

INTERNATIONAL ACTION

One option being considered by many states is an international declaration on civilian possession of firearms. Language needs to be carefully considered but the 1997 Crime Commission resolution plus language on a prohibition of the sale and possession of military assault weapons would be a good start. The recommendations which have been tabled that are consistent with Canadian policies include:

- *Adopt a new definition of national firearms control which integrates the definition of small arms and light weapons.* Harmonizing the definition of firearms with the definition of small arms is important to developing a coherent strategy which addresses the problems of the illicit trade “in all its aspects”. The Organization for African Unity (OAU), International Consultation on the Illicit Proliferation, Circulation and Trafficking in Small Arms and Light suggested there should be a focus on a single accepted definition of small arms based upon a synthesis of the definition used by the UN Panel on Small Arms and that used in the Firearm Protocol. The term “firearm” encompasses the full range of these including: “revolvers and self-loading pistols; rifles and carbines; submachine guns; assault rifles; light machine guns”¹⁰ regardless of their intended use (military, police, civilian) to developing effective national arms control regimes. International work on small arms (in the context of conflict and disarmament) and the work on firearms (in the context of crime and injury prevention) has tended to proceed on parallel tracks.¹¹ Efforts to differentiate small arms by focusing on “military specifications” are fraught with difficulty and coordination is needed.¹²
- *Ban the sale and unregulated civilian possession of military style weapons including semi-automatics which can be converted to fully automatic fire and semi-automatic variants of military weapons.* This has been effectively implemented in countries such as Canada and Cambodia. It is important to develop norms in which the civilian possession of assault weapons is seen as undesirable and inappropriate. *The definitions present challenges. Many semi-automatic pistols were originally designed for military purposes. Work on language is essential. Prohibit the sale and unregulated civilian possession of military style weapons including semi-automatics which can be converted to fully automatic fire and semi-automatic variants of military weapons with military features such as a large capacity magazine*¹³.
- *Adopt national regulatory regimes consistent with the 1997 UN Commission of Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Resolution including licensing, registration, safe storage, import/export controls and appropriate criminal penalties.* (see appendix 1 for more detail)
- *Ensure that national measures include a particular focus on preventing violence against women.*
- *Ensure that national measures also include efforts to reduce the incidence of gun violence against children.*
- *Adopt strong implementation processes including enforcement, prosecution and alternative policing strategies.*
- *Collaborate regionally to reduce the chances of firearms flowing from poorly regulated areas.*
- *Collaborate to develop community based initiatives to reduce demand.*
- *Provide periodic amnesties and measures to encourage the collection and destruction of unwanted, unneeded and illegal firearms.*
- *Appoint a disarmament advisor to peace processes/UN missions to examine opportunities to improve national laws.*

Other recommendations which have been made include such proposals as banning civilian possession of handguns or semiautomatic weapons, limiting the number of firearms or amount and type of ammunition an individual may possess, and creating "gun free zones" etc.