

# Media coverage of Small Arms at the BMS

Emile LeBrun / Communications Advisor to IANSA

**D**espite the fact that the Biennial Meeting of States was not a negotiating conference, the gathering drew significant media attention to small arms issues and the role of governments in reducing global gun violence. Over 150 articles appeared in newspapers around the world during the week of the conference, including in Africa, Europe, Australia, the Middle East, South Asia, Southeast Asia and the USA. It was the biggest single week of coverage on the issue since the UN Conference on Small Arms in July 2001.

Some highlights of our communications activities include:

- In the week prior to the conference, IANSA placed an extended opinion piece in the *International Herald Tribune* by Rachel Stohl of the Center for Defence Information in Washington. On the first day of the conference, the *Los Angeles Times* printed a second piece by Ms. Stohl that touched on the links between the small arms trade and terrorist

activities. These two pieces helped alert the media and the international community to the importance of the BMS and helped secure additional coverage.

- Working with our local members in Pakistan and South Africa, IANSA helped to secure local news coverage of the conference in the regions, relying on local spokespeople. This is a technique we will be refining and repeating in the months ahead.
- IANSA held UN press conferences on the opening and closing days of the conference, drawing reporters from around the world. The opening news event launched the IANSA Report on the PoA and set the context for the meeting and IANSA's expectations. The closing news event provided reporters with IANSA's perspective of what had been accomplished at the conference and what still needed to be done. See the IANSA press release at [http://www.iansa.org/um/bms\\_media.htm](http://www.iansa.org/um/bms_media.htm)

- IANSA spokespeople, including Afi Yakubu of Ghana and Christiane Agboton Johnson of Senegal, gave a number of radio interviews to national news and UN broadcast services in the US and Africa. In Brazil, a television interview with Rubem Cesar Fernandez was carried on national television.
- On the third day of the conference, West African IANSA members issued a statement concerning the ongoing fighting in Liberia. They urged the international community not to overlook the role of small arms in the region in dealing with the crisis.
- Despite the presence of the gun lobby at the BMS in New York, there was almost no coverage of pro-gun positions in the international media.

Since most of the coverage of the BMS was either generated by IANSA or the Small Arms Survey, it's clear that without our concerted efforts, the world media might have paid little attention to the conference.

## Linking Gender and Security

**T**his NGO session, presented by UK-based International Alert, examined the broader issues relating to gender-aware 'human security' within the framework of Security Sector Reform (SSR).

The discussion emphasised that small arms and light weapons should not be looked at in isolation; instead we should adopt a holistic approach and include gender-aware analysis of conflict situations and security provisions.

Participants (all from International Alert):

- Nicola Johnston, Gender & Peacebuilding Programme
- Michael Page and Helena Vázquez, Security & Peacebuilding Programme
- Kevin Clements, IA Secretary General

### Key points:

- The impact of and engagement in violent conflict is different for men, women, boys and girls.

- Gender analysis should be included at the beginning of any planning phase for SSR or SALW work.
- Both micro and macro levels of security (households, community and national/regional) should be considered.

A summary of the discussion will be circulated to participants and further discussions are planned. For more information please contact: [njohnston@international-alert.org](mailto:njohnston@international-alert.org) or [hvazquez@international-alert.org](mailto:hvazquez@international-alert.org)