

# Aiming for



# Prevention

## Conference Report

### 4th Biennial Meeting of States on the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms (UNPoA) and Light Weapons New York City July 14-18, 2010

*Aiming for Prevention* director Maria Valenti and PSR Philadelphia Executive Director Patricia Harner joined IPPNW physicians Sina Helbig (Germany), Robert Mtonga (Zambia), Emperatriz Crespín (El Salvador), Ime John (Nigeria), and Cathey Falvo, Vic Sidel (US) in bringing an important health perspective to the Fourth Biennial Meeting of States (BMS), which was convened to review implementation of the UN's Programme of Action to combat the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. Dr. Mtonga served on the official Zambian delegation and helped inject text on the importance of health into the Zambian statement submitted to the meeting.

By the close of the five days of deliberation and discussion, the Chair of BMS4, Ambassador Macedo of Mexico, facilitated the adoption of the draft outcome document which pledged a range of actions by states, but unfortunately largely ignored the role of civil society in participating in preventing both trafficking of arms as well as prevention of violence.

Highlights of IPPNW delegate activities included the following:

#### **Address to Delegates**

- Dra. Emperatriz Crespín from El Salvador provided a doctor's perspective on the human consequences of armed violence which was enthusiastically received. She related her recent experience surveying youths in El Salvador and their response that they turn to health care professionals as well as parents and teachers to help protect them from violence. Drawing from the IPPNW policy paper "Prescriptions for Prevention" on health approaches to preventing armed violence, she outlined our recommendations for action including that states incorporate public health strategies into national action plans. The PoA, she said, should reflect the need for a comprehensive supply and demand approach to control small arms and light weapons proliferation, to recognize that health and development are intricately linked, and to implement national collections of data on gun-related deaths and related costs. Dra. Crespín was also supported in her attendance at the UN PoA by the Latin American Coalition for Armed Violence Prevention (CLAVE).

### **Outreach to Delegates via the IPPNW Exhibit Table, Meetings**

IPPNW members spent considerable time speaking with state delegates and other NGOs about the health affects of armed violence and a public health approach to prevention at our exhibit table located outside the main meeting hall. Over the five days of the conference we spoke with hundreds of people and distributed our Policy Paper as well as a range of IPPNW campaign materials including One Bullet Story posters and bookmarks as well as Vital Signs.

As observers in the NGO gallery at the BMS, we listened to country statements so we could comment on them to delegations, and encourage more attention to prevention and demand side initiatives, especially with delegates representing member countries. For example, Pat Harner and Maria Valenti of the US shared our concerns about the need for more investment in armed violence prevention initiatives with US Delegation leader Steven Costner, Deputy Director of the Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement. Dr. John discussed the POA reports and Nigerian non-compliance with Mr. Lawrence O. Obisakin, Minister at the Nigerian Mission who led the Nigerian delegation. Also, the tension arising from the final outcome document and Nigerian's intervention that resolved the impasse was discussed with another Nigerian Minister, Mr. A.U. Nwosa during the final debates. Dr. Helbig met with the German delegation. Since Dr. Mtonga served on the official Zambian delegation, he was allowed to participate in the meeting in a full manner.

### **Active Participation in Side Events**

IPPNW actively participated in most of the side events organized by both states, UN agencies and other NGOs, held during the mid-day break as well as during the evenings. Our members provided comments on presentations and input from a health perspective, and offered our expertise in future conversations and follow-up activities, such as a meeting hosted by CLAVE to discuss a project designed to facilitate South-South collaborations between Africa and Latin America. The session on women's issues led by Agnes Marcaillou Chief Regional Disarmament Branch, UNODA, was particularly well attended and focused on global impediments to women's health and wellbeing. The trafficking of women in prostitution, for domestic help and the sales of arms were outlined and the importance of a female voice at all UN planning sessions was underscored. The trafficking of women in the media was another excellent discussion. The evening workshop on the Impact of Small Arms on Children and Communities conducted by the American Friends Service Committee on gun violence in New York City/restrictions on gun sales and attendant legislation in NY, was a classic example of illustrating the human face of violence and also effective crime reduction strategies. IPPNW members also participated in events conducted by the Geneva

Declaration on Armed Violence and Development, UNDP, Small Arms Survey's Yearbook release, and the Forensic Technology breakfast meeting. In addition, the Global Small Arms and Armed Violence Web Knowledge Base was launched by Philip Alpers at [www.gunpolicy.org](http://www.gunpolicy.org).

### **Participation in IANSA Restructuring Meetings**

IPPNW delegates attended a series of meetings on restructuring the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA) of which IPPNW is a founding member. Goals of the restructuring include improved member participation in decision making, greater transparency on issues related to such activities as funding priorities and IANSA member representation at meetings such as the BMS, etc. Dra. Crespín was nominated by IPPNW and appointed to the Interim International Advisory Council that will help advise the ongoing process.

With many thanks to Dr. Cathey Falvo of PSR New York and IPPNW who hosted an IPPNW delegate to stay at her home, as well as all IPPNW attendees for a wonderful dinner.