

## From Quito to Mexico City: Building a Disarmament Culture in Latin America and Beyond

As we note often, this is a particularly challenging and interesting time for disarmament policy advocates. The UN Programme of Action on Small Arms is now in its tenth year, and we are co-producing events with governments in capital and at the UN to help stimulate thoughtful activity towards ending the threat of illicit small arms. The Arms Trade Treaty process is nearing the beginning of formal negotiations and we are part of the monitoring team that helps diplomats make the most informed and far-sighted decisions. Later this year, the NPT review will take up the challenge of the Middle East Weapons of Mass Destruction Free Zone, a process which we also have opportunity to impact through monitoring and strategic conversations with officials of existing zones.

For Global Action, this cycle began in early December with a remarkable event hosted by the Ministries of Defense and Foreign Affairs of Ecuador with the cooperation of the UN Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean (UNLiREC) in Lima and the UN Office of Disarmament Affairs in New York. Four Andean countries participated in the discussions and their representatives laid out many challenges and opportunities in controlling small arms, including the need for inter-agency and inter-government coordination, better legal frameworks, safer borders, more attention to gender impacts, and more effective regional communications. As the Andean region moves towards a common framework for foreign policy, the expectation is that commitments to end the scourge of illicit small arms will be both more robust and better coordinated. Moreover, Ecuador and their regional partners have great capacity for leadership in the international community on this and related issues and seem poised to exercise that opportunity.

More recently in February we were invited to participate in a major celebratory and assessment event in Mexico City hosted by El Organismo para la Proscripción de las Armas Nucleares en la América Latina y el Caribe (OPANAL). The celebration, which attracted many diplomats and UN officials, including the soon-to-be retiring Sergio Duarte, honored 45 years of the ground breaking Treaty of Tlatelolco which established a nuclear weapons free zone in Latin America. Following the ceremony, a seminar took place which assessed OPANAL's 'best practices' and priorities which could be shared with other zones, especially the proposed Weapons of Mass Destruction free zone in the Middle East. GAPW contributed to the seminar outline and also made a presentation focused on the need for a zone structure in the Middle East and calling on diplomats to give more credence to the many non-nuclear disarmament activities in Latin America that help create stable security sectors and thus contribute to the sustainability of the Latin American zone.

The next day, a workshop was held for Mexican NGOs on 'new disarmament priorities,' hosted by Lucatello Simone of the Mora Institute in Mexico City and co-organized by Hector Guerra of IANSA and Katherine Prizeman of GAPW. The seminar not only represented the first efforts on disarmament by the esteemed Mora Institute, but also represented the first time that GAPW has been able to test some of the ideas contained in a volume that we are editing for the UN Office of Disarmament Affairs – including the relationship of disarmament education to gender, development and the prevention of mass atrocities.

The events which began dramatically in Quito and ended (for now) at the Mora Institute have demonstrated the extraordinary resolve of governments to tackle difficult security problems but also the extraordinary leadership available throughout the region to accomplish these difficult goals. Through affiliations with UNLiREC and regional governments, we will use our networks and resources to

leverage additional activities that can help provide stable and transparent security to promote safer and more abundant communities.