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Small Arms Monitor
Civil society reporting on the UN Programme of Action

Prioritizing the UNPoA on small arms
Katherine Prizeman | Global Action to Prevent War

As member states gather this week for the Preparatory Committee for the August Review Conference to assess progress made on the implementation of the Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons (PoA), there is much work to be done on evaluating the 'successes' and 'failures' of implementation of the PoA and the separately adopted International Tracing Instrument (ITI). As more than a decade has passed since the adoption of the PoA in 2001, member states must be serious about using 2012's forums—the Prep Com as well as the Review Conference—to thoughtfully and thoroughly identify where weaknesses remain in the implementation of the PoA and promote strong and transparent measures to address these weaknesses through information exchange, international assistance, and solid reporting measures. The PoA offers the unique opportunity to tackle an issue that affects all member states—whether as manufacturer or importer of arms, in post-conflict or conflict-laden societies, or as supplier or consumer.

Following a very successful Meeting of Governmental Experts (MGE) in May 2011 under the leadership of Ambassador Jim McLay of New Zealand, member states must now fight the 'negotiating fatigue' that is sure to be a factor this year with the PoA Review Conference held just a few weeks after the month-long ATT Negotiating Conference in July. It is significant to highlight that the MGE was both a success for the PoA and a breakthrough achievement for arms-related processes on the whole as it was the first of its kind. The hope is that this type of meeting will be institutionalized and made to repeat in the PoA process and perhaps other arms control processes as well. The technical discussions held among national implementers who directly apply these methods in their capitals was a true value added as member states could share best practices and lessons learned in marking, tracing, and record keeping with regards to the PoA and the ITI. It is hoped that this positive momentum will be carried through into this week's PrepCom, now under the able leadership of Nigeria's Ambassador U. Joy Ogwu.

The importance of the PoA 'blueprint' for international, regional, and national action on preventing, combating, and eradicating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons (SALWs) cannot be understated. It important to note, as has been pointed out by many in the
diplomatic and civil society communities, that the PoA lays the groundwork for drying up existing stockpiles of weapons as well as those weapons already in circulation, something that the hoped-for, future ATT will not have the ability to do. Therefore, it is crucial that the PoA be robustly supported in concert with the current work on the ATT. It is critical that this Prep Com—in addition to the Review Conference—be prioritized as an important opportunity for progress on the PoA’s implementation. Moreover, as the PoA is a non-legally binding document that lacks clear benchmarks for success, it is vital that member states use the Prep Com as a means of evaluation to push forward implementation mechanisms in the most vigorous way possible.

Furthermore, it is imperative that member states discuss a wide expanse of SALW-related issues in evaluating the illicit trade, including border controls, ammunition, intermediary brokers, and civil society cooperation in addition to the technical aspects of marking, tracing, and record keeping in order to improve implementation. These issues provide a valuable context for devising a comprehensive strategy for the control, prevention, and eradication of trade in SALWs, but also a strategy that is realistic in its implementation related expectations.

A key element of the success of the PoA, and thus also of tracking the progress on implementation, is honest and reliable reporting—something that is still starkly lacking among many member states. More than thirty member states have never submitted a report and others have only done so once or twice over the 11-year period since the PoA’s adoption. Although many states are, in fact, implementing the lion’s share of PoA undertakings, the lack of official and comprehensive reporting makes for a difficult process of analysis of progress made, which is the very goal of this Prep Com and subsequent Review Conference. National reports allow for better matching of needs and resources so that adequate international assistance can be provided to those states that need support in adopting measures in line with the PoA commitments. As such, it is important that this Prep Com encourage those states that have been remiss in their reporting duties to recommit to doing so. Moreover, the lack of benchmarks and of a formal monitoring system is often perceived as a major weakness of the PoA. Improvements in national reporting would certainly help curb the negative implications of the limited oversight mechanisms that exist within the PoA framework as well as help generate greater public awareness around the small arms process.

Illicit trafficking in SALWs is at the forefront of minds this year as many in the diplomatic community are set to tackle this issue through both the PoA and ATT processes. It would be wise to bear in mind the distinctive importance of the PoA in addressing the current challenges of communities awash in weapons and suffering severely from armed violence and other abuses committed at gun point. Illicit SALWs are a true blight on the security of communities by limiting and often preventing the ability to create and sustain a robust security sector with implications for the participation of women, the education of children, and much more. Building on the positive energy of the MGE, the Prep Com must continue its work of evaluating where weaknesses in implementation exist and, in turn, providing the support and pressure necessary to fill those gaps.

Mainstreaming gender in the UNPoA
The IANSA Women’s Network

"It is not about feminism, it is about business. Member states give us money to implement projects, and if I implement a project that only affects 50% of the population, that is bad business." - Agnès Marcaillou, former head of the Regional Disarmament Branch of UN Office for Disarmament Affairs

The Preparatory Committee and Review Conference of the Programme of Action (PoA) present an important opportunity to improve implementation of the PoA by making it more gender-responsive.

A gender-sensitive approach is not exclusively about women, but about analysing
gender more broadly. This approach factors the special needs and capacities of men and women, and boys and girls, in the formulation of appropriate responses to issues of gender and small arms and light weapons (SALW). For example, global research has shown young men suffer disproportionately from the direct impacts of SALW use (90% of gun homicide victims are men), while women tend to be victims of the indirect, longer-term consequences.

However, it is inaccurate to identify women solely as victims of violence perpetrated by men with small arms. Such an approach not only neglects the active role that women play globally, regionally and locally in civil society-driven as well as government-led disarmament initiatives as peacebuilders, politicians, community organisers and activists, but also ignores the role that women and girls increasingly play as users of guns, as combatants or traffickers. In this regard, UN Security Council Resolution (SCR) 1325 represents an important tool to empower women.

For example, India’s Northeast, especially Meghalaya State, has become a supply zone for the traffickers of women and girls who have been lured by promises of employment or abducted by armed men. It is a transit point on the route for trafficking in women and SALW. The traffickers use extortion and intimidate people with guns. They also provide armed security as some people pay for informal armed protection during their illegal migration from one country to another. The international border is extremely porous and transnational criminal networks flourish.

There is evidence that both guns and women are being traded across the frontiers including cases where trafficked Burmese girls were caught carrying guns in the Indian State of Mizoram. Many of the routes where women are trafficked are the same routes where SALW and drugs flow (See: ‘Trafficking women and guns in India’s Northeast’ in Women at Work: Preventing Gun Violence, IANSA Women’s Network Bulletin No. 17, January 2009). Such a phenomenon cannot be addressed without a gender-responsive policy.

The PoA contains only one reference to gender, in paragraph 6 of the Preamble in which states express grave concern about the devastating consequences of the illicit trade in small arms for children ‘as well as the negative impact on women and the elderly’. Men are not mentioned at all.

It is important to note that the use of the phrase ‘women and children’, though widespread, is often inappropriate. Putting ‘women and children’ together portrays women as hapless victims, rather than as a key resource in combating gun violence. Children are minors, cannot vote, and require specific and different attention and protection from women. It is vital to make this distinction clear in order to ensure that each group gains the attention it requires.

**Mandates for Gender in the PoA**


UN SCR 1325 recognises the active role that women can play in peace processes and as advocates, and it binds Member States to ensure women’s full participation accordingly. It has also proven to be a decisive mandate for the field of small arms control policy and practice, to include women in decision-making and take gender issues into account.

**Gender objectives for combating the illicit trade and trafficking of SALW**

Addressing the gender, poverty and development dynamic behind illicit trade and trafficking including sexual exploitation and human trafficking in national, regional and
international collaboration with development partners will enhance the effectiveness of PoA implementation by:

- Strengthening control of the illicit trade in SALW in all its aspects;
- Eliminating opportunities for traffickers to exploit the vulnerability of the poor and other marginalised populations;
- Addressing the human rights, security and livelihood needs of women and girls drawn into trafficking networks and offering livelihood alternatives to men who rely on trafficking to make a living;
- Increasing the engagement of social and economic development actors in SALW control.
- Improving knowledge of criminal network mechanisms in order to better address the problem of trafficking;
- Encouraging and supporting participatory enabling mechanisms and the concomitant capacity to identify and respond to potential conflict situations;
- Combating the drivers of illicit trade in SALW.

What you can do to integrate gender

An inclusive approach will help in full ownership of all efforts to eradicate illicit small arms and light weapons trade. It is a fact that gender-oriented policy, continuously and rigorously implemented, will maximize all efforts.

Designed to assist policy makers and field personnel in incorporating gender perspectives in all relevant initiatives and operations in the process of implementation of the PoA, the “Guidelines for Gender Mainstreaming for the Effective Implementation of the UN PoA” take into account new developments, progress made and lessons learned in the implementation of the PoA, as well as in the area of gender mainstreaming in peace and security. Benefiting from a wide array of field based experience and knowledge, they have been developed as a user-friendly resource that will help practitioners identify concrete ways of mainstreaming gender perspectives in all relevant initiatives and operations, and at all stages, from information gathering and planning to implementation, monitoring and evaluation, in the process of effective implementation of the PoA.

Integrating gender perspectives is critical to the successful implementation of the PoA in the following four key areas:

1. Illicit trade in SALW, and the linkages between different forms of trafficking;
2. DDR programmes;
3. National and regional focal points: defining specific regional and national approaches; and
4. Civil society integration and public awareness initiatives.

International implementation of the PoA has come a long way in terms of building norms and standards to combat and prevent the proliferation of SALW. To ensure sustainability of progress to date and to make sure that the PoA responds adequately and more meaningfully to peace challenges on the ground, it is critical that the gender implications of SALW form an integral component of national and regional strategy development.

The Guidelines for gender mainstreaming for the effective implementation of the UN PoA (A/CONF.192/2006/RC/CRP.3) are available at: http://www.iansa-women.org/node/454
Momentum shift
Robert Zuber | Global Action to Prevent War

The control of illicit small arms and light weapons is a high priority for many governments worldwide. In the Andean region, where we were privileged to meet with governments in Ecuador late in 2011 on small arms policy, the sources for such weapons vary widely. They are brought across borders beyond the reach of government control. They are diverted from the legal sale to illegal uses by criminals and non-state actors. They are made locally by rural people seeking to increase their security or make an extra bit of income. This pattern is replicated in states and regions worldwide – too many weapons on the streets of communities beyond the reach of state control.

Thankfully, whatever their sources and circumstances, there is broad and growing recognition in the international community of the insidious role that such weapons play in destabilizing security environments, increasing opportunities for criminality and insurgency, creating obstacles for participation in society by women and indigenous peoples, and undermining appropriate government authority.

2012 offers opportunities for new leadership from states and regions that are wrestling with diverse challenges related to small arms proliferation and have both urgency and advice to offer other sectors of the international community that have not yet fully seized their own opportunities to end the scourge of illicit weapons. These challenges are widely known, including borders, communications, inter-agency cooperation within governments, and engagement by diverse stakeholders including women and civil society organizations. The conference on small arms policy in Quito reinforced the determined efforts of many governments and their civil society counterparts to do what is needed – on communications, on coordination of national agencies, and on regional capacity assistance to address what states rightly believe to be a major threat to public safety and a major drain on government efforts to preserve that safety.

Thanks to the commitment of the current chair, Ambassador U. Joy Ogwu, and her able predecessors, the interest in implementing the PoA is steadily growing. Around the world, there is so much more to learn and to teach about the small arms problem as well as a wider range of states that are able to provide assistance as well as receive it. Worth highlighting in this regard is the Group of Interested States in Practical Disarmament Measures, which will meet again during the Prep Com (March 21) in part to continue the helpful 'matching needs and resources' program administered by Daniel Prins of UNODA.

Though the PoA does not have the legally binding status of what we all hope and expect the future ATT to possess, the work being done on implementation in diverse contexts and with a range of helpful partnerships is quite hopeful. Sometimes, individuals, organizations and governments do their best work when they are less motivated by treaty obligations and more by the need to enhance the safety and sustainability of their communities.
INVITATION

8 March 2012

Dear Madam, Sir,

We would like to kindly invite you for the next meeting of the Group of Interested States (GIS) in practical disarmament measures in New York, which will take place on Wednesday 21 March 2012, 1:15 – 2:45 p.m. in the German House, 571 UN Plaza (1st Ave., between 48th and 49th Streets). Taking advantage of the timing of the Preparatory Committee of the Second Review Conference of the United Nations Programme of Action (PoA) from 19 to 23 March 2012, this meeting is designed to offer practical examples on how the international community can cooperate to implement the PoA.

Agenda

1. Welcome and introductory remarks
   Florian Lauter, Counsellor, Permanent Mission of Germany to the United Nations
   Charlie Elms, First Secretary, Permanent Mission of Australia to the United Nations

2. Implementation of UNPoA Assistance Programs in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Somalia
   Speakers: Mr. Jose Kengo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ministry of the Interior, National Commission on Small Arms and Light Weapons
   Mr. Chris Leighton, Mines Advisory Group (MAG)

3. Presentation of the Small Arms Survey on regional organisations
   Speakers: Mr. Eric Berman, Small Arms Survey (SAS)
   Mr. Kerry More, Small Arms Survey (SAS)

4. Matching needs and resources on small arms – Update
   Daniel Paas, Chief, Conventional Arms Branch, UNODA

5. Any other business

Sincerely yours,

Florian Lauter

Counsellor

Permanent Mission of Germany to the United Nations

Daniel Paas

Chief, Conventional Arms Branch

UNODA

Lunch will be provided.

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