



Resolution 928 (1989)¹

Arms sales and human rights

Parliamentary Assembly

The Assembly,

1. Recognising the inalienable right of every country to defend itself individually or collectively in the event of armed attack, in accordance with Article 51 of the United Nations Charter, and the right of nations to ask for aid and assistance from other countries to ensure respect for that principle ;
2. Aware also of the substantial political, economic and commercial interests involved in the international trade in all kinds of armaments, including foreign policy, balance of payments, economies of scale and employment considerations in the exporting countries ;
3. Convinced that current levels of arms exports, while now declining, clearly go beyond that required for the legitimate self-defence and security purposes of many recipient nations, and that purchases of arms are often pursued at the expense of the economic and social development of countries in the Third World ;
4. Realising, furthermore, that employment in the armaments sector is highly uncertain due to fluctuating sales, that the spin-off from military to civilian technology is often highly overestimated, and that the "multiplier effect" of civilian exports is much greater in Third World countries than is the case with arms sales ;
5. Believing, too, that many arms exports may be used for the violation of human rights over which the exporting country has no control, except to refuse to export arms which could be used for domestic repression, and recalling, in this context, its [Recommendation 962 \(1983\)](#) on development cooperation and human rights, stating that the "principle of non-interference in the domestic affairs of other states should not apply whenever human rights are at stake", and the positive reply thereto by the Committee of Ministers ;
6. Concerned that the full facts and figures of international arms sales are not always revealed to the parliaments or public of member countries, and that the final destination of arms as defined in end-user certificates can be concealed ;
7. Alarmed also that arms sales increasingly involve not only traditional arms, but also systems that permit the production and launching of even more ominous weapons or weapon components (such as nuclear, chemical and biological ones) with incalculable consequences for the regions concerned and the world as a whole ;
8. Hopeful that the vastly improved relations between East and West can lead to more effective arms sales control on an international scale, while aware that the main threat to world peace now could come from escalating Third World conflicts fed by arms exports from the developed world ;
9. Convinced that the above situation requires particularly strong political guidance and parliamentary involvement as well as closer international co-operation and assistance, to help assist recipient states with confidence-building measures for their internal and external security and with practical advice on the economics of disarmament and development,

1. Assembly debate on 27 September 1989 (19th Sitting) (see [Doc. 6115](#), report of the Political Affairs Committee, Rapporteur : Mr Speed ; and [Doc. 6094](#), opinion of the Committee on Economic Affairs and Development, Rapporteur : Mr Holtz). Text adopted by the Assembly on 27 September 1989 (19th Sitting).



10. Calls upon the Council of Europe member states :
- a. to work in favour of reduced, better controlled arms exports to Third World countries, and to create, as a first step, control mechanisms, including at parliamentary level, to oversee hardware arms exports in particular ;
 - b. to initiate the setting up of an open register on the production of and trade in conventional weapons, to which all members of the United Nations will be invited to adhere, such a register to be organised in co-operation with existing specialist organisations such as the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) and the London International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) ;
 - c. to establish common criteria and definitions for arms sales, including modernisation and maintenance of equipment already supplied, to draw attention to the risk of armed conflict in the regions of recipient states, and to pay particular regard to international obligations in the field of human rights ;
 - d. to incorporate, where this is not already the case, such criteria in their national legislation while ensuring that they are scrupulously adhered to, and to establish parliamentary control bodies to this end ;
 - e. to use their best endeavours to promote an international conference under the auspices of the United Nations, with the active participation of all the major arms-exporting countries, with a view to limiting, monitoring and controlling arms exports, bearing especially in mind the dangers to world peace of Third World conflicts, and to create towards this end a co-ordinating body on North-South arms trade policies ;
 - f. to promote, using where possible existing regional organisations, confidence-building and enhanced security measures for recipient countries consistent with programmes reducing levels of arms exports ;
 - g. to urge Third World countries to devote scarce resources primarily to civilian investment, rather than excessive armament, making this one of the factors to be considered when granting official development assistance and debt relief, and to promote democracy in Third World societies aimed at the realisation of human rights and socially and environmentally sound policies, and hence help avoid their militarisation ;
 - h. to build upon the 1982 United Nations' proposals and encourage national studies on the economics and practicalities of disarmament and development that can be implemented by exporting and recipient states alike ;
 - i. to ask the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) to study the problems, possibilities and consequences related to the conversion from military to civilian production, building on past experiences ;
 - j. to give high priority to encouraging a level of harmonisation of national legislation controlling and licensing arms exports, and to take urgent steps to ensure the credibility of and compliance with end-user certificates for arms export sales with the maximum possible parliamentary scrutiny and contact.