

“A Farewell to Small Arms” the International Conference of NGOs in TOKYO

Chairpersons Statement

May 8, 2005

1. The proliferation and misuse of small arms and light weapons is a global scourge that has devastating direct and indirect effects. Directly, small arms kill an estimated half a million people every year; that's one person every minute of every day and night of every year. Indirectly, small arms cause the death and misery of countless millions more who are displaced, maimed, or rendered impoverished through their misuse.
2. Thankfully, Japanese society is not afflicted by the scourge of small arms. But the Japanese people should not be complacent. Japanese civil society, working in collaboration with civil society in affected countries and regions, can play an important role in alleviating this problem.
3. To emphasize this point, an international conference of NGOs entitled, “A Farewell to Small Arms” was held at Sophia University, Tokyo, on May 7 and 8, 2005. The conference was hosted by the Association for Aid and Relief (AAR), Japan, and was chaired by Prof. Kuniko Inoguchi of Sophia University and Ms. Fusako Yanase, Chairperson of the Board of AAR. NGO representatives, Official Development Assistance project officers, researchers and journalists from 8 states, namely, Angola, Argentina, Japan, the Philippines, South Africa, Switzerland, Uganda and UK as well as more than 600 people for these 2 days from the public attended the conference. At the conference, participants discussed the present situation and the issues surrounding small arms and light weapons, in line with the theme, “What can we do?: the role of NGOs”. Participants resolved to make sustained efforts to work towards the reduction and control of SALW, both on an individual and organizational level.
4. The considerable efforts by NGOs at the local, national, sub-regional and regional levels have not yet, been adequately reflected by the role that NGOs are being allowed by governments to play at the global level. Granted, primary responsibility for implementing the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms (PoA) rests with states, but NGOs, given their commitment and expertise, should be allowed to play a much more prominent role in the UN process to implement and further strengthen the PoA.
5. The PoA, even though it is a politically rather than a legally binding agreement, provides an important framework of action for dealing with problems that require immediate response. Legally binding commitments by states are preferable to politically-binding ones,

although it is important to ensure that all states are included in such multilateral agreements.

6. To fully address the issue of the proliferation and misuse of small arms and light weapons, it is necessary to address both the supply and the demand sides of the problem. On the supply side, since we cannot ban small arms, we must effectively regulate the legal trade and strive to eradicate illegal trafficking. Surplus supplies need to be reduced as well. On the demand side, we must address various factors including root causes of conflicts, poverty, and lack of human security.

7. NGOs working in the field know that small arms have a strong negative impact on development and post-conflict reconstruction. They also know that collection of illegal weapons must be based on adequate disarmament education and security sector reform.

8. Japanese civil society should focus on developing the capacity of NGOs in affected countries and regions and on empowering them to combat small arms problems. Japanese NGOs should also strive to work in close cooperation with their government in its efforts to implement its commitments under the UN Programme of Action.

9. NGOs around the world should make utmost effort to address the problems caused by small arms, reinforcing the network among themselves and enhancing civil society participation in all factors of the problems.

Kuniko Inoguchi
Professor of Political Science
Sophia University, Tokyo

Fusako Yanase
Chairperson of the Board
Association for Aid and Relief, Japan