

Address to the **ARF Seminar on Confidence-Building Measures,**
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"ARF Activities in Support of the UN Register of Conventional Arms"
by
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Let me start off by thanking the governments of the Kingdom of Cambodia, Canada, and Japan for hosting this seminar.

Esteemed colleagues, it gives me great pleasure to be here addressing you today on the subject of ARF activities in support of the UN Register. The Register is a subject near and dear to my heart. Since 1995, I have been working on issues relating to it. At times, even inside the U.S. government, I have had an uphill struggle convincing people about the need to support international transparency in arms transfers by reporting data to the UN Register of Conventional Arms. It was not that anyone opposed the Register, but rather that people needed to be convinced of the benefits of reporting transfers of military equipment, which can affect directly affect a country's international security. I kept framing the issue in terms of not what you were losing by reporting this information, but rather what you were gaining by reporting it. The simple answer is that you were gaining mutual confidence by increasing transparency and reducing fears, misperceptions, and suspicions concerning potential adversaries' arms programs.

The UN Register was created at a unique historical moment in the aftermath of the Persian Gulf War, and it represents a global attempt to solve a regional problem. One state had accumulated arms at such a disproportionate rate to that of its immediate regional security needs that this state posed a threat, both to its neighbors in the region and to states outside the region. No one realized at the time the true scale of the accumulation of arms because there was no international mechanism for arms exporting states to pool information on their exports and for states in a region to report their imports. There was not enough information available for states to make their own determinations about whether a given state's accumulations of arms imports posed a threat to regional security. Instead, states were forced to make security decisions in the dark on the basis of incomplete information and to either naively assume the best or paranoidly assume the worst from its neighbors. This hardly was a recipe for regional stability.

Resolution 46/36 L sought to address this concern by calling for the creation of the UN Register of Conventional Arms. This resolution called on upon all Member States to provide annually to the UN Secretary-General relevant data on imports and exports of conventional arms to be included in the Register, and to consider also providing available background information on regarding their military holdings and procurement through national production. The General Assembly declared its determination to **prevent** the excessive and destabilizing accumulations of arms in order to promote stability and strengthen international peace and security, taking into account the legitimate security needs of States and the principle of undiminished security at the lowest possible level of armaments. The Assembly also reaffirmed the inherent right of States to individual and collective self-defense recognized in Article 51 of the UN Charter of the United Nations.

The Secretary-General, in his foreword to the report of the 2000 Group of Governmental Experts (GGE), noted "In our rapidly globalizing world, security can no longer be pursued in isolation. We must strive to apply as much transparency as possible to matters related to defense policies and armaments. In this way, we can help minimize the risk of misunderstanding or miscalculation, and thereby contribute to greater trust and more stable relations among States." The 2000 GGE noted that the Register could contribute to enhancing confidence, easing tensions, strengthening regional and international peace and security, and contribute to restraint in military production and the transfer of arms. The Group took full account of the relationship between transparency and the security needs of states, and reaffirmed that participation in the Register was a voluntary means that States could use to signal their willingness to enter to into dialogue with other States on this aspect of security policy. Such dialogue can provide a valuable input into bilateral and regional dialogues on security concerns and the evolution of a more cooperative approach to security. In that context, the Group noted that transparency was not an end in itself, nor was the Register a control mechanism. but rather a confidence-building measure designed to improve security relations among States.

My colleagues who have spoken before me have outlined the Register and its workings, so I will not put you to sleep by repeating this information. Instead, let me emphasize how the Register meets the concerns of regional organizations such as the ARF. The first thing to recognize is that the Register is a global reporting mechanism, but that it imposes no value

judgments on the information reported to it. That is up to UN Member States themselves. There is no central body that says that this transfer of, say 50 F-16s is excessive and destabilizing while that transfer of 80 Mirage-2000s is not. Previous Groups of Governmental Experts have looked into this question and have decided to leave the criteria for deciding that a given transfer or series of transfers is excessive and destabilizing should be left to the Member States. All that the UN Register does is to collect the information to allow such a determination to be made. . The most appropriate fora for making such determinations are the regional security ones such as the ARF, which already have an active dialogue on regional security.

Since its founding in 1994, the ARF has developed into a useful forum for consultation and dialogue with the goal of preventing future conflicts in the Asia-Pacific region. It has instituted a host of important confidence-building measures that contribute to transparency and may form the basis for successful preventive diplomacy down the road. One of these CBMs has been an active dialogue on paving the way for the eventual participation by all ARF countries in the Register. An important step in support of the Register was the decision at the 1996 Foreign Ministers Meeting to endorse the recommendations of the Inter-Sessional Group on Confidence-Building Measures that ARF participants should be encouraged on a voluntary basis to circulate the data submitted to the Register at the same time to other ARF countries. Ministers also endorsed the recommendation that discussions on the Register within the ARF framework should be continued, with a view to enhancing security in the region and that ARF participants should be encouraged to work together within the United Nations to promote more global participation in the Register.

Unfortunately, ASEAN and the ARF is a bright exception to a rather minimal level of participation in the Asia and Pacific region as a whole. In 1999, among ARF countries, Australia, Canada, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Mongolia, New Zealand, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Singapore, Thailand, United States, and Vietnam submitted data, while Brunei, Burma (Myanmar), China, Cambodia, DPRK, Laos, Papua New Guinea failed to submit any data. ASEAN participation has ranged from 4 to 7 countries each year, with participation last year declining to 4 members from its peak of 7 members in the years immediately following the 1996 ARF Foreign Ministers Meeting. Only two ASEAN countries have never participated in the UN Register: Burma (Myanmar) and

Laos. However, no ASEAN state reported data on military holdings and procurement through national production in 1999, although most of the "Dialogue Partners" did.

Some of the ARF countries which fail to report returns in a given year do so because they have no exports or imports to report and fail to report this fact to the UN in a so-called "nil" return. Nil returns are extremely important to the Register. They clearly put a state on record as having no transfers to report, and close the possibility that it is trying to hide transfers which it should be reporting. A nil return by a small country is just as important to the level of participation in the Register as a comprehensive return by a large state. States which are eligible to submit nil returns should get the credit they deserve for not having any transfers to report.

It is time that we recommit ourselves to the 1996 decisions of the ARF Foreign Minister's meeting and reinvigorate ARF efforts to promote greater ARF participation in the Register. At a minimum, we should renew the ARF commitment to participate in the Register and to exchange UN returns among ARF members. Members with no imports or exports to report are eligible to file so-called "nil" returns and should be encouraged to do so. Nil returns must be renewed each year. ARF members should go beyond merely reporting import and export data and submit additional information on military holdings and procurement through national production in order to provide a more complete picture of the security situation facing ARF members. Reporting only on imports and exports provides an incomplete picture on the accumulation of arms and undermines efforts to utilize the Register to judge regional security. In order to facilitate communication, ARF members should be encouraged to provide the UN with information on national points of contact on the Register as called for in recent UNGA resolutions on transparency in armaments. Even if a state is unwilling to report on its imports and exports to the UN, it should provide a national point of contact as a contribution to promoting the regional dialogue on security matters that stands at the heart of the ARF. It is rather difficult to have a dialogue if we do not know who to talk to.

Thank you.