

ACTIVITY

Regional Organizations and the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1540

Common values, shared interests and building on existing mechanisms within regional organizations could mean such organizations have the best overall opportunity and leverage to encourage and facilitate the signing, ratification and implementation of international obligations. In particular, regional organizations have the potential to play a significant role in the implementation of UN Security Council resolution 1540 (on the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction). This is especially so in the less developed regions of the world, and for countries with little or no prior experience of such matters.

Some scholars with knowledge of specific regional organizations foresee problems with regional organizations playing a significant role implementing and monitoring compliance of resolution 1540. Lack of institutional capacities, funds and enforcement mechanisms, as well as alternative agendas within regional organizations, are cited as reasons for doubt. However, although there are apparent challenges, there are also windows of opportunity. By definition, regional organizations, in contrast to international or global entities, have the advantage of consisting of states in close proximity to each other with similar political, social and economic cultures and histories. As a result, regional organizations could provide the necessary authority in communicating the security benefits—to the state and to the region—of implementing resolution 1540. There is also reason to believe that peer pressure applied from states within regional organizations will be more effective compared to efforts from other states or international actors. And states might find it more politically acceptable to receive, for example, funds and technical assistance earmarked for resolution 1540 from regional organizations than bilateral contributions. Protecting state sovereignty, fearing that an outside donor will seek to gain political influence over internal affairs, is often a rationale for a state's hesitation in respect to the latter type of assistance. Finally, examples show that subregional organizations, some of them created through treaties within regional organizations, could provide guidance on implementation, monitoring and verification of compliance. Capitalizing on regional organizations' strengths and building capacity in necessary areas will be crucial for regional organizations to significantly contribute to the implementation of resolution 1540.

In each issue of *Disarmament Forum*, UNIDIR Focus highlights one activity of the Institute, outlining the project's methodology, recent research developments or its outcomes. UNIDIR Focus also describes a new UNIDIR publication. You can find summaries and contact information for all of the Institute's present and past activities, as well as sample chapters of publications and ordering information, online at <www.unidir.org>.

In its initial phase, this project has explored an area where regional organizations have, in recent years, played a particularly strong role in implementation—issues related to small arms and light weapons (SALW). This has aided the development of a “template” on the role of regional organizations in implementation efforts, which is being transposed to nuclear, biological and chemical issues associated with resolution 1540—taking into consideration, of course, that in some regions it is very difficult to get political traction on weapons of mass destruction issues whereas SALW have high political value. Differences in salience and urgency between SALW and 1540 notwithstanding, the experience of regional organization activity in implementing goals and objectives provides insight into the potential roles and limitations of regional organizations in so far as matters of implementation and compliance are concerned.

This project is being undertaken in conjunction with Dr Lawrence Scheinman of the Center for Nonproliferation Studies, Monterey Institute of International Studies.

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NEW PUBLICATION

Cluster Munitions in Albania and Lao PDR: The Humanitarian and Socio-Economic Impact

Cluster munitions have been used in combat in at least 21 countries. Thirty-four countries are known to produce them and at least 73 countries stockpile them. Worldwide, stockpiled submunitions number in the billions.

The use of cluster munitions results in civilian death and suffering both during and after conflict. They are a particularly dangerous weapon type in need of international attention, in that they have a serious and long-lasting humanitarian and socio-economic impact where they have been used.

Presented here are brief case studies on cluster submunition contamination in Albania and the Lao People’s Democratic Republic. Together, these studies present a picture of the short- and long-term humanitarian and socio-economic impact of cluster munition use. The case of Lao PDR shows the continual harm—even more than thirty years after the fact—caused by large-scale cluster munition use, while the case of Albania illustrates that even recent, limited cluster munition use can cause harm no less profound.

These case studies demonstrate the devastating impact cluster munitions have on civilians. They provide additional evidence from the field that stronger action needs to be taken to reduce the tragedy these munitions bring to lives, livelihoods and societies.

***Cluster Munitions in Albania and Lao PDR:
The Humanitarian and Socio-Economic Impact***

Rosy Cave, Anthea Lawson and Andrew Sherriff

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