Small arms and light weapons
International Action Network on Small Arms

Background
Small arms and light weapons (SALW) kill and injure more people on a daily basis worldwide than any other weapon. They are used in every act of armed violence from armed conflict to domestic violence. There is a multi-billion dollar industry surrounding the production, sale and trade, illicit traffic, and use of SALW and their ammunition.

In 2001, United Nations member states adopted a Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons (UNPoA). The UNPoA is a non-legally-binding instrument that encourages states to develop programmes for collecting and destroying illegal weapons, strengthening import and export controls, raising awareness on the effects of illegal weapons, improving the security and safety of weapons storage facilities, and helping affected countries track down illegal transfers of small arms and the brokers involved. SALW were also included as a category of weapon covered by the Arms Trade Treaty, which was adopted in 2013 and will enter into force once 50 states ratify it.

Current context
The UNPoA and ATT have the potential to reduce and prevent the illicit trafficking and misuse of SALW. Implementation of the UNPoA at the national level has been effective in many countries. At the international level, there have also been some laudable developments. UN Security Council resolution 2117, adopted in 2013, underscores the need for the full and effective implementation of the UNPoA and provides for measures related to securing government stockpiles and weapons collection, among others. It also calls for further measures to facilitate women's full and meaningful participation in all policy making, planning, and implementation processes to combat and eradicate the illicit transfer, destabilizing accumulation, and misuse of small arms.

The establishment of the UN Trust Facility for Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation (UNSCAR) to support implementation of the UNPoA and ATT is also a welcome development. However, the commitment of governments to address SALW issues at the UN has seemingly diminished. A key challenge is that the resolutions on SALW at First Committee are virtually unchanged from year to year, giving a sense that the issue is stale and lacks urgency. Another challenge is that some states seem reluctant to explore synergies between the UNPoA and ATT.

While vitally important national and local work continues on implementing these instruments, it would be useful to revitalise some of the urgency and innovative thinking on SALW at the international level.
All technical discussion and political will to control SALW should be checked against the purpose of reducing the impact of gun violence on people and communities. States should get rid of the narrow perspective of only controlling tools of violence per se and increase their understanding, action, and cooperation to address survivors needs and their input into this international processes, and the complementarity between SALW processes and the ongoing discussion to strengthen global commitments on sustainable development goals.

**Recommendations for governments**

**During First Committee:**
- Delegations should commend ongoing work to implement the UNPoA and to explore synergies and complementarities between it, the Arms Trade Treaty, and the sustainable development goals (SDGs) process. On the SDGs, they should indicate support for goal 16(4), which seeks to reduce illicit arms flows by 2030.
- Delegations should take a progressive view on the omnibus resolution on SALW and suggest language that involves action to strengthen implementation such as effective tracing programmes to address diversion of weapons to the illicit market, improving border surveillance, and strategic approaches to monitoring and implementing UN Security Council arms embargoes.
- Delegations could propose new SALW resolutions that address some of the UNPoA’s gaps such as assistance to survivors, ammunition, SALW production, stockpile management, emerging technologies. States may want to make obligatory the submission of biennial national reports, as these are necessary for stocktaking. Only 36.6% of UN member states submitted reports in 2014 as compared to 2012’s 43.5%.

**Beyond First Committee:**
- States should propose a concrete way forward towards international controls of SALW ammunition – not only of its trade, but from production to destruction.
- States should develop initiatives to address challenges related to stockpile management standards, excessive arms production, and emerging technologies.
- States should call for the establishment of an independent mechanism to systematically measure and evaluate assistance, as well as UNPoA implementation so as to identify and fill in the gaps. Developing indicators will be a good first step to this end.
THE GLOBAL BURDEN OF ARMED VIOLENCE

Did you think armed violence only affected war zones? Think again. This snapshot of the Geneva Declaration’s findings reveals the wider picture.

526,000 PEOPLE
are killed by armed violence each year

21,000
Killings during legal interventions

54,000
Unintentional homicide

55,000
Direct conflict deaths

396,000
Intentional homicides

87.8% are killed in non-conflict settings.
12.2% are killed in conflict settings.

ONLY 1 OUT OF 10 VIOLENT DEATHS OCCURS IN CONFLICT SETTINGS OR TERRORIST ACTIVITIES.

AOAV WORKS TO REDUCE THE WORLD-WIDE HARM OF ARMED VIOLENCE

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