, para 13.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Disarmament in Conflict Prevention, Panel Discussion, United Nations, NY, 1 October 2002, DDA Occasional Papers, No 7, May 2003, p 2.