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# INTRODUCTION

It was an act of faith in the year 2000 that we published *The Geneva Forum: Seminars on Small Arms* with “Volume 1” boldly printed on the front cover. This assumed that we would be able to continue to organize the kind of quality events in Geneva that led to Volume 1 and therefore would at some point wish to produce a Volume 2. Since 2000, small arms and light weapons issues have continued to be a major focus of the work of *The Geneva Forum*, a unique partnership in Geneva that has become an important mechanism for dialogue and learning among diplomats and Geneva-based agencies on a range of security-related topics. And we are pleased that, indeed, we have felt it important to produce a Volume 2.

When *The Geneva Forum* launched its work on small arms, this issue area was still new as a focus of international concern. Our activities in those early years do appear to have played a role in establishing the legitimacy of the issue on the international agenda. Volume 2 brings together examples of the work of *The Geneva Forum* in this respect up to the period just after the UN Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects in July 2001. While a great deal of international activity has taken place since then, the pieces presented in this volume have continuing relevance as we head towards the “review of progress” conference to be held in 2006.

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Chapters 1 and 3 provide particular insights into dimensions of the trade in small arms and light weapons, the role of “arms brokers” and others who facilitate this trade, and the responsibilities of states. This is a critical area so far only modestly addressed in international deliberations and remains a focus for further work as an enhanced Programme of Action is developed for beyond 2006. Chapters 2 and 5 provide insights into the realities and impacts of the widespread availability of small arms and light weapons. The first of these two chapters concentrates particularly on efforts to combat the small arms scourge on the African continent, while the latter chapter presents some of the challenges posed by these weapons to the humanitarian community and the civilians they aim to protect. Chapter 6 is a case study into one innovative approach at reducing the availability of small arms. The remaining chapters deal with small arms in relation to the UN 2001 Conference: Chapter 4 illustrates the work of *The Geneva Forum* in assisting preparation for the 2001 Conference, while Chapters 7 and 8 look at the Conference and its Programme of Action, and at approaches to how this historic meeting must be followed up.

Since the 2001 Conference, the work of *The Geneva Forum* on small arms has not only included its occasional lunch-time seminars, upon which much of this volume is based, but also a concerted programme of activities aimed specifically at the fullest possible implementation of the Programme of Action. Principally this has been undertaken via what has become known as the “Geneva Process”, a regular series of focused discussions among governments, international organizations, and non-governmental organizations. Between May 2002 and June 2003, this group met and discussed issues of Programme of Action implementation and, in particular, preparation for the Biennial Meeting of States in July 2003. This work will go on over the coming period in the run-up to the Second Biennial Meeting in 2005.

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Geneva has become a center for small arms activity. Since Volume 1 was published, the *Small Arms Survey*, based at the Graduate Institute of International Studies, and linked to the *Programme for Strategic and International Security Studies (PSIS)*, has established itself as the most authoritative research institute on small arms. Other Geneva-based organizations and agencies have developed new small arms programme orientations. All of *The Geneva Forum* partner organizations continue to devote substantial attention to small arms beyond the specific activities of *The Geneva Forum*. Our function in *The Geneva Forum* is to help to activate and steer small arms work in Geneva and elsewhere, and, in doing so, to help maximize the contribution which Geneva can make to the enhancement of effective policies and programmes aimed at reducing the human impact of the use of small arms and light weapons.

We would like to thank Andrew Prosser, who has worked diligently and creatively to pull this volume together, and Seden Özel who transformed many of the audio recordings of the seminars into transcripts. We thank also Patrick McCarthy, Network Coordinator of *The Geneva Forum*, for overseeing the completion of this project. Our thanks go also to the Ford Foundation, which provided the bulk of the funding which made the events covered in this volume possible, and to all the other funders, including the governments of Switzerland, Norway, Canada, India, The Netherlands and Sweden, who have supported the work on small arms of *The Geneva Forum* in the period since Volume 1 appeared. And, of course, we are especially grateful to all those whose fine contributions are summarized in this volume.

Great progress has been made since the mid-90s in understanding the dimensions of the small arms problem. Some concrete steps have been taken in addressing these facets of the problem. But, realistically speaking, the international community is only at the end of the beginning, in terms of understanding and

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acting upon what must be done. There is plenty of work left to do. And Volume 3 will appear in due time, we are sure.

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