CONFIDENCE-BUILDING MEASURES: A TOOL FOR DISARMAMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

“Effective disarmament” is an important condition for achieving sustainable development and disarmament-related CBMs can play an important role in post-conflict situations. Meek focuses on how CBMs relate to conventional arms and military expenditure and how they can encourage disarmament and bring about development in ways that include communication, regional approaches and transparency - particularly the UN Register of Conventional Arms and the UN system for the standardized reporting of military expenditures. She also considers the role of practical disarmament programmes that encompass weapons for development, disarmament demobilization and reintegration and subregional cooperation.

Confidence-building measures have become increasingly useful in addressing many of today’s disarmament challenges, including efforts to control the use of small arms and light weapons.

The aim of disarmament is to promote international peace and security, while the need for security is one of the

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foundations for development. Disarmament and development are therefore mutually reinforcing concepts and security plays a crucial role in that relationship, as noted in the 1987 report of the International Conference on the Relationship between Disarmament and Development.1 Progress in these areas, including improving the security situation, can be achieved in various ways, as "progress in any of these three areas would have a positive effect on the others."2 This is especially true for those countries emerging from conflict, where providing security by disarming fighting factions becomes a precondition for development. In that connection, the 2003 Human Development Report has identified violent conflict as a key obstacle to achieving the Millennium Development Goals.3

Confidence-building measures

In the context of disarmament, development and security, confidence-building measures (CBMs) have become important steps in building the trust, stability and security needed to reduce violent conflict and enhance efforts at development.

In general, adversarial states can use CBMs as tools to reduce tensions and avert possible military conflict. These tools may include communication, constraints, transparency, and verification measures. Traditionally, CBMs have either preceded the negotiation of formal arms control agreements or have been added to strengthen them. Lately, they have evolved and can now be found outside the framework of treaties. At the international level, for example, two important confidence-building measures exist: the United Nations system for the standardized reporting of military expenditures and the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms.
In other contexts, the definition of CBMs has been expanded, or redefined, to meet a changing security environment. More and more, they are being used in practical applications to address the same challenges of yesteryear, only in very different environments. Recently, they have been applied in post-conflict peacebuilding situations, in efforts to reduce armed violence and in finding means to address instability and insecurity. Often, CBMs have addressed the proliferation and misuse of small arms and light weapons — a group of weapons which poses one of the biggest arms-related challenges to peace and security for many countries — especially in Africa. Thus, CBMs can be effective in efforts to reduce small arms and light weapons in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration efforts (DDR), weapons collection programmes, and in post-conflict peacebuilding situations.

A range of disarmament-related CBMs also remains important in reinforcing norms against the spread of weapons and reducing tensions between states. Although at one level it is important to look at the range of CBMs that are actively used, this presentation focuses on how they relate to conventional arms and military expenditure. Within that range, I will discuss how they can encourage disarmament and bring about development.

**Why are CBMs important to disarmament and development?**

In the 1991 resolution "Transparency in Armaments" the General Assembly reiterated its conviction that arms transfers in all its aspects deserved serious consideration, *inter alia*, because of: (a) their potential effects in further destabilizing areas where tension and regional conflict threaten international peace and security as well as national security; (b) their potentially negative effects on the progress of the peaceful and social development of all peoples; and (c) the danger
of increasing illicit and covert arms trafficking. This conviction led to the establishment of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and was reiterated in the United Nations Millennium Declaration, which identified peace, security and disarmament as one of its key objectives.

The effective use of CBMs can be an important component in making disarmament and, by extension development, sustainable. A growing body of research is illustrating how ineffective disarmament contributes to insecurity and impedes development. A report published by the World Bank in 2000 found that there was a great likelihood of conflict returning to areas that had recently suffered conflict. Linkages have also been made between those countries or regions that had been inadequately disarmed and where armed conflict or violence had resumed. Thus, finding ways to achieve effective disarmament becomes an important condition for achieving sustainable development — and CBMs have played and can continue to play an important role in this regard.

Ways in which CBMs can assist in promoting disarmament and development include:

**Communication**

In his report on the Prevention of Armed Conflict, the United Nations Secretary-General noted how transparency arrangements, in the context of disarmament, served to reduce the risk of misunderstandings that led to conflict. Such experiences can often be found during DDR 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 Defense Force (CDF) in the disarmament process. Simultaneous dis-
armament involved negotiating with the two parties to identify disarmament sites, to draw up disarmament schedules, and, most importantly, to ensure that the disarmament of RUF and CDF combatants in proximate areas took place simultaneously or as close in time as possible.

Regional approaches

Another approach is to recognize the impact that CBMs can have at the regional or subregional level. For instance, a confidence-building measure that functions on a subregional level is the 1998 Moratorium on the importation, exportation and manufacture of light weapons, adopted by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). The Moratorium, which grew from an early effort by the United Nations to assist countries in West Africa to combat illicit trafficking in arms, recognized the destabilizing effect the unregulated spread of weapons was having on countries in the subregion. A Code of Conduct for the Implementation of the Moratorium was adopted in December 1999. This Code includes provision for the exchange of information on the procurement of weapons covered by the Moratorium, in an effort to increase transparency. While the implementation of the Moratorium has been affected by ongoing conflict in the subregion, the spirit of building confidence among countries in the region remains.

Transparency

Transparency may be one of the best-known confidence-building measures. Both the United Nations system for the standardized reporting of military expenditures and the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms were developed in recognition of the need to give these opaque areas greater visibility. The importance of both instruments is in large part due to the fact that the information is provided by
governments and is accessible to other states via the United Nations. As the information is part of a public record, it may be used to confirm or indicate trends in military expenditures, in sales, or point out anomalies that can be independently pursued for further analysis.

The United Nations system for the standardized reporting of military expenditures was established through General Assembly resolution 35/142 B in 1980. The standardized 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, 82 national submissions were recorded, while a total of 110 states reported at least once. This is a significant rise 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 data annually on imports and exports of conventional arms in seven categories covered by the Register and to provide available background information regarding their military holdings, procurement through national production and relevant policies. On average, more than 90 countries report annually, capturing the bulk of the global arms trade in the category of weapons covered by the Register, as almost all significant weapons suppliers and their recipients submit reports regularly. The recent decision by the General Assembly broadens the scope of information provided in the Register by expanding the threshold for mortars, including man-portable air defense systems and encouraging voluntary reporting on small arms transfers.8 The decision will be an important element for strengthening
this transparency mechanism as it tackles respectively, issues that affect conflict in developing regions and terrorists’ threats.

Efforts to increase transparency in the arms trade at the regional level have also progressed in the Americas and across the countries that participate in the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). The concept of a subregional arms register which could circulate agreed information among a smaller group of countries has been mooted in West Africa, although with few tangible results. A new effort in the direction of transparency has begun under the auspices of the United Nations Regional Center in Africa — the Small Arms Transparency and Control Regime in Africa (SATCRA). It would encourage those African States concerned by and eager to stem the flow of small arms and light weapons to promote transparency by providing data and information on their manufacture, flows, and stockpiling.

**Confidence-building measures at work**

In the words of the former Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Jayantha Dhanapala, disarmament has moved from a "dry technical field into a classic cross-cutting issue — a collective good with real benefits." Recent disarmament efforts — especially those often captured by the concept of "practical disarmament" frequently rely on CBMs for their implementation and sustainable effect. These efforts may be framed under the rubric of development, crime prevention or post-conflict peace building. 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 within the framework of the UN Development Programme. Some of these programmes include:

- The 1992 programme by the Nicaraguan government that ran a country-wide weapons collection programme. Financing for micro-development projects was provided through seed money.

- The “Tools for Arms” programme run by the Christian Council of Mozambique begun in 1992, which still continues. Weapons 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, took the concept of weapons for development more broadly by identifying projects that would have lasting benefits for communities (rather than individuals). The Gramsh model led to similar approaches in other countries, such as Cambodia and Niger.

Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR)

The successful implementation of the disarmament phase of DDR programmes is widely being viewed as an important element of building lasting stability in a country emerging from conflict. Given the propensity of countries to lapse into conflict, finding sustainable ways of removing weapons becomes important. In order to achieve effective disarmament as part of DDR programmes, confidence-building measures are often used.
The case of Sierra Leone

Current DDR planning in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Burundi recognize the need to build the confidence of fighting parties in the disarmament process. In addition, the need to recover weapons which may stay outside the formal disarmament process is more widely recognized. Thus, in Sierra Leone, a Community Arms Collection and Destruction Programme was initiated by the Sierra Leone police with the assistance of UNAMSIL, the United Nations peace operation in Sierra Leone, that specifically collected weapons from civilians who were not part of the DDR programme and focused on weapons such as hunting rifles that were excluded from the DDR exercise. This national programme collected approximately 9,600 weapons and 17,000 rounds of ammunitions.10

Subregional cooperation

In Southern Africa, more efforts to support development in the subregion are being made 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 in locating and destroying arms caches in Mozambique. These caches were identified as providing weapons for criminal use in both countries, thus increasing insecurity and affecting development efforts. Operation Rachel, which is still underway, has collected and destroyed more than 28,000 weapons and four million rounds of ammunition.

Operation Qeto: Within the framework of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), in 2001,
the governments of South Africa and Lesotho collaborated to destroy surplus weapon stocks in Lesotho in the context of an initiative to implement a strategic partnership to assist that country shed its least developed country status within five years. A total of 3,844 weapons and assorted equipment was destroyed in this joint initiative. The clusters for cooperation went far beyond disarmament to include stability, economic, social and good governance issues.

**Conclusion**

A range of confidence-building measures is available and being actively used to promote disarmament and to enhance prospects for development in countries emerging from conflict. Confidence-building measures have been proven effective and innovative ways to use them are being applied.

Support for the Register of Conventional Arms and the United Nations system for the standardized reporting of military expenditures needs to be sustained and countries should continue to participate in them, as they are the only international transparency instruments that exist. In addition, other fora for information sharing through such organizations as the Organization of American States, the OSCE and ECOWAS should be actively pursued and recognized for their role in promoting confidence between states.

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

Notes


2  Ibid.


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