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**Press Conference on the forthcoming G-8 Summit
London
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First, I would like to thank Canadian Foreign Minister, Lloyd Axworthy, for attending and the representatives of other non-governmental organizations (BASIC, Christian Aid, International Alert, Oxfam and Saferworld) here today for helping to make this press conference possible before the G8 Summit this weekend.

In the closing years of the 20th Century it is scandalous that those who supply small arms - and associated military and security equipment, technology, or training - are not subject to proper monitoring and control.

There is virtually no public oversight of these activities. There is scant evidence from governments that the human rights record of intended customers is fully taken into account before export licences are granted and arms are shipped. And there is almost no monitoring or accountability of the end-use of such arms in terms of international human rights and humanitarian law criteria. Arms brokers and arms traffickers can circumvent and evade what few controls exist.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights--adopted as one of the early acts of the United Nations, 50 years ago in 1948--states that every human being has the right to life, liberty and security of person. Likewise, the Geneva Conventions--setting forth rules of humanitarian law--prohibit indiscriminate killings, mutilation, torture, cruelty and hostage-taking.

Yet today mass abuses of these basic rights are carried out in many armed conflicts around the world by government and armed opposition forces who are often given virtually unrestricted access to small arms and associated military equipment. Sadly, in today's world those violators can be confident that supplies will continue to flow.

The human consequences are catastrophic for many, especially vulnerable groups. The United Nations estimates that the vast majority of casualties in these conflicts are unarmed civilians, mostly women and children, and that hundreds of thousands of children participated in these armed conflicts.¹ Some powerful governments that deny asylum to refugees fleeing armed conflict nevertheless supply small arms to perpetrators of the very abuses that refugees seek to escape. The examples are many, but here are just a few:

¹ A report in 1966 by the UN Children's Fund estimated that by 1988 there were as many as 200,000 children under the age of 16 who had participated in armed conflicts in 25 countries - this would exclude children over that age, and those who have participated since then.

- In late 1996, for example, in eastern Zaire, the discovery of military procurement documents provided evidence that in the midst of **the Rwandese genocide** of 1994, the former Rwandese armed forces responsible for mass killings were supplied weapons and ammunition--through Zaire--from **Albania and Israel**, secretly flown in by traders who had operated from the **United Kingdom, Italy and France** (apparently using aircraft registered in Nigeria). These traders contributed to the carnage that was the Rwandese genocide, but none of them have faced prosecution. Despite massive ongoing human rights abuses in the Great Lakes Region of Africa by all sides, large quantities of small arms have been supplied by various countries, including **China and Romania**.
- Amnesty International obtained government documents from **the USA** in November 1996 which showed that US weapons exported to **Colombia** to fight drug trafficking actually went to Colombian army units responsible for killings of civilians and other grave human rights violations. Unprecedented data on small arms exports released by the US government last year shows that during 1996 the US granted further licences for the export of 517,135 rifles and small arms, 409,131 pistols and revolvers and hundreds of thousands of cartridges to Colombia. The US Government claims that its military aid to Colombia has excluded units accused of human rights abuses, but there is a lack of credible end-use monitoring to demonstrate that this is the case. Meanwhile, armed groups in Colombia are reportedly able to acquire small arms illegally, including from foreign traders including from **Russia**.
- Amnesty International has since 1996 urged governments to stop transfers of small arms to the **Turkey** since these are known to have been used to facilitate political killings, "disappearances" and torture by the Turkish armed forces. Some of the main units responsible were armed with surplus assault rifles provided by **Germany** from former east German arsenals. Reports also indicate that during 1996 and 1997, thousands of pistols and "short guns" were supplied from **Italy** to Turkey, despite the use of these types of small weapons in political killings carried out by shadowy groups possibly in collusion with the security forces. Most of the supplies did not fall under the law which regulates the arms trade, because they were considered "arms for civilian use". While the US Government has since recognised this problem, an Anglo-German company has been allowed by **the UK** Government to proceed with a co-production project in Turkey to re-arm the whole Turkish army with modern assault rifles (thereby creating further surpluses which may find their way to other recipients who abuse human rights).
- Amnesty International has also drawn attention to the fact that from 1979 to 1992 **the USA and former Soviet Union** and their allies, as well as **China**, provided massive quantities of arms, including modern small arms, to all sides in the armed conflict in **Afghanistan** which subjected civilians to gross human rights violations. Sources of the weaponry were often concealed. For example, by 1991 the US secret services had reportedly supplied over 400,000 Kalashnikov rifles. By 1993, as many as 3 million such rifles and other small arms such as anti-personnel landmines were being

distributed by the **Pakistan** secret services to Afghan factions. These reached buyers throughout many parts of south Asia.

It is hardly surprising that since 1989 there have been repeated appeals in the United Nations from less powerful states to control the “destabilizing” flows of illicit small arms. The more powerful states, including the G8, which include many of the main producers and suppliers of small arms, have now added their voice to this concern.

Amnesty International has welcomed the recommendations to the UN Secretary-General in 1997 by the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms², which have been endorsed by the UN General Assembly. Likewise we welcome the initiatives in 1997 to curb illicit arms trafficking taken by the Organization of American States (OAS)³. But as you can see from the above examples, we hope that the governments of the G8 will recognize the reality that it is not simply *illicit* traffick in arms that is leading to persistent human rights abuses, but also many cases of government's irresponsible, albeit *authorized*, transfer of arms that contribute to such abuses.

Need for a comprehensive international agreement

Amnesty International is in principle opposed to military, security and police transfers which can reasonably be assumed to contribute to human rights violations such as torture and ill-treatment, “disappearances”, or deliberate and indiscriminate killings. That is why in May 1997, we and *other Nobel Peace Laureates* launched an International Code of Conduct on Arms Transfers and why we have been jointly campaigning with hundreds of other NGOs to secure such Codes, starting in the European Union and the USA. The Nobel Peace Laureate Code is a basic model designed to help ensure that arms exports are effectively monitored and controlled. It is rooted in international law. The definition of “arms” in the Code includes all types of small arms and associated materials, and the definition of “transfers” includes not only direct sales, but all transfers - even those carried out by brokers using third countries, which as you know is a major loophole used by small arms traffickers in today’s global markets.

Some will call the Nobel Laureates’ Code “idealistic.” It is. We are convinced, however, that the international community must agree on basic principles for governments to establish fair and effective systems of comprehensive arms control if we are to have even a chance of ending an effective trade in terror. The Nobel Laureates’ Code is a first step, making clear the need to respect fundamental human rights and setting standards of transparency and independent monitoring. If international standards governing the trade of small arms and

² See “General and Complete Disarmament: Small Arms. Report of the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms”, United Nations General Assembly (A/52/298)

³ See “Inter-American Convention Against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials”, OEA/Ser.P, AG/RES.1 (XXIV-E/97), 13 November 1997

light weapons were already in place, we might instead be calling for their implementation at this press conference. But we have almost no such standards in this critical area, and we are asking the world's governments to hear and heed this call.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we urge the G8 Summit to urgently consider positive action to support these principles in the Code, especially the human rights and humanitarian law principles. The Summit should include these as well as other recommendations from the 1997 report of the UN Small Arms Panel, the resolution of the 1998 Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, and the provisions of the 1997 OAS Convention, in realistic plans for effective regulation of small arms, especially to prevent small arms flows to conflict zones where such arms are being used to commit human rights abuses.

There are, of course, powerful governments that have historically been opposed to any control measures on conventional arms. Nevertheless, we will continue our efforts with our NGO partners to convince all governments that it is in everyone's interest to regulate arms more strictly in terms of international human rights criteria. A global campaign for the effective monitoring and control of all small arms, to prevent their proliferation and unlawful use, can be built involving thousands of non-governmental organizations, religious bodies, and professional and civic associations, as well as sympathetic governments. We will certainly step up our campaigning for the introduction of measures such as those contained in the 1997 Nobel Laureate's Code - measures which should be included in binding national and international laws.

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