The United Nations is increasingly called upon to respond to the harm associated with the misuse and illicit circulation of arms and ammunition. Adequate and effective responses to this pressing problem require consideration of policies and programmes in diverse fields such as: peace and security; development; rule of law and governance; crime prevention; criminal justice and countering transnational organized crime; counter-terrorism; citizen security; public health; human rights; children’s and women’s rights; migration; forced displacement; and humanitarian aid. To address the need for a coherent and coordinated approach, the United Nations Coordinating Action on Small Arms mechanism, or CASA, brings together 23 UN system partners.

Over the past decade, CASA partners have actively supported Member States, aiming to enhance their capacities to control small arms and light weapons and to prevent and reduce armed violence.

CASA launched a set of voluntary International Small Arms Control Standards, or ‘ISACS,’ aimed to provide clear, practical guidance on the implementation of the relevant UN agreements on small arms control.1 Operational ISACS modules encompass the full spectrum of small arms control measures, from legislation and how best to set up a national commission, to stockpile management and awareness-raising. An ISACS software tool supports the practical national application of the standards. ISACS are utilised by CASA partners, to holistically deliver the highest quality assistance to Member States;2 as well as by regional organisations, civil society and the private sector.

CASA also addresses risks arising from the accumulation of conventional ammunition surpluses. The International Ammunition Technical Guidelines, or IATG;3 complement ISACS.

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1 UN Programme of Action on small arms and light weapons; the International Tracing Instrument; and the Firearms Protocol, to supplement the UN Convention on Transnational Organized Crime.
2 www.smallarmsstandards.org
3 www.un.org/disarmament/convarms/Ammunition/IATG/
Recognizing the significant negative impact of armed violence on socio-economic development and human well-being, UN entities have supported the global discourse on the post-2015 development agenda and advocated for the inclusion of a target related to armed violence reduction.

CASA participants provide support ranging from strengthening of institutional capacities, to supporting risk groups, to releasing “Guidelines on gun-free zones,” to concrete community policing projects, to providing marking machines to States in West Africa.

The impact of armed violence on children requires multiple responses both to protect children and also to prevent their own engagement in violent acts. UNICEF supports States to reduce children’s vulnerability for recruitment into criminal activity and to promote positive models for children, and social norms that reinforce children’s own strength and resilience. UNICEF focuses increasingly on supporting government injury surveillance mechanisms. Violent injury data provides a more comprehensive picture of violence in a country and also provides the evidence needed for a response.

DPKO’s UNMAS worked on operationalizing the Programme of Action in 9 countries, often using the UNMAS rapid response capacity, to destroy surplus and unsecure weapons and ammunition; to build or refurbish storage sites; and to implement innovative training programmes on ISACS and IATGs, such as safe storage trainings for Malian Armed Forces and a small arms marking programme in Somalia.

SEESAC, which is UNDP’s small arms control programme in South Eastern Europe, assisted its States in improving their national recordkeeping systems and by building capacity for reporting. In the near future a subregional control mechanism will enable practical information exchange and further coordination on arms exports.

Excellencies,

Finally a word about UNSCAR, the new UN trust fund covering the Programme of Action amongst other instruments. It was set up in response to the 2012 Review Conference, which called for improving trust fund arrangements. Funded by ten donor countries, UNSCAR aims to improve effectiveness of assistance through better coordination and better matching of assistance needs with resources. Its 2014 call for proposals will remain open until 18 July. It is encouraged that States in need of assistance consult with CASA partners or other capable implementing agencies, and have them submit proposals to UNSCAR.

The goal of CASA is to enable the United Nations to ‘deliver as one’ on the issue of small arms and light weapons. Twenty-three (23) participating UN entities stand ready to provide coordinated advice and support to Member States as they move forward with their implementation of the UN Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument.

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4 Central African Republic, Côte d’Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Hauti, Libya, Mali, Sierra Leone, Somalia and South Sudan