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International Action Network on Small Arms

by Eric Wuestewald [Center for International Stabilization and Recovery]

For the past 12 years, the International Action Network on Small Arms has sought to improve personal safety and development through the increased regulation of guns and arms exports. To this end, IANSA has developed a number of initiatives to discourage the proliferation and violence associated with small arms and light weapons. This article explains the organization and some of the major campaigns it has adopted since its origin.



IANSA was first conceived in August 1998, when 33 nongovernmental organizations from 18 countries met in Canada to discuss how to effectively prevent the unwanted dispersal of small arms and light weapons. Recognizing that SA/LW diffusion has negative consequences for all levels of sustainability and further affects the population on local, national, regional and international levels, the NGOs put together IANSA as a collaborative banner organization to seek international regulations on the proliferation and unlawful use of SA/LW. On 14 October of the same year, over 100 NGOs from around the world met in Brussels to expand upon this mission and, through a number of workshops, finalized an agreement on

IANSA's policy, campaign methods and organizational structure.¹

Since then, IANSA's movement against gun violence has grown to a globally coordinated network of more than 800 independent organizations in 120 countries with five regional NGO networks coordinating the work of over 30 countries. In addition to the participatory support of these member organizations, IANSA has also received financial support from the governments of Belgium, Republic of Ireland, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, and the United Kingdom, as well as from charitable organizations including Christian Aid, the Compton Foundation, Ford Foundation, John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Open Society Institute, Ploughshares Fund, Rockefeller Foundation and Samuel Rubin Foundation.²

Policy Issues

As IANSA allows the inclusion of any organizations, professional associations, or individuals who "broadly" support its goals,¹ many of the organizations that fall under the IANSA umbrella represent multiple facets of arms control. As a result, members include policy-development organizations, aid agencies, women's groups, human-rights groups and community-action organizations, among others.² Similarly, IANSA is involved in various areas of arms control, working to combat the harmful effects of SA/LW proliferation on all levels. Consequently, the network works to enact public health policies, prevent gender violence, regulate arms brokering, standardize the marking of small arms, eliminate child soldiers and mandate stockpile destruction.³ To help fight these varied aspects of gun and arms growth, IANSA has launched a number of campaigns and initiatives to raise awareness about the widespread effects of SA/LW and

promote new policies to prevent armed violence and proliferation.

United Nations Programme of Action

In July 2001, the United Nations held the Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects to develop a method to prevent the unlawful trade of firearms. During the conference, IANSA coordinated and presented evidence from member NGOs on the dangers of SA/LW and illegal arms transfers. When combined with similar efforts by the World Forum on the Future of Shooting Activities and other organizations, a total of 172 NGOs were able to expound upon their years of collective experience in the field. Ultimately, this collective action, along with the participation of the U.N. member states, led to the development and implementation of a U.N. Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects.⁴

Among its many statutes, the U.N. PoA commits participating countries to criminalize the illegal use of SA/LW, create a national coordinating agency on SA/LW, use serial numbers during the manufacture of SA/LW, destroy confiscated and collected weapons, create "adequate and detailed standards" for the management and security of stockpiles, and establish programs for the disposal of surplus stockpiles.⁵ IANSA has continued to support these goals and push for implementation of the PoA at subsequent U.N. Review Conferences and Biennial Meetings in 2003, 2005, 2006 and 2008. The 2010 U.N. Biennial Meeting of States on Small Arms was held from 14–18 June in New York City.⁶

Control Arms Campaign

IANSA, in conjunction with Oxfam International and Amnesty International, also founded the jointly-run Control Arms Campaign in October 2003. With the public support of over one million people worldwide, Control Arms seeks the adoption of an international Arms Trade Treaty to limit the currently unregulated global arms trade. In December 2006, this large-scale support was brought before the U.N. General Assembly, where 153 countries voted to begin working on a global ATT. In 2007, over 100 nations examined the possibility of such a treaty, writing and submitting potential parameters to the U.N. Secretary-General. IANSA's political victories continued in October 2008 when 147 governments voted favorably on a second resolution of the ATT, establishing an Open-Ended Working Group to begin serious discussion on a treaty.⁷

On 12 January 2010, the U.N. General Assembly passed Resolution 64/48, which mandated the beginning of formal ATT negotiations. As part of these negotiations, the remaining 2010 and 2011 working group meetings have become ATT Preparatory Committees, including the two-week session recently ending on 23 July 2010. The resolution has further mandated a four-week negotiating conference in 2012 when the final text for the treaty will be decided.⁸ Control Arms asserts that it will continue to raise awareness and encourage negotiations among countries until the treaty is finished.⁷

Further Campaigns

In addition to IANSA's work with the PoA and Control Arms, the network has instituted a number of other programs and events to raise awareness about SA/LW proliferation, violence and on how to maintain sustainability. Among these other initiatives are the Disarm Domestic Violence campaign to protect women from gun violence,⁹ the Gun-Free World Cup campaign to keep firearms out of the world football championship in South Africa,¹⁰ IANSA's annual Global Week of Action Against Gun Violence,¹¹ and public education and advocacy campaigns.²

IANSA has quickly become a major player in international affairs, not only encouraging and increasing SA/LW advocacy and research efforts, but also developing policies and regulations to curtail arms proliferation and the violence associated with it. In the coming years, IANSA says it will maintain its role in the U.N. Small Arms Conference, continue its involvement in the Control Arms Campaign, and advocate for the stronger national, regional and international regulation of SA/LW.

IANSA also plans to expand upon its current regional and sub-regional networks, build international expertise within thematic networks such as the Women's Network and Youth Network, and create a series of networks to focus on additional arms-control issues. IANSA also hopes to create public-education campaigns that will organize public media events to publicize SA/LW information and to further its involvement in pursuing an international Arms Trade Treaty. ↗

Biography



Mailinese singers, Amadou and Miriam, supported the Gun Free World Cup campaign. During the performance, Amadou Bagayoko said, "We want peace in Africa. No arms, no war, just joy."



Eric Wuestewald has worked for the Center for International Stabilization and Recovery since May 2009 as an Editorial Assistant for *The Journal of ERW and Mine Action*. In May 2010, he graduated from James Madison University with a Bachelor of Arts in English and a minor in creative writing. He is currently pursuing a career in journalism.

Endnotes

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