



SESSION TWO

National perspectives and priorities for implementation

Chair: Andrew McLean, Saferworld-ISS Liaison Officer

DJIBOUTI

Snr Lt Sahal Sougueh Egueh, Deputy Director, Interpol National Central Bureau

The territory of the Republic of Djibouti covers an area of 23 000 km². Situated in the east of the Horn of Africa, the country is bordered in the north by Eritrea, in the west and south by Ethiopia, and in the south-east by Somalia. In the east, the strait of Bab-al-Mandeb opens the way towards the Red Sea via the Gulf of Aden – this border constitutes 370 kilometres of coastline.

Neighbouring countries beset with conflict have led to a massive influx of refugees into Djibouti. The permeable borders create an environment that lends itself to all kinds of illicit trafficking in firearms.

Illicit trafficking in firearms

The incidence of arms trafficking has increased considerably in the modern world. It is one of the gravest plagues of our time.

Djibouti is not an arms-producing country. There is no central register to keep track of the domestic production of firearms in the country. The police and the *gendarmerie* are tasked to stay up to date on the status of firearms. However, there is not a single research centre that keeps statistics on the available equipment or personnel.

In the course of a police operation against arms and drug trafficking in 1998, a bag containing an American machine-gun, an automatic pistol of French origin, a Makarov pistol and 44 rounds of 9 mm cartridges was discovered in the apartment of a French soldier and his Ethiopian friend. The subsequent police investigation identified three

additional arms dealers of Djiboutian nationality. When the police searched the dealers' house, they discovered a suitcase containing a Kalashnikov machine-gun, an automatic pistol of Czech origin, an automatic pistol of Spanish origin, three Kalashnikov magazines, one MAG50 magazine, four PA magazines, 121 rounds of 9 mm cartridges, 91 Kalashnikov cartridges, one 350 Magnum cartridge and one Famas cartridge. These arms entered Djibouti via Ethiopia. After the arms had been seized by the police, the National Interpol Office in Djibouti recorded these arms and sent a notice to the General Secretariat of Interpol to inform and alert all its member states.

The growing presence and use of certain firearms in Djibouti are of concern to society. This phenomenon is mainly the result of the civil war that took place in the north of the country in 1991.

Illicit firearms enter Djibouti by sea or overland. The import and export of firearms are strictly forbidden in the country. Only the state is allowed to import firearms for use by the police, the army and the *gendarmerie*. There are no facilities to do any ballistic analyses of bullets, missiles or cartridges.

In order to help prevent illicit arms trafficking, all firearms made anywhere in the world should exhibit permanent markings sufficiently identifying them in the following ways: name of manufacturer, name or number of model, calibre, country of origin, and a unique serial number.

The uncontrolled proliferation of firearms and their impact on criminality in Africa constitute serious menaces to public security. It is the increase in arms trafficking that, to a large extent, lies at the heart of the psychosis of insecurity that can be perceived in several African countries.

A few individuals in Djibouti do have or may obtain the right to carry and keep firearms in a legal manner. This would apply to, for example, members of the police fulfilling their tasks when in possession of the necessary paperwork to carry arms.

Legislation

Djiboutian law provides for the following regulations regarding firearms:

- The sale, transfer and transportation of arms, munitions and materials of war are regulated by a penal code introduced in 1962.
- A decree describes the categories of arms, articles of armaments, munitions and materials of war of which the import, sale, transport, transfer, possession and export are regulated in Djibouti.

Conclusion

Each country has to adopt effective legislation and a system to register, keep track of and control all transactions related to firearms under its jurisdiction. Legislation should be put in place to regulate the application of firearms in particular.

UGANDA

Job Elogu, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Uganda is taking a number of initiatives to tackle the proliferation of small arms:

- *Strengthening the capacity of the police's central firearm registry.* The government has initiated a consultation process to strengthen controls on the ownership of firearms, especially by private security firms.
- *Addressing the problem of cattle-rustling.* The government has announced a new disarmament programme in the Karamoja region which will start in July. Leaders in border areas are asking for weapons to protect themselves from Kenyan raiders, but the Ugandan government has pledged to address this situation bilaterally with Kenya.
- *Working with children affected by armed conflict.* The government is working with the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) on programmes to rehabilitate former child combatants and those who have been traumatised by war.

It is encouraging that Ugandan civil society is now taking up the small arms issue. There are many articles and advertisements on this topic in newspapers. Public debate and awareness are increasing.

Uganda strongly supports the *Nairobi Declaration* and is looking forward to the establishment of the secretariat to co-ordinate follow-up activities. Uganda also supports the increasing role played by Interpol in this area with the creation of the EAPCCO subcommittees.

KENYA

Assistant Commissioner Ole Mpesha, Chief Firearms Licencing Officer

Legislation on the control of arms in Kenya has been operative for the last 45 years. It has been amended whenever the need has arisen.

Influx of weapons

Before the conflicts in East African countries, the Great Lakes and the Horn, Kenya had enjoyed many gun-free years. However, due to the frequent conflict within the region, there has been a significant rise in the numbers of illicit firearms recovered by the

Kenyan police during the last five years.

YEAR	TOTAL FIREARMS RECOVERED
1995	214
1996	430
1997	755
1998	1 476
1999	676

It is important to note that most of these recovered firearms were AK47s. Since 1997, a substantial number of Colt 45s (model 1911-17), made in the United States, have also been recovered. A total of 156 revolvers of this type have been recovered. This suggests that these weapons might have been supplied to a neighbouring country within the subregion.

Implementation of the *Nairobi Declaration*

Immediately after the Nairobi meeting, the Kenyan President issued a one-month amnesty for those with illicit firearms to surrender them without fear of prosecution. The government also directed district commissioners to form village committees specifically to deal with issues of illicit firearms. During the Eastern African police chiefs conference recently held in Nairobi, the Commissioner of Police presented a paper which was adopted for consideration at the main meeting in Cairo. It calls for co-operation among governments and civil societies in matters pertaining to the control of illicit firearms.

Adequate laws

The Commissioner of Police has submitted a proposal to amend some sections of the legislation to the Attorney-General. This will provide for harsher penalties and identify more offences in order to protect the society.

Reducing the demand for guns

The Kenyan policy on the licencing of firearms is to keep licenced firearms to a minimum without causing hardship to anyone. Kenya therefore licences non-lethal weapons like chemical maces for use by the public to protect themselves and to prevent loss of life.

In order to discourage members of the society from arming themselves, some people have been trained as part of the Kenyan police reserves. They are armed by the government and are responsible to protect members of society and their property.

Transactions

Any legal transaction of small arms must be reported to the Chief Licencing Officer within 48 hours. Failure to comply will result in a heavy penalty.

Initiatives

To strengthen the existing control measures and in line with the *Nairobi Declaration*, a special unit has been formed within the police force, responsible to combat illicit small arms trafficking. At the same time, paramilitary units have been deployed to the cattle-rustling areas to seize the large number of illicit firearms held by local inhabitants.

Destruction of illicit firearms

The government is in the process of compiling a list of illicit small arms which have been collected in recent years. It is expected that almost 10 000 of these weapons will be destroyed. There will be no further stockpiling and subsequent recoveries will be destroyed immediately.

Regional co-operation

Neighbouring countries in the region should harmonise their respective gun control laws and regulations. An agreement should be reached to register all legal firearms in the region. Joint operations should be organised to combat illicit arms trafficking, and to remove and destroy surplus weapons. Joint educational programmes should be developed to educate society that there is no need for people to arm themselves. A culture of peace should be introduced along common borders and joint efforts should be made to raise funds to enable effective patrols with sufficient personnel.

Manufacturers

The easy availability of illicit small arms among conflicting factions in the region is one of the root causes of the problem. Manufacturers and suppliers of weapons should be warned by a universal body like the OAU or the UN Security Council, that they should not supply weapons to factions in conflict regions. End-user certificates must be issued by a legal source and by authenticated individuals.

Way forward

Initiatives should be established to remove arms from society and reduce the demand for small arms. Significant efforts should be made to collect and destroy surplus military arms. Illicit and unlicensed weapons should be removed from circulation. A culture of peace should be promoted, using traditional community methods to solicit the voluntary surrender of illicit small arms. Economic and social development programmes should be implemented to integrate marginalised communities and ensure the effective management of natural resources, while also encouraging the peaceful resolution of conflicts according to the *Nairobi Declaration*.

ETHIOPIA

Woldegebriel Beyene, Higher Police Officer

Ethiopia consists of more than 80 ethnic groups with a great cultural diversity. Different groups have their own customs relating to firearms possession and usage. In some families, small arms are transferred from father to son as an inheritance and it is difficult to separate such people from their arms. Former regulations permitted the transfer of small arms within families when the owner dies. They also permitted the selling of arms from one person to another. But, this is no longer the case.

Ethiopia was continuously at war for almost three decades. Because of this war, a large number of firearms were in the hands of many individuals. The government tried to legalise arms with promising and fruitful results. However, there are still a small number of firearms illegally held by people. At present, an effort is being made to propose strict regulations and laws on firearms.

The fateful condition of neighbouring Somalia, being without a state, has also contributed to the illegal smuggling of firearms into Ethiopia. Efforts are being made to solve this problem.

Problems relating to firearms

- *Distribution of arms to the population:* Due to the downfall of the old regime – the ‘Dergue’ – arms previously owned by members of the defeated regime were illegally distributed to many individuals. Many of these arms are still found in the hands of individuals without being registered with the police. It is difficult to identify these illegal owners of firearms. But, continuous study and effort are undertaken in this regard.
- *Cultural value of firearms:* Many Ethiopians are strongly attached to their firearms. It is impossible to separate them from their firearms, particularly the nomadic people who live in arid and semi-arid areas.
- *Illicit trafficking:* The illegal smuggling of firearms from neighbouring countries, especially from Somalia, remains a grave problem. To some extent, the illegal transfer and sale of firearms inside the country also take place. Firearms are still sold without the consent of the government by some individuals.

Despite the above problems, there is not a critical situation in terms of small arms proliferation in Ethiopia, and there are no manufacturers of firearms in the country.

Legal controls and operational initiatives

The police department is fully responsible for the control and regulation of firearms in

the country and has the following legal control mechanisms and operational initiatives in place:

- *Introducing new legislation:* The previous regimes did not have permanent laws and regulations on firearms. The government is proposing new permanent laws to control firearms. The study on the proposed laws and regulations will be finalised soon.
- *Registering civilian possession:* Temporary regulations on the control and licencing of firearms are currently in place. Every citizen with a firearm is obliged to be registered and licenced for each weapon owned. Almost all citizens are registered and have identity cards for the arms in their possession. Some, however, have still not registered. If people do not comply with the regulations, the police force will confiscate their arms.
- *Encouraging local regulation in pastoral communities:* For those citizens inseparable from their arms, especially the nomadic people, attempts are made to legalise these weapons by assigning local militias and registering their weapons. Local regulations are being formulated in the federal regions to prohibit the sale and purchase of firearms, and prevent shootings without the permission of the local chiefs or administrators.
- *Strengthening border controls:* The police department, in co-operation with the defence force, is trying to strengthen border controls to stop firearms trafficking from neighbouring countries like Somalia. Efforts are also under way to stop the illegal sale and purchase of firearms in Ethiopia.

In conclusion, the firearms control department, which is a branch of the Police Commission, is trying to devise permanent laws and regulations and a new Ethiopian firearms Act. The study and research branch of the firearms control department will finalise its study very soon.

BURUNDI

Chubwa Renovat, Embassy of Burundi in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

Burundi is different from other countries in the subregion, because it is beset by war. There are four armed rebel groups active in the country. This makes Burundi a magnet for arms trafficking.

Burundi has faced rebellion since 1993. The government started to disarm people who illegally held firearms in 1994, but this has become very difficult because of the large number of rebels. Some of these groups are fighting with President Laurent Kabila's troops. The Interahamwe militia who fled from Rwanda after the 1994 genocide also present a big problem. There is further an easy circulation of weapons into the country from the war in Angola, Congo, the Sudan and Somalia.

Burundi supports the *Nairobi Declaration*, but it is difficult to foresee immediate concrete action while the war continues. Peace talks are still ongoing and there are signs of progress now that President Mandela has taken the chair, and has convened meetings between the government and the rebel groups. Since the meeting, much progress has been made. President Buyoya has agreed to correct the imbalance in the army through reform, and it is envisaged that it will be composed equally of Hutus and Tutsis. With the participation of the rebels in the peace talks, it is hoped that a cease-fire will soon follow.

ERITREA

Major Woldegebriel Andegiorghis, Head: Interpol National Central Bureau

Crime is one of the serious social problems of our time and its prevention must be given priority over other social problems. The proliferation of small arms is directly linked to high levels of crime. Tackling small arms proliferation is therefore one of the key methods to prevent crime and create stability.

Prohibiting civilian possession

In some states, small arms can be freely handled and possessed by citizens with a licence. In other countries, it is completely prohibited to possess firearms, except for those who are involved in law enforcement activities.

Eritrea believes that the latter approach has many advantages:

- It can minimise crimes committed with small arms.
- It can help to control criminal gangs who cannot operate without small arms.
- It can help to prevent and control drug traffickers and dealers.
- It can help to combat small arms traffickers and other dealers in contraband who pose a danger to society and law enforcement officers.

If an individual country could tackle the proliferation of small arms, it would be easy to control crimes and other vices related to these weapons. But, if citizens are allowed to possess small arms, it will be dangerous to disarm people, and to control and prevent crimes. It is therefore much better to address the root of the problem – if there is no demand, there is no supply.

Key areas for co-operation

Since tackling small arms proliferation cannot be done by individual countries, countries in the Great Lakes region and the Horn of Africa must co-operate in controlling and preventing small arms traffickers, brokers and dealers. Small arms move from the legal to the illegal market through theft, diversion, corruption, and interstate and intrastate trafficking. Countries must

therefore work together to develop similar policies to combat these problems.

Eritrea's experience in tackling small arms proliferation

Since its independence in 1991, Eritrea has declared that the possession, trafficking and dealing in firearms are forbidden for all individuals, except those involved in law enforcement activities. Full control of firearms is given to the police. If someone is believed by the police force to possess small arms, the police have to study the occupation of the individual and why he should possess a small arm.

Because this proclamation is accepted by all Eritreans, it has now become the cultural norm not to possess small arms. No crimes are committed with small arms, or by trafficking in small arms or handling small arms. Therefore, no firearms are entering Eritrea and there is no small arms trafficking to other neighbouring countries. During the nine years since independence, efforts have been made to ensure that those people who had firearms returned them to the police.

The Eritrean government will continue to control illicit arms trafficking in co-operation with neighbouring countries, countries in the Horn, and all other countries and NGOs.

SUDAN

Yassir El Balal El Taib, Head: Interpol National Central Bureau

The human need for weapons follows the basic need for food and drink. Weapons are used to protect people from danger, and in the absence of security institutions, people need weapons in order to defend their existence. The state is sometimes not able to protect or to provide security to everybody and people have to use weapons for this reason. This phenomenon is fuelling crime, exacerbating conflict, undermining stability and hindering development.

Customs and tradition govern the possession of weapons in some communities and people may consider weapons as of value and as part of their appearance. The proliferation of small arms causes armed conflicts, which sometimes continue for a long time. This subsequently paves the way for illicit trafficking in small arms and trade in illegal firearms. The ultimate result is a significant number of victims, unstable and disintegrated societies, and the deterioration of development and peace.

Main factors leading to the proliferation of small arms

- Most armed struggles happen as a result of political competition and tribal conflict, often for the sake of obtaining trivial things.
- The geographic positions of some countries play a great role in the transfer of small arms across their borders
- The spread of illiteracy, the narrow tribal concept, and the absence of awareness and a culture of peace underlie the excessive spread of small arms.

- Economic deterioration and its impact on citizens feed the need for arms.
- The weakness of law enforcement agencies can contribute to the proliferation of small arms in the absence of state authority.

Priorities for tackling small arms proliferation

- Countries should review and update national firearms legislation. Legislation should be harmonised at a regional level into a legal treaty or convention governing the possession, use, import, export and transit of small arms.
- Governments should create a regional database on illicit trafficking. This should include information on criminal groups, types of firearms, supply routes, destinations, methods of transportation and financial support of these criminal groups.
- Governments should tighten security along borders and tackle corruption at border posts.
- Governments should undertake bilateral and regional policing operations to combat crossborder crimes. Protocols of co-operation could be introduced covering extradition, investigation, recovery of exhibits and hot-pursuit agreements.

Conclusion

The control of the proliferation and illicit trafficking of small arms is an important objective. Regional and international co-operation is needed to combat this serious phenomenon.

SOMALIA – AN INDEPENDENT VIEW

Dr Ahmed Yusuf Farah, War-torn Societies Project

Arms, both large and small, are traded in Somalia like any other commodity in contravention of the UN embargo on the import of arms. The country is awash with all types of arms and ammunition that are used freely for legitimate and illegitimate purposes by individuals, clans, clan-based factions and interest groups. Arms control initiatives for Somalia must take into consideration the absence of centralised authority. Emerging political entities have achieved varying degrees of success in terms of demobilisation and disarmament and controlling weapons in their respective domains.

Somaliland

Somaliland, which is more advanced than the other emerging entities in terms of developing centralised authority, has demobilised former combatants and mobilised clan-militias by drafting these groups, who posed an eternal threat to peace and stability, into the national security forces. The administration formed a large army of

militias which, at the height of the conflict, reached 15 000 salaried combatants. This is a level which the administration cannot sustain. The security forces of the administration, in co-operation with clan heads, succeeded in collecting heavy armaments from clan-militias. However, control of small arms has not yet been addressed.

Puntland

Formed in July 1998, the Puntland administration is still at a formative stage. As in Somaliland, former combatants and active militia have been drafted into the security forces. Nonetheless, the administration, which is still weak, has neither succeeded in collecting heavy armaments from clan-militias, nor addressed the menace posed by small arms, although it formally declared possession of heavy weapons by the civilian population as illegal.

Outside these relatively stable entities, heavy weapons and small arms which have proliferated during the continuing civil war that started in the 1980s, are in the hands of individual families, unruly armed factions, clan militias and interest groups in both urban and the interior areas of the country.

Findings of WSP research

The Somali programme of the War-torn Societies Project (WSP) has carried out a pilot study, utilising participatory action research methods, on the social integration of the militias and armed youth in Puntland.

In the mid-1990s, thousands of former fighters found themselves unemployed or underemployed, without official duties or a source of income. These former combatants were joined by untrained and largely uneducated youth, who were unable to find a productive social or economic niche. Instead, many set up roadblocks in order to charge informal 'taxes', obtain a daily dose of the habit-forming drug *qaad*, or to engage in other forms of banditry. Others were employed to protect destructive or illicit trading practices like the collection and export of charcoal, while some remained semi-mobilised in the 'legitimate' protection of community and clan interests.

The new Puntland administration has taken the need seriously to promote integration of these groups (together with internally displaced persons, returned refugees and vulnerable female-headed households). Since its formation, the Puntland administration has successfully cleared illegal checkpoints from roads and has invested significant (though admittedly insufficient) funds in the training of its security forces. Despite a few success stories, most individuals taken from roadblocks have not found alternative viable sources of employment, and the danger persists that they will resume their illegal activities.

Challenges identified by workshop participants that continue to plague the new administration with regard to the social integration of former militia and armed youth include the:

- proliferation of weapons and the need to disarm the public safely;
- failure of the Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF) and traditional authorities to enforce law and order;
- disintegration of social values;
- adverse effects of *qaad* use;
- social tolerance of criminal activities and economic offences; and
- misuse of *dija* payments in ways which threaten security.

The relationship between the militia and the rest of society is a complex one characterised by mutual hostility, distrust and need. Bonds of kinship, loyalty and respect are interwoven with threads of alienation and rejection. Some participants in the research process branded the militia as criminals, while others absolved them of responsibility for their actions. The militia themselves, however, seemed almost united in their sense of betrayal by a community which they feel they have served loyally in its time of distress. Reconciling these diverse and often contradictory perspectives will be vital to the successful integration of the militia with the rest of post-war society:

- The most important recommendation is that concerned actors should develop a strategic plan of action for the integration of the former militia and armed youth.

The family

In Somali society, where the family remains a vital social unit, parental and familial pressure can be crucial in influencing individual armed youth or militia to discontinue their antisocial activities:

- Parents and close relatives should strive to disarm their sons. The gun, which is the most prized possession of the militia, is often bought with family cash or as part of a collective effort for legitimate self-defence. The family therefore has proprietary rights over the weapon and can pressure the young person to turn it in.
- Parents and relatives should try to identify or create alternative employment for their military active sons. If their sons were formerly students, parents should help them to return to school to resume their education.
- Nomadic parents should encourage militia sons who have failed to integrate peacefully into urban life to return to the pastoral setting, offering them some herd animals and the opportunity to begin their own families. The many militia who voluntarily returned to practice traditional livestock husbandry since 1993 provide a positive precedent.
- Families should seek to instruct their militia sons in the Islamic faith and tradition, so that they may repent and relinquish violence by understanding the anti-Islamic nature and deleterious effects of their activities.

The community

Traditional and clan leaders have a responsibility to assist in the resolution of the militia problem. Without the support and participation of the clans and clan elders, who represent traditional authority, the nascent government of Puntland will be severely handicapped in any programmes it intends to carry out. The involvement of clan leadership will therefore be essential in the reintegration process – particularly at the level of the *dijya*-paying groups:

- Community leaders should give guidance and a sense of direction to families whose children are described as anti-social and guilty of inappropriate activities. If community leaders fail to persuade parents and relatives, it may have to apply more direct forms of social pressure.
- Clan elders should consider formulating new *xeer* (customary law) to combat or alleviate the criminal activities of the irregular clan militia.
- Clans should prohibit the erection of militia-operated checkpoints in their traditional territories, and seek the support of official security forces when this prohibition is violated. Clan elders could also provide the police and judiciary with essential information concerning criminal elements among the clan militia.
- Traditional and religious leaders should come forward to teach the armed youth and militia the tenets of a culture of peace and non-violence – precepts which are firmly established in Islam.

Civic organisations

Youth groups, women's associations, local NGOs, professional associations, trade associations, religious leaders and the media are embryonic in the Puntland state and throughout Somalia, but they are potential allies in the consolidation of peace and the promotion of the political, social and economic reconstruction of Puntland:

- Civic organisations should promote public awareness of the militia issue.
- Local NGOs should actively encourage the involvement of former militia in educational and skills training programmes.

International organisations and donors

International organisations operating in Puntland have generally avoided direct engagement in the social integration of the militia, but many offer programmes to assist in the integration of internally displaced persons who have returned and other socially dislocated groups. The similarities between the needs of these groups and those of the militia, as well as the fact that they are often members of the same community, offer some scope for international support in resolving the militia problem:

- International organisations should assist in training demobilised militia and armed youth in marketable skills.
- UN agencies and NGOs, together with the new government and the private sector, should explore ways to create employment opportunities for former militia.

- Donors and competent international agencies should assist the authorities in their efforts to curb the export of charcoal, sea piracy, illegal fishing by foreign vessels, dumping of toxic and nuclear wastes, and other regulatory and protective services that militia previously provided.
- Aid agencies should emphasise a community-based approach in integration programmes that does not artificially differentiate between socially dislocated groups. Projects for the integration of internally displaced people and other groups should be extended to involve former militia and armed youth as well.
- International actors should seek to understand the distinctive political and historical characteristics of the people of Puntland, in order to develop better adapted and more effective programmes in support of reconstruction and development.

Recommendations for Puntland government initiatives

Despite high public expectations, the nascent Puntland administration is currently unable to address all of the urgent and complex issues of post-war recovery. Nevertheless, the government can provide much needed leadership in prioritising issues, strategic planning, and harnessing the energies of civic and traditional leadership, as well as of the international community. Ways in which the government can best address the problem of militia and armed youth include the following:

- *Provide a secure environment through the deployment of regular security forces:* The presence of uniformed police and military makes it possible to distinguish between those who may or may not legitimately carry a weapon. This will require the completion of the dismantling of unofficial checkpoints throughout Puntland.
- *Enlist widespread support for demobilisation and integration from civic and traditional leadership:* A public awareness campaign involving widespread community meetings should be central to this effort, emphasising the responsibilities of clan elders, civic organisations, religious leaders and families to address this problem.
- *Develop clear policies and programmes for the demobilisation and integration of armed youth and clan militia groups:* Although the administration should take the lead, policies and programmes should be developed in close consultation with civic, traditional and religious leaders.
- *Act decisively to ban illegal activities that depend upon private and freelance militia:* The government needs to demonstrate that justice applies not only to the militia, but also to their employers.
- *Organise skills training (based on realistic identification of marketable skills), sports and recreation centres and other integration programmes for former militia:* Although the government could enlist the support of local and international partners in this exercise, it should also allocate some government

funds to lead the way and to demonstrate its commitment to this process.

- *Introduce measures to control the distribution and consumption of qaad:* This could possibly include higher levels of taxation and the regulation of business hours.

DISCUSSION

Importance of a comprehensive approach

It was stressed that, while strict legal controls are vital, desperate people will look to acquire weapons from illegal sources. Action to strengthen legislation must therefore be matched by initiatives to combat illicit trafficking and address the factors which are fuelling the demand for small arms.

Need for research

The lack of reliable statistics and the importance of research were stressed by many participants. Suggested topics included: what type of firearms are being recovered by police in the subregion; what is the humanitarian, social and economic impact of firearms in the subregion; what legislation is in place in different countries; and what training do law enforcement agencies need for capacity-building.

Civilian possession of firearms

There was a discussion on whether the possession of firearms should be a right for civilians. Participants agreed that the wide ownership of guns within society could endanger the security of citizens. The experience of Interpol was that firearms that are acquired to ensure security can often end up threatening it. It was agreed that the model of Eritrea, where the civilian possession of firearms is banned, should be studied in more detail.

Developing a subregional initiative

Participants agreed that action was needed at national and subregional levels. There was a discussion on the order in which this should be undertaken, and whether national initiatives should be the building blocks for subregional action, or the other way around. It was proposed that the optimum combination would be to agree on a comprehensive subregional approach, within which particular countries can take the lead in different priority areas.