



Security Council

Distr.: General
1 November 2023

Original: English

Small arms and light weapons

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to resolution [2220 \(2015\)](#), by which the Security Council requested the Secretary-General to continue to submit biennial reports on the issue of small arms and light weapons.

Since the issuance of the previous report ([S/2021/839](#)), the illicit transfer and misuse of small arms and light weapons have continued to initiate, exacerbate and sustain armed conflict, pervasive violence and acts of crime and terrorism, hindering sustainable peace and development.

The United Nations has continued to advance and support global, regional, subregional and national efforts to strengthen the control of small arms and light weapons, including their ammunition.

In line with past practice, concluding observations and recommendations are offered with a view to supporting Member States in their efforts to address the threats arising from the misuse, illicit transfer and destabilizing accumulation of small arms and light weapons. Various recommendations are also offered throughout the thematic sections.



I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to resolution [2220 \(2015\)](#), by which the Security Council requested the Secretary-General to continue to submit reports on the issue of small arms and light weapons on a biennial basis.

2. Since the issuance of the previous report ([S/2021/839](#)), the misuse, illicit transfer and destabilizing accumulation of small arms and light weapons and their ammunition have persisted and have continued to undermine peace and security at the national, regional and global levels, derailing States from their paths towards sustainable development.

3. Escalation of armed conflicts has led to a surge in civilian casualties. In 2022, the United Nations recorded at least 16,988 civilian deaths across 12 of the world's deadliest armed conflicts, a 53 per cent increase compared with 2021 (see [S/2023/345](#)). Sub-Saharan Africa and Europe accounted for 90 per cent of the deaths. This rise was driven largely by the increased use of heavy weapons and explosive munitions, which caused 39 per cent of civilian deaths (see [A/78/80-E/2023/64](#)). Small arms and light weapons were the second most prevalent cause of conflict-related civilian deaths, accounting for 14 per cent of all such deaths.¹

4. Reflective of the deteriorating security environment, the upward trend in military expenditures has continued. In 2022, global military expenditures reached a new record high of \$2.24 trillion.² The volume of global transfers of major conventional arms has also increased, signalling growing militarization.³

5. The present report provides an overview of developments since the previous report, including on the mainstreaming of small arms and light weapons considerations across the work of the Security Council. It also contains reflections on United Nations efforts to promote safe and secure weapons and ammunition management. Pursuant to resolution [2616 \(2021\)](#), the report provides information on general trends of illicit trafficking and diversion in contravention of Council-mandated arms embargoes. Global, regional and subregional efforts to tackle the threat posed by small arms and light weapons are also outlined.

II. Trends and developments

6. The Security Council remained actively seized of threats posed by the misuse, illicit transfer and destabilizing accumulation of small arms and light weapons and their ammunition, particularly in situations of armed conflict. The Council recognized the negative impact of small arms and light weapons in various country contexts on its agenda and integrated weapons-related language into its resolutions on

¹ Data provided by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

² See <https://www.sipri.org/media/press-release/2023/world-military-expenditure-reaches-new-record-high-european-spending-surges>.

³ Pieter D. Wezeman, Justin Gadon and Siemon T. Wezeman, "Trends in international arms transfers, 2022", Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) fact sheet, March 2023. Available at <https://doi.org/10.55163/CPNS8443>.

Afghanistan,⁴ the Central African Republic,⁵ the Democratic Republic of the Congo,⁶ Haiti,⁷ Libya,⁸ Mali,⁹ Somalia,¹⁰ South Sudan,¹¹ the Sudan¹² and Yemen.¹³

7. The Security Council has also continued its consideration of the relevance of weapons and ammunition management in its thematic discussions and decisions. In the context of threats to international peace and security caused by terrorists, the Security Council adopted resolution [2617 \(2021\)](#), reiterating Member State obligations to prevent the supply of weapons to terrorists.

8. Weapons and ammunition management continues to be integrated into the work of peace operations. For instance, in 2022, a new mandate was given to the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan to support regional and international efforts to prevent and address the illicit trade in and destabilizing accumulation of small arms and light weapons and their diversion in Afghanistan and the region, which was extended in 2023 (see resolutions [2626 \(2022\)](#) and [2679 \(2023\)](#)).

9. Illicit flows of arms and ammunition in violation of arms embargoes remain a matter of grave concern. The adoption by the Security Council of resolution [2616 \(2021\)](#) to address the illicit transfer, destabilizing accumulation and diversion of arms and related material in violation of Council-mandated arms embargoes is a positive development. In response to concerns over the negative impact of illicit trafficking and diversion of arms in Haiti, a new sanctions regime was established by the Council, including a targeted arms embargo on designated individuals and entities (see resolution [2653 \(2022\)](#)).

10. The Security Council has regularly considered the issue of transfers of conventional arms, including small arms and light weapons. In those discussions, the importance of counter-diversion measures at all stages of the weapons and ammunition life cycle and transparency in armament production and transfers, along with the effective implementation of international instruments, has been recognized as essential in preventing the illicit trade and diversion of weapons and ammunition.¹⁴

11. In addition to the misuse of small arms and light weapons, the use of explosive weapons in populated areas continued to cause suffering and widespread destruction across many armed conflicts. A milestone achievement in enhancing the protection of civilians from the increasing urbanization of armed conflict was the adoption and endorsement of the Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Humanitarian Consequences Arising from the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas by 83 States in November 2022.

12. An important step has also been taken towards addressing the threat of illicit trafficking and diversion of conventional ammunition, as well as accidental ammunition explosions. In June 2023, the open-ended working group on conventional ammunition successfully concluded its work and adopted its final report ([A/78/111](#)), which contains the new Global Framework for Through-life Conventional Ammunition Management, for adoption by the General Assembly.

⁴ Resolution [2626 \(2022\)](#).

⁵ Resolutions [2693 \(2023\)](#), [2659 \(2022\)](#) and [2648 \(2022\)](#).

⁶ Resolutions [2667 \(2022\)](#), [2666 \(2022\)](#) and [2641 \(2022\)](#).

⁷ Resolutions [2692 \(2023\)](#), [2653 \(2022\)](#) and [2645 \(2022\)](#).

⁸ Resolutions [2656 \(2022\)](#), [2647 \(2022\)](#) and [2644 \(2022\)](#).

⁹ Resolution [2640 \(2022\)](#).

¹⁰ Resolutions [2687 \(2023\)](#), [2662 \(2022\)](#), [2657 \(2022\)](#) and [2628 \(2022\)](#).

¹¹ Resolutions [2683 \(2023\)](#), [2633 \(2022\)](#) and [2625 \(2022\)](#).

¹² Resolution [2620 \(2022\)](#).

¹³ Resolution [2624 \(2022\)](#).

¹⁴ See [S/PV.9436](#), [S/PV.9415](#), [S/PV.9399](#), [S/PV.9364](#), [S/PV.9325](#), [S/PV.9301](#), [S/PV.9256](#), [S/PV.9216](#) and [S/PV.9127](#).

A. Mainstreaming small arms and light weapons considerations in peace, security and development

1. A New Agenda for Peace

13. The Secretary-General's policy brief on A New Agenda for Peace (A/77/CRP.1/Add.8) provides the international community with an updated framework to address the scourge of illicit arms flows. Recognizing small arms and light weapons and their ammunition as the leading cause of violent death globally, it identifies arms control as a critical tool for preventing conflict and violence and sustaining peace. Calling for action to reduce the human costs of weapons, the Secretary-General has put forward three related recommendations on small arms and light weapons and their ammunition for States: developing and strengthening regional, subregional and national instruments and road maps to address challenges related to diversion, proliferation and misuse; setting national and regional targets and measuring progress through data collection and monitoring; and pursuing whole-of-government approaches that integrate small arms control into development and conflict prevention strategies.

2. Sustainable development and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

14. At the Sustainable Development Goals Summit in September 2023, States reaffirmed their commitment to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.¹⁵ In the 2030 Agenda, the linkages between arms control, peace, human rights and development are recognized, particularly through Goal 16. To attain that Goal, States have pledged to substantially reduce illicit arms flows. The collection and tracing of illicit small arms and light weapons are essential measures to achieve this objective and to make progress towards other Sustainable Development Goals. However, successful weapons and ammunition tracing remains a challenge. Available data show that, on average, between 2016 and 2020 only 28 per cent of illicit weapons were successfully traced.¹⁶

15. Both legally binding and political instruments on arms control promote the destruction of recovered weapons and ammunition, removing the risk of materiel being further diverted and reducing the flow of illicit arms and ammunition in circulation. According to data received from States through biennial reports on the implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, national authorities destroyed more than 1 million illicit small arms and light weapons from 2018 to 2021. Available data also show that national authorities destroyed on average 45.7 per cent of weapons seized, found and surrendered for that same period.¹⁷

16. The integration of small arms and light weapons considerations into development efforts should be further advanced. In this pursuit, comprehensive and multidisciplinary approaches at the national level are needed to promote the control and regulation of small arms, while also addressing the political, socioeconomic and cultural drivers of demand for these weapons. The Saving Lives Entity fund, a global funding facility within the Peacebuilding Fund, has continued to support such

¹⁵ Political declaration of the high-level political forum on sustainable development convened under the auspices of the General Assembly (A/HLPF/2023/L.1).

¹⁶ See E/2022/55. Based on data from 55 States, on average around 83 per cent of firearms seized are potentially traceable and consist mainly of firearms that have unique markings that can be used to identify their illicit origin. Potentially traceable firearms exclude firearms seized from their legitimate owners. Firearms whose marking status was not recorded are also included and considered as "unsuccessful" instances of the efforts to identify the illicit origin.

¹⁷ See <https://smallarms.un-arm.org/statistics>.

transformative and catalytic programmes on small arms and light weapons control and armed violence reduction that are embedded in the development policies and processes of beneficiary countries with the support of United Nations country teams. In 2022 and 2023, implementation of activities funded by the Saving Lives Entity fund continued in three pilot countries: Cameroon, Jamaica and South Sudan. **States are encouraged to increase support and financial contributions to the Saving Lives Entity fund and other relevant funding mechanisms, including the United Nations Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation, to promote long-term, comprehensive programming on small arms control initiatives at the country level, predicated on the principle of national ownership.**

3. Protection of civilians and human rights

17. The widespread availability and misuse of small arms and light weapons contribute to violations of international humanitarian law and violations and abuses of international human rights law. Across armed conflicts, heavy weapons and explosive munitions, and small arms and light weapons, represented the leading causes of civilian casualties. Small arms and light weapons and their ammunition also continued to be used by terrorists to facilitate the commission of abuses of human rights, including against marginalized groups and persons, such as ethnic, racial, religious and other minorities, as well as persons in vulnerable situations.¹⁸

18. Armed violence has continued to threaten and impede humanitarian operations and access to humanitarian assistance. According to available data, major attacks affecting aid workers occurred in 32 countries in 2022, with the highest rate of incidents recorded in Burkina Faso, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Haiti, Myanmar, South Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Ukraine.¹⁹ The use of small arms and light weapons was among the most common means of attack.²⁰

19. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has documented the direct and indirect impact on human rights resulting from the diversion of arms and illicit or unregulated arms transfers and from the civilian acquisition, possession and use of firearms, including civil and political rights, in particular the right to life and security of person, as well as economic, social and cultural rights.²¹ In a recent report on the human rights abuses committed by gangs in Haiti, the United Nations concluded that abuses were largely facilitated by access to arms and ammunition illicitly trafficked into the country.²²

20. Under international human rights law, States have due diligence obligations and must take appropriate measures to prevent the diversion of arms and unregulated and illicit arms transfers that have a direct and foreseeable impact on the rights of individuals outside their territory, including the right to life and the right to freedom from all forms of violence. **The Secretary-General has consistently urged States**

¹⁸ Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre and United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), *Technical Guidelines to Facilitate the Implementation of Security Council Resolution 2370 (2017) and Related International Standards and Good Practices on Preventing Terrorists from Acquiring Weapons* (2022). Available at <https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/ctc/content/technical-guidelines-facilitate-implementation-security-council-resolution-2370-2017-and>.

¹⁹ See <https://aidworkersecurity.org/incidents/report/tactictrends>.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ See A/HRC/53/49, A/HRC/51/15 and A/HRC/49/41.

²² Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti, “The population of Cité Soleil in the grip of gang violence: investigative report on human rights abuses committed by gangs in the zone of Brooklyn from July to December 2022”, February 2023.

to exercise the utmost responsibility in their arms transfers, including prior human rights risk assessments, to prevent their use in the committing of violations of international humanitarian law and violations and abuses of international human rights law.

21. Conventional arms control can be further leveraged to ensure more effective action towards the protection of civilians in situations of armed conflict. **When mandating United Nations peace operations, the Security Council is encouraged to consider the potential contribution of conventional arms control and integrate related mandates and activities into the protection of civilians efforts of peace operations. To ensure appropriate action on small arms and light weapons, the Council could consider requesting the Secretary-General to examine and report on the role of small arms and light weapons in fuelling conflict and the perpetration of violence against civilians in country-specific situations.**

22. **United Nations peacekeeping operations, special political missions, and United Nations entities should consider arms-related risks and impacts in protection risk assessments and conflict prevention and management activities. As envisioned in the Agenda for Disarmament, the collection and analysis of arms-related information as part of civilian casualty recording and human rights monitoring is an important practical step to address concerns raised by the use of conventional weapons and ammunition.** In this regard, the *Arms-Related Risk Analysis Toolkit*,²³ developed by the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, provides practical guidance on the integration of conventional arms control into United Nations conflict prevention and management activities.

4. Children and armed conflict

23. Children continue to be disproportionately affected by armed conflict, experiencing a persistent high number of grave violations (see [A/77/895-S/2023/363](#)). Small arms and light weapons contribute significantly to the commission of grave violations against children, such as their recruitment and use, as well as killing, maiming, rape and other forms of sexual violence, abduction, attacks on schools and hospitals, and the denial of humanitarian access. In 2022, 8,631 children were killed (2,985) and maimed (5,655), as verified by the United Nations in 24 situations on the children and armed conflict agenda and in the Lake Chad basin. In Somalia, for example, the main causes of casualties were small arms and light weapons, including during crossfire, indiscriminate shootings and targeted killings.

24. The Secretary-General has reported a steady increase in the killing and maiming of children, including through the use of live ammunition, and a shocking increase in attacks on schools and hospitals, often committed using small arms and light weapons, disrupting the life and education of many children (ibid.). This increase is also a result of the increased use of explosive weapons in populated areas, as well as landmines, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices, which represented some 26 per cent of the methods used in the killing and maiming of children (see [A/HRC/52/60](#)). Mitigating the impact of conventional arms, including small arms and light weapons, is crucial to preventing children from continuing to suffer the disproportionate effects of armed conflict.

25. **The Security Council is encouraged to further examine the role of small arms and light weapons in facilitating grave violations against children and to address the interlinkages in relevant resolutions, as well as in discussions of the**

²³ Simon Yazgi and Erica Mumford, *The Arms-Related Risk Analysis Toolkit: Practical Guidance for Integrating Conventional Arms-Related Risks into Conflict Analysis and Prevention* (UNIDIR, 2021). Available at <https://unidir.org/publication/arms-related-risk-analysis-toolkit>.

Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, including when making recommendations on possible measures and actions to promote the protection of children in armed conflict.

26. In his report on the impact of arms transfers on human rights issued in September 2022 (A/HRC/51/15), the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights noted that the diversion to unauthorized end users or for unlawful end use, as well as unregulated and illicit arms transfers, could result in a broad range of violations and abuses of the rights of children and youth in situations of both peacetime and armed conflict. In this regard, he highlighted the need for gender- and age-disaggregated data on the impact of diversion of arms and illicit arms transfers to understand the vulnerabilities faced by girls and boys, as well as by young women and men. **The Security Council is encouraged to consider the recommendations contained in that report, including the call to promote the participation of youth and children capable of forming their own views in all arms control and disarmament process forums, including global disarmament meetings.**

5. Women and peace and security

27. Recent research has highlighted a strong connection between gender and small arms.²⁴ Gender plays a crucial role in determining the likelihood, extent and nature of how individuals are affected by various forms of armed violence. The vast majority of weapon-related incidents are perpetrated by men, who also represent the majority of victims.²⁵ Conversely, women possess a relatively minor share of firearms worldwide but are overrepresented among victims of sexual and gender-based violence, frequently facilitated by small arms and light weapons.²⁶ In conflict settings, the availability of small arms and light weapons and their ammunition fuels systematic and widespread sexual violence. Recent research has noted that, in countries with available data, approximately 70 to 90 per cent of incidents of conflict-related sexual violence involve small arms and light weapons.²⁷ The latest report of the Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence (S/2023/413) underscores the role played by the proliferation and illicit circulation of small arms in facilitating and perpetrating conflict-related sexual violence, including in specific country contexts such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti, Libya and Mali.

28. The framework for the prevention of conflict-related sexual violence launched in 2022 identified arms control and disarmament as a key approach for the prevention of conflict-related sexual violence. Implementation of arms control treaties and instruments can help to prevent conflict-related sexual violence by preventing the diversion and trafficking of small arms and light weapons in conflict and post-conflict zones where conflict-related sexual violence is widespread and systematic.²⁸ **Member States are encouraged to implement the Programme of Action on Small Arms, the Arms Trade Treaty and other relevant instruments to minimize the**

²⁴ United Nations, Office for Disarmament Affairs, *Training Manual on Gender-Mainstreaming Small Arms Control* (2022). Available at <https://disarmament.unoda.org/gender-salw-project/>.

²⁵ Globally, an estimated 83 per cent of firearm victims are men, although this proportion can be higher in certain regions. Small Arms Survey, “Global violent deaths in 2020”, infographic, July 2022. Available at <https://smallarmssurvey.org/sites/default/files/resources/SAS-GVD-July-2022-update.pdf>.

²⁶ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Global Study on Firearms Trafficking 2020* (Vienna, 2020). Available at <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/firearms-protocol/firearms-study.html>.

²⁷ Hana Salama, “Addressing weapons in conflict-related sexual violence: the arms control and disarmament toolbox”, UNIDIR, 2023. Available at https://unidir.org/sites/default/files/2023-06/UNIDIR_Addressing_Weapons_in_Conflict_related_Sexual_Violence.pdf.

²⁸ Hana Salama, “5 ways that arms control and disarmament can help to prevent sexual violence in conflict”, 5 March 2023. Available at <https://unpeacekeeping.medium.com/5-ways-that-arms-control-and-disarmament-can-help-to-prevent-sexual-violence-in-conflict-ab6474b3f9c>.

risk that the transfer of arms or the illicit trafficking of weapons will enable conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence. It is further recommended that the Security Council include sexual violence as a stand-alone designation criterion for all targeted sanctions regimes.

29. Gender- and age-disaggregated data on the impact of small arms and light weapons on different groups allows understanding the needs and vulnerabilities of these groups and consequently informs prevention and protection strategies. **Accordingly, the Security Council is encouraged to mandate United Nations entities to systematically collect data on the impact of weapons and ammunition, disaggregated by gender and age, including when recording casualties and monitoring incidents of conflict-related sexual violence.**

30. Small arms and light weapons control efforts play a crucial role in advancing the women and peace and security agenda. However, less than half of all national action plans on women and peace and security include specific actions on disarmament, non-proliferation or arms control.²⁹ **Member States are encouraged to ensure greater harmonization between national strategies for implementing the women and peace and security agenda and regulating small arms and light weapons. In addition, the Security Council could explore ways to strengthen linkages between the women and peace and security agenda, and disarmament, including through the convening of specific meetings on this topic.**

31. The Security Council has called for the full and meaningful participation of women in arms control and in all levels of decision-making in its resolution [2122 \(2013\)](#) and encouraged their empowerment to participate in the design and implementation of such efforts in its resolution [2242 \(2015\)](#). This notwithstanding, women remain significantly underrepresented in the field of small arms and light weapons control, representing only one third of officials accredited to arms control and disarmament conferences.³⁰ In technical roles, women face significant political, policy, legal and institutional barriers.³¹ More needs to be done to foster women's participation in arms control at the international, regional and national levels. A positive development in this regard is the establishment of the Women Managing Ammunition Network under the SaferGuard programme. At the national level, institutions are taking steps to improve women's participation in conventional arms control.³² **To identify good practices, the Security Council could request the Secretary-General to prepare a report on gender equality in national, regional and international institutions and organizations working on conventional arms control and disarmament to track the implementation of resolutions [2122 \(2013\)](#) and [2242 \(2015\)](#).**

32. The outcome document of the Eighth Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, held in June 2022, stressed the highly gendered nature of small arms and light weapons and the need for the full, equal, meaningful and effective participation of women. The latest reporting on the implementation of the Programme of Action shows that 62 per cent of States that responded to gender-related questions indicate that gender considerations have

²⁹ See [S/2022/740](#) and Women and Peace and Security Focal Points Network, "Global map of adopted national action plans", available at <https://wpsfocalpointsnetwork.org/resources/>.

³⁰ Renata Hessmann Dalaqua, Kjølsv Egeland and Torbjørn Graff Hugo, "Still behind the curve: gender balance in arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament diplomacy", UNIDIR, 2019.

³¹ Hana Salama and Emma Bjertén-Günther, *Women Managing Weapons: Perspectives for Increasing Women's Meaningful Participation in Weapons and Ammunition Management* (Geneva, UNIDIR, 2021). Available at <https://unidir.org/publication/women-managing-weapons>.

³² Renata Hessmann Dalaqua, Manaved Nambiar and Hana Salama, "Best practices for gender equality in conventional arms control: survey results", UNIDIR, 2023.

been included in policymaking, planning and implementation processes.³³ **In line with the outcome document, Member States are encouraged to strengthen coordination between national focal points on the implementation of the Programme of Action and national focal points on the women and peace and security agenda and those working on the prevention of and response to conflict-related sexual violence, and promote the sharing of good practices and experiences between them at the national, regional and global levels** (see [A/CONF.192/BMS/2022/1](#), annex).

6. Countering terrorism and violent extremism

33. In its resolutions [1373 \(2001\)](#), [2370 \(2017\)](#), [2462 \(2019\)](#), [2482 \(2019\)](#) and [2617 \(2021\)](#), the Security Council consistently emphasized the need to address the illicit trafficking in and supply of small arms and light weapons to terrorists. The Council also recognized that terrorist organizations could exploit transnational organized crime, including the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, as a means of financing their activities.

34. According to available data, small arms and light weapons were the second most prevalent weapons used in terrorist attacks in 2022, following explosive devices. The methods and tactics varied by region. In the Sahel region alone, firearms were used in 70 per cent of attacks, while the rest of sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East and North Africa, and North America also saw significant firearm use in this context. In the Middle East and North Africa region, there has been a notable increase in the use of firearms in terrorist attacks, rising from 31 per cent in 2012 to 42 per cent in 2022.³⁴

35. The increased use of improvised explosive devices in terrorist attacks, and of uncrewed aerial vehicles by terrorists, is another alarming development (see [S/2023/549](#)). In its resolution [2610 \(2021\)](#), the Security Council strongly condemned the continued flow of weapons, including small arms and light weapons, uncrewed aerial vehicles and improvised explosive device components to and between terrorist groups, illegal armed groups and criminals. In its resolution [2617 \(2021\)](#), the Council also noted with concern the increasing global misuse of uncrewed aerial vehicles by terrorists and acknowledged the need to balance fostering innovation with preventing misuse of uncrewed aerial vehicles.

36. Terrorism and transnational organized crime can cross-fertilize each other, while small arms and light weapons can serve as an enabling and aggravating factor for both. In its resolution [75/291](#) on the seventh review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, the General Assembly expressed concern that terrorists may benefit from transnational organized crime in some regions, including from the illicit trafficking of arms. **Addressing the terrorism-arms-crime nexus and disrupting the supply of weapons to terrorists require multifaceted and comprehensive approaches, including strong border security and management strategies, enhanced stockpile management, collection and analysis of data on illicit trafficking cases and tracing results, detection and disruption of criminal networks, and tackling the challenges posed by new weapon technologies. To better understand and address linkages of small arms and light weapons with terrorism and transnational organized crime, States are encouraged to also conduct financial investigations that incorporate tracing of the financial flows related to small arms and light weapons, including in cases of seizure from terrorist and organized criminal groups.**

³³ United Nations, Office for Disarmament Affairs, “Global implementation status of the Programme of Action”. Available at <https://smallarms.un-arm.org/statistics>.

³⁴ See [S/2022/740](#) and Institute for Economic and Peace, *Global Terrorism Index 2023: Measuring the Impact of Terrorism* (Sydney, 2023).

37. In its resolution [77/298](#) on the eighth review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, the General Assembly reaffirmed that Member States shall eliminate the supply of weapons and their ammunition to terrorists, as well as prevent, combat and eradicate their illicit trade to terrorists. It also called upon all Member States to find ways of intensifying and accelerating the exchange of information regarding trafficking in arms, and to enhance coordination of efforts on national, subregional, regional and international levels. **To address the illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons to terrorists, States are encouraged to ensure systematic tracing of weapons and ammunition, reporting and recording of lost and stolen small arms and light weapons, and making full use of the INTERPOL Illicit Arms Records and Tracing Management System (iARMS) and Ballistic Information Network. States should also consider sharing information on trafficking cases in the Customs Enforcement Network of the World Customs Organization.**

38. To support Member States in tackling the threats posed by the acquisition by terrorists of small arms and light weapons and other conventional weapons, the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, the Counter-Terrorism Centre and the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research jointly launched the *Technical Guidelines to Facilitate the Implementation of Security Council Resolution [2370 \(2017\)](#) and Related International Standards and Good Practices on Preventing Terrorists from Acquiring Weapons*. The use of the *Guidelines* has been promoted through a series of regional workshops for and dialogue among States and their national authorities in Europe, the Sahel and the Maghreb, and the Caribbean in 2022 and 2023.

39. In Central Asia, the United Nations, through a joint collaboration between the Counter-Terrorism Centre, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate and the Office for Disarmament Affairs, continued to provide technical assistance and support to Member States in the implementation of resolution [2370 \(2017\)](#) and of the Madrid Guiding Principles, enhancing their capacity to prevent and combat the illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons and their illicit supply to terrorists, through training, legal assessments and regional conferences.

7. Transnational organized crime

40. The international community has continued to acknowledge the destabilizing impact of illicit small arms and light weapons as a matter of particular concern in the context of organized crime. Trafficking of small arms and light weapons is often a common element in the commission of other serious crimes. For instance, in Latin America and the Caribbean, trafficking of small arms and light weapons and their criminal use are closely intertwined with various forms of transnational organized crime and other illicit activities, in particular drug trafficking, gang criminality and illegal mining.

41. Illicit small arms and light weapons and ammunition link conflict and crime. Illicit arms can both enable and fuel an armed conflict, while different conflict phases provide opportunities for the diversion of arms and a potentially lucrative income source for organized arms trafficking networks. Non-State armed groups and organized criminal groups use illicit arms to engage in conflict and perpetrate crime, respectively, and are involved in the trafficking of small arms and light weapons. When hostilities cease, the widespread availability of arms and ammunition can

contribute to a situation of “criminalized peace” that obstructs sustainable peacebuilding efforts and the rule of law.³⁵

42. To effectively address the interlinkages between illicit small arms and light weapons and transnational organized crime, a comprehensive approach is needed. **States are encouraged to adopt integrated criminal justice responses that support investigations and prosecutions of the firearms trafficking offences, while aiming to disclose and dismantle organized crime groups and networks and recover their illegal assets. At the same time, States are encouraged to reinforce national small arms control frameworks to increase accountability, transparency and traceability of small arms and light weapons and ammunition and prevent and counter their diversion and trafficking through comprehensive marking, tracing and record-keeping, robust border controls and strong national legislation.**

B. Weapons and ammunition management

43. The Security Council has continued to integrate weapons and ammunition management into the work of peace operations, including as part of mandates of peacekeeping operations and special political missions. In response to its new mandate, in resolution [2626 \(2022\)](#), to support efforts to address the illicit trade in and destabilizing accumulation of small arms and light weapons in Afghanistan and the region, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan engaged with the de facto authorities on the appropriate mitigation measures needed to counter the risk of diversion of small arms and light weapons and unplanned explosions of ammunition storage facilities (see [A/77/772-S/2023/151](#)).

44. The Security Council has encouraged its peace operations and relevant United Nations entities to assist States in reinforcing capacities to counter the illicit trade in arms and ammunition (see resolution [2616 \(2021\)](#)). Practical support in the area of weapons and ammunition management was provided by the United Nations in various mission settings, such as in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti, Libya, Mali, Somalia, South Sudan, the Sudan and Yemen. For example, in 2022, the Mine Action Service extended its support to the assessment, rehabilitation and construction of 325 weapons storage areas and 247 ammunition storage areas in seven countries.³⁶ In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, support towards implementing the small arms and light weapons national action plan was provided. Similarly, in the Central African Republic, the United Nations provided advice and technical assistance in reviewing the current national strategy for weapons and ammunition management and developing a new one.

45. Efforts to strengthen weapons and ammunition management by troop- and police-contributing countries in peace operations contexts continued, notably through a strategic study on ammunition management in field missions. In line with the study’s findings, the United Nations developed and piloted a dedicated training course, including a train-the-trainers component, to improve the capacities of United Nations personnel and troop- and police-contributing countries to effectively apply the International Ammunition Technical Guidelines and the Modular Small-arms-control Implementation Compendium and to implement relevant United Nations policies, including the 2019 policy on weapons and ammunition management and the 2020 United Nations Manual on Ammunition Management.

³⁵ Lauren Pinson, “Addressing the linkages between illicit arms, organized crime and armed conflict”, 2022. Available at <https://www.unidir.org/publication/addressing-linkages-between-illicit-arms-organized-crime-and-armed-conflict>.

³⁶ Data provided by the Mine Action Service.

46. The Mine Action Service provided assistance on weapons and ammunition management to troop- and police-contributing countries. In Abyei, technical advice was provided to contingents in the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei. In 2022, 73,500 small arms ammunition, 30 weapons and 480 hand grenades that were in the possession of peacekeepers departing from the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur were destroyed.³⁷ Technical assistance was offered to the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon on the safe disposal of 2 million rounds of unserviceable small arms ammunition, and weapons and ammunition management training was delivered to personnel of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. **A concerted and coordinated effort is encouraged by troop- and police-contributing countries and field missions to further advance implementation of relevant policies to ensure the safety, accountability and security of weapons and ammunition and to minimize risks of their diversion and unplanned explosion, including through adequate storage, regular inspections, and proper budgeting and planning for destruction of unserviceable ammunition.**

47. The United Nations continued to promote effective weapons and ammunition management in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes. In support of these efforts, a standard operating procedure was released in 2022 to provide guidance on developing mission-specific activities on the collection, handling, storage, transportation and disposal of weapons and ammunition in the context of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration.³⁸ Assistance on weapons and ammunition management in the context of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration was provided in several mission and non-mission settings. In Haiti, the United Nations has supported national authorities in drafting a law on arms and ammunition, conducting a weapons and ammunition management baseline assessment and developing a national action plan. In the Great Lakes region, the United Nations has provided advice in the area of weapons and ammunition management to the Contact and Coordination Group, a mechanism established by Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and the United Republic of Tanzania to offer an opportunity to foreign armed groups operating in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo to return safely to their country of origin. In collaboration with the Lake Chad Basin Commission, the United Nations released a study on weapons and ammunition dynamics in the Lake Chad basin presenting recommendations on arms control initiatives in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes and community violence reduction programmes.³⁹ **The Security Council is encouraged to promote the integration of weapons and ammunition management considerations in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes and in community violence reduction programmes, including through dedicated mandates of peace operations.**

48. From 2015 to 2023, 15 States used the approach outlined in the *Reference Methodology for National Weapons and Ammunition Management Baseline Assessments*⁴⁰ to assess their relevant institutions, policy and operational capacities,

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ See <https://peacekeepingresourcehub.un.org/en/policy>.

³⁹ United Nations, Department of Peace Operations and Office for Disarmament Affairs, and Lake Chad Basin Commission, "Weapons and ammunition dynamics in the Lake Chad basin", October 2022.

⁴⁰ Hardy Giezendanner and Himayu Shiotani, *A Reference Methodology for National Weapons and Ammunition Management Baseline Assessments* (Geneva, UNIDIR, 2021). Available at <https://unidir.org/publication/reference-methodology-national-weapons-and-ammunition-management-baseline-assessments>. The *Reference Methodology* is informed by past experience with baseline assessments, lessons learned from its use and application, as well as research and dialogue carried out with the community of practice on weapons and ammunition management.

in line with international obligations and commitments as well as international standards and guidelines. These baseline assessments contribute to developing road maps towards comprehensive national frameworks and serve as a basis for international cooperation and assistance requests. In 2022, an update on progress made by nine African States in strengthening their weapons and ammunition management policy and practice was published. A strong national coordination mechanism, national ownership and the political will of high-level national stakeholders, targeted international cooperation and assistance, and inclusive and consultative approaches were identified as key enabling factors for progress.⁴¹

49. The Security Council is encouraged to ensure that peace operations are consistently and appropriately mandated to assist host States in the effective, safe and secure management of weapons and ammunition. The Council could also consider mandating peace operations to assist States, in cooperation with United Nations entities and regional and subregional organizations, in national efforts to establish, review and regularly update comprehensive weapons and ammunition baselines, to identify priority areas, including international cooperation and assistance needs, in order to strengthen national weapons and ammunition management frameworks. The Council could request briefings on good practices and lessons learned from peace operations mandated to assist host countries with weapons and ammunition management.

C. Arms embargoes

1. Benchmarks on weapons and ammunition management

50. To help certain States to strengthen their national security institutions, the Security Council continued its practice of easing and partially lifting arms embargoes, including in the Central African Republic (see resolutions [2693 \(2023\)](#) and [2648 \(2022\)](#)), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (see resolution [2641 \(2022\)](#)), Somalia (see resolution [2662 \(2022\)](#)) and South Sudan (see resolution [2683 \(2023\)](#)). The consideration of a State's national capacity to exert effective control over national arms and ammunition stockpiles in the Council's evaluation of a possible lifting or easing of arms embargoes is welcome.

51. To support reviews of arms embargoes, benchmarks related to weapons and ammunition management continued to be introduced and progress assessed under various sanctions regimes. Benchmarks on weapons and ammunition management were identified under the arms embargo regime on Somalia, in line with a technical assessment of the country's weapons and ammunition management capability (see [S/2022/698](#)). Assessments of progress achieved on benchmarks were conducted in the context of the Central African Republic (see [S/2023/356](#)), Somalia (see [S/2023/676](#)) and South Sudan (see [S/2023/300](#)). The latest sanctions regime on Haiti also introduced weapons and ammunition-related benchmarks to measure the trend of illicit trafficking and diversion of arms (see resolution [2653 \(2022\)](#)). In the context of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Security Council requested the Government to report on its efforts to ensure safe and effective weapons and ammunition management (see resolution [2667 \(2022\)](#)).

⁴¹ Anna Edna Esi Mensah, Hardy Giezendanner and Paul Holtom, "Weapons and ammunition management in Africa insight: 2022 update", WAM Insight Series (UNIDIR, 2022). Available at <https://undir.org/publication/weapons-and-ammunition-management-africa-insight-2022-update>.

2. Information on general trends of illicit trafficking and diversion in contravention of Security Council-mandated arms embargoes

52. Illicit arms trafficking and diversion in violation of Security Council-mandated arms embargoes continued to be documented, pointing to the ongoing need to improve national and regional implementation and enforcement of arms embargoes. The Council, through its resolution [2616 \(2021\)](#), addressed the illicit transfer, destabilizing accumulation and diversion of small arms and light weapons and related material in violation of Council-mandated arms embargoes. Pursuant to that resolution, the subsections below contain information on general trends of illicit trafficking and diversion in contravention of Council-mandated arms embargoes, based largely on recent reports of panels and groups of experts and the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team, and provides further recommendations on this matter.

53. The continued trend of terrorist groups benefiting from easy access to large quantities of weapons remains a cause for concern (see [S/2023/549](#)). Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL, also known as Da'esh), in particular, has persistently maintained access to substantial quantities of small arms and light weapons across Afghanistan, the Middle East and Africa. Of equal concern is the continued illicit arms trade between terrorist organizations, including ISIL (Da'esh), and transnational criminal networks (see [S/2023/76](#)). The involvement of ISIL-Somalia and Al-Shabaab in the illicit trafficking of firearms from Yemen to Somalia illustrates the increasing risk of secondary proliferation (see [S/2023/95](#)).

54. Serious concerns also remain over the risks of proliferation of weapons and ammunition in Afghanistan and from Afghanistan into neighbouring States, undermining the arms embargo (see [S/2023/549](#), [S/2023/370](#) and [A/77/636-S/2022/916](#)).

55. In Yemen, a significant increase in the illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons destined for the Houthi forces has been documented. The majority of these weapons were smuggled on traditional sailing vessels and smaller boats in the Arabian Sea. There has been a steady increase of seizures by international maritime forces of small arms and light weapons intended for Yemen with quantities in several tens of thousands of weapons, predominantly assault rifles and machine guns, and several million cartridges (see [S/2023/130](#)).

56. In Somalia, the first quarter of 2023 saw the highest number of improvised explosive device incidents compared with any other quarter since 2017 (see [S/2023/443](#)). Analysis of captured improvised explosive devices, weapons and ammunition from Al-Shabaab indicated that the group continued to have access to an uninterrupted illicit supply, with some of the captured ammunition manufactured as recently as 2020. Smuggling from the sea through Puntland continued to be the only trafficking route identified by the Panel (see [S/2022/754](#)).

57. In the Darfur region of the Sudan, the proliferation of weapons and ammunition intensified, posing a serious threat to security. Increased access to and possession of arms by the civilian population hindered the Government's efforts to maintain security. The Panel of Experts also reported that some government forces supplied weapons to local communities, further destabilizing the situation (see [S/2023/93](#)).

58. In Libya, the Panel of Experts continued to document violations against the arms embargo, with Member States directly supporting parties to the conflict. Although the number of violations identified was much lower in 2021 and 2022 than during previous years, the Panel reported that weapons and ammunition stockpiles remained high (see [S/2022/427](#)).

59. In Mali, arms trafficking remained a source of financing for armed groups. While the influx of new weapons from Libya towards Mali has been documented, the Panel of Experts reported that the majority of illicit arms circulating within Mali consisted of old weapons which were traded through various hubs in the country. In addition, armed groups acquired weapons through diversion from State security forces, along with battlefield captures (see [S/2023/138](#)).

60. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Group of Experts continued to report evidence attesting to violations of the arms embargo, including provision of weapons and ammunition to Congolese and foreign armed groups (see [S/2023/431](#) and [S/2022/967](#)).

61. In the Central African Republic, armed groups continued to receive weapons and ammunition mainly from networks in some neighbouring countries. According to the Panel of Experts, the financial capacity of armed groups to procure newer weapons seemed limited. The country experienced an increase in the use of explosive devices, and in 2023, for the first time, the Panel observed the possession and use of uncrewed aerial vehicles by armed groups. In addition, the Panel documented violations of the arms embargo and non-compliance with the notification regime regarding deliveries of weapons and ammunition to the national armed forces (see [S/2023/87](#)).

62. In Haiti, recent research by the United Nations has found a concerning rise in the trafficking of sophisticated and high-calibre firearms and ammunition into the country. Weapons and ammunition have entered Haiti through both land and sea routes, ultimately reaching gang members and civilians with the assistance of intermediaries. These transfers often take place through various points of entry, including public and private ports, as well as porous checkpoints along the borders.⁴²

3. Recommendations

63. The request by the Security Council in its resolution [2616 \(2021\)](#) that Member States fully cooperate with panels of experts is welcome. Across many arms embargo regimes, panels of experts continued to face challenges in identifying the origin and supply chain of seized weapons and ammunition, due to inconclusive tracing requests, reports of replicas and imitation markings, and insufficient record-keeping of weapons and ammunition by manufacturing States. **As stipulated in resolution [2616 \(2021\)](#), Member States are encouraged to ensure that adequate marking and record-keeping measures are in place to trace arms and ammunition, including small arms and light weapons, as required by international and regional instruments, in particular the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons. Given the need to improve the effectiveness of tracing requests, States are encouraged to respond in a timely manner to tracing requests from panels of experts and to share relevant information on weapons, ammunition or related components manufactured in their territories.**

64. Good practices in diversion prevention, including in the context of arms embargoes, involve adding a unique marking to weapons and ammunition in the possession of the State, including the police and armed forces. Such measures can act as a deterrent factor preventing loss from national custody, especially in contexts of weak national control management, and support tracing of seized and recovered weapons and ammunition. **It is therefore encouraged that States, when procuring conventional weapons and ammunition under national ownership, request appropriate markings.**

⁴² United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, “Haiti’s criminal markets: mapping trends in firearms and drug trafficking”, 2023.

65. As the Security Council has stressed in its resolution [2616 \(2021\)](#), to ensure effective monitoring, investigations and documentation, panels of experts should be provided with information about seized military equipment transferred in contravention of the respective arms embargoes. Whenever and wherever possible, panels should also be allowed to conduct inspections and to access seizures, or to be provided with samples of seized material.

66. In various arms embargo contexts, the need for capacity-building and training for national customs and border control authorities, as well as their adequate equipment for weapons and ammunition detection, seizures, inspections and investigations, has been identified. **Member States and relevant international, regional and non-governmental organizations are encouraged to provide such assistance to States, upon request, in implementing Security Council-mandated arms embargoes.**

67. In its resolution [2616 \(2021\)](#), the Security Council noted the need to improve information-sharing on possible arms embargo violations between arms embargo monitoring groups and panels of experts and peace operations within their mandates. The United Nations peacekeeping missions in Côte d'Ivoire and the Democratic Republic of the Congo offer valuable examples of mechanisms for information-sharing on illicit arms and ammunition with panels of experts.⁴³ At the same time, peace operations operating in Member States affected by Da'esh and Al-Qaida could share information with the Monitoring Team more systematically. **In line with resolution [2616 \(2021\)](#), the Security Council is encouraged, when adopting and renewing mandates of peace operations, to consider how those operations could support national authorities in monitoring compliance with arms embargoes, identifying sources of illicit arms and tracing seized, found and surrendered arms, to support relevant sanctions committee panels of experts and to support national authorities in combating the illicit transfer and diversion of weapons in violation of arms embargoes.**

D. Challenges and opportunities of new technologies

68. The impact of new and evolving technologies on the illicit trafficking and production of small arms and light weapons and their parts, components and ammunition remains an ongoing concern. In particular, challenges relating to the use of non-traditional materials in small arms and light weapons manufacture and design have been identified as a concern since 2011. Specifically, the use of polymer plastics in weapons manufacturing has given rise to concerns on guaranteeing the durability of markings on this material. Furthermore, modular weapons which allow for the reconfiguration of multiple components pose challenges in ensuring the inclusion of a distinct marking on the essential or structural component to ensure its traceability.

69. Illicit small arms production has encompassed diverse methods, including additive manufacturing through 3D printing, the utilization of computer numerical control machines, reverse engineering processes, and the manufacturing of firearm parts and components using prefabricated kits composed of mouldable resin and metal flats. The ready availability of these technologies facilitates the home-based production of nearly all firearm parts and components, presenting a significant challenge for national security agencies to identifying, detecting, registering and

⁴³ Nils Holger Anders, "Peacekeeping in hostile environments: the impact of illicit arms on MINUSMA", 2023. Available at <https://undir.org/publication/peacekeeping-hostile-environments-impact-illicit-arms-minusma>.

tracing small arms with adverse effects on the efficacy of criminal investigation processes.

70. The dark web provides a platform for non-State armed groups, criminals, terrorists and other unauthorized individuals to acquire weapons and ammunition. In response, efforts are needed to enhance the capacity of Governments and judiciaries to counter, investigate, prosecute and adjudicate cybercrime associated with the illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons. The elaboration of a new convention on countering the use of information and communications technologies for criminal purposes presents an opportunity to address the online trade in small arms and light weapons (see [A/AC.291/7](#)).

71. In the framework of the Programme of Action on Small Arms, discussions have focused on the potential impact of new technologies especially as they pertain to recent developments in small arms and light weapons manufacturing, technology and design, and related challenges and implications on marking, record-keeping and tracing. At the Eighth Biennial Meeting of States, States agreed to continue to exchange views on ways of addressing these recent developments and their impact on the implementation of the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument and to further discuss the establishment of an open-ended technical expert group that could develop action-oriented recommendations on that matter at the fourth Review Conference, in 2024 (see [A/CONF.192/BMS/2022/1](#)).

72. Discussions within the framework of transnational organized crime also continued to focus on the implications of recent technological developments related to firearms. In 2022, the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, in its resolution 11/6 on strengthening international cooperation to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms, their parts and components and ammunition (see [CTOC/COP/2022/9](#), sect. I.A), urged States to strengthen early-detection capacities through the use of new technological tools and specialized training to law enforcement, customs and judicial authorities, as well as private sector actors, in order to better prevent trafficking in postal and courier services. Furthermore, at the tenth meeting of the Working Group on Firearms, the implementation of the definitions of the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, in the light of technological developments was discussed (see [CTOC/COP/WG.6/2023/5](#)).

73. Evolving technologies also present opportunities for strengthening small arms and light weapons control, including for diversion prevention, supply chain monitoring, intelligent stockpile management systems, arms and ammunition marking, identification and tracing in conflict and crime contexts, and peacekeeping-intelligence investigations.⁴⁴ For instance, new technologies may offer cost-effective solutions for individual marking during and after the manufacture of ammunition. In addition to commonly used techniques, such as printing, stamping, laser marking, this may include the application of microtags or the integration or application of identifying combinations of rare earth elements (chemical tagging).⁴⁵ **The opportunities and benefits of new technologies for strengthening small arms and light weapons control, including in the work of United Nations peace operations and to enhance the implementation of arms embargoes, would merit further examination by the Security Council.**

⁴⁴ Tech4Tracing, “Bringing new tech to arms control”, policy brief, August 2022.

⁴⁵ Sarah Grand-Clément and Robert Kondor, “Exploring the technical Feasibility of marking small-calibre ammunition”, UNIDIR, 2022. Available at <https://unidir.org/publication/exploring-technical-feasibility-marking-small-ammunition>.

III. Global, regional and subregional efforts to address illicit small arms and light weapons, including their ammunition

A. Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects

74. At the Eighth Biennial Meeting of States, the status of implementation of the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument was considered, with a specific focus on means of enhancing modalities and procedures for international cooperation and assistance. States decided to establish a standing dedicated fellowship training programme on small arms and light weapons to strengthen technical knowledge and expertise in areas related to the implementation of both instruments. Other means to enhance international cooperation and assistance were explored, including conducting baseline assessments, developing procedures to match needs with expertise and resources, and promoting sustainable capacity-building through the development of national frameworks, dedicated structures, procedures and capabilities. Multi-year funding and multi-stakeholder cooperation were also identified as key components for the sustainability of international cooperation and assistance. Recognizing the importance of national action plans and regional frameworks, States emphasized the need to align international cooperation and assistance with the identified needs and priorities at both the national and regional levels. Moreover, States highlighted the need to further advance measurability in implementation through voluntary target setting at both the national and regional levels. The Eighth Biennial Meeting concluded with the adoption, by consensus, of a substantive outcome document ([A/CONF.192/BMS/2022/1](#), annex).

B. Open-ended working group on conventional ammunition

75. In June 2023, the open-ended working group on conventional ammunition, established pursuant to General Assembly resolution [76/233](#), adopted, without a vote, its final report ([A/78/111](#)). In its final report, the working group recommended to the General Assembly the adoption at its seventy-eighth session of the Global Framework for Through-life Conventional Ammunition Management. Member States expressed grave concern over the diversion and unplanned explosion of conventional ammunition at ammunition sites, recognizing the significant threat that such incidents pose to peace, security, stability and sustainable development at the national, subregional, regional and global levels. In response, the Global Framework addresses the safety and security risks associated with conventional ammunition in a comprehensive manner from the point of manufacture, through pre-transfer, transfer, relocation and transport, stockpiling and recovery, to their eventual use or disposal. The Global Framework contains 15 objectives with a range of measures to promote the safety, security and sustainability of through-life conventional ammunition management. Its objectives include strengthening gender mainstreaming and the full, equal, meaningful and effective participation of women and encouraging multi-stakeholder cooperation, including with civil society. The important role of international cooperation and assistance is recognized in the Global Framework, and a dedicated follow-up and review process for the effective implementation of the Framework is set out therein.

C. Arms Trade Treaty

76. States parties to the Arms Trade Treaty demonstrated ongoing commitment to addressing the diversion of small arms and light weapons, recognizing the crucial

importance of effectively implementing the Treaty's provisions to mitigate associated risks. The Eighth Conference of States Parties, held in August 2022, focused on post-shipment controls as its priority theme. Post-shipment controls enable a State to perform checks on military equipment after it has been exported and delivered to the end user to ensure that exported military equipment remains in the possession of the authorized end user. States parties recognized robust post-shipment controls as effective tools to prevent the diversion of small arms and light weapons. Furthermore, the regulation of small arms and light weapons exports, coupled with efforts to reduce their vulnerability to diversion, is widely understood by most States parties as a means to combat gender-based violence. On the margins of the Eighth Conference of States Parties, the Diversion Information Exchange Forum met for the first time. The Forum serves as a platform for States parties and signatory States to voluntarily exchange information on substantive cases of detected or suspected diversion and share operational diversion-related information. The establishment of this platform reflects a significant step forward in fostering information exchange to combat the diversion of arms.

D. Firearms Protocol

77. The Firearms Protocol and its parent Convention provide control measures on firearms, their parts and components and ammunition to safeguard the legal firearms market, while also supporting criminal justice responses to their illicit manufacturing and trafficking. The recently published module 03.50 of the Modular Small-arms-control Implementation Compendium provides guidance to Member States on criminal justice responses to the illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons, in particular on criminal offences, investigative measures and international cooperation in criminal matters. In its resolution 11/6, the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime emphasized the need to enhance cooperation and coordination among the relevant United Nations bodies to assist States in preventing and combating the engagement of organized criminal groups in supplying firearms, their parts and components and ammunition to terrorists and foreign terrorist fighters. The Conference also encouraged Member States to address armed violence against women, girls and boys and hate crimes related to the illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms, their parts and components and ammunition.

E. United Nations Register of Conventional Arms

78. In 2022, the Group of Governmental Experts on the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms recommended a description of small arms and light weapons for reporting under the "seven-plus-one formula", using language from the International Tracing Instrument (see [A/77/126](#)). This represents an important step towards solidifying the inclusion of small arms and light weapons into the scope of the Register. **States are encouraged to apply the "seven-plus-one formula" and to report imports and exports of equipment that fall within the Register's seven categories of major conventional arms,⁴⁶ as well as transfers of small arms and light weapons.** During the 2022 reporting cycle, 80 per cent (56 out of 70) of Member

⁴⁶ The seven categories of major conventional arms are: battle tanks, armoured combat vehicles, large-calibre artillery systems, combat aircraft and fixed-wing or variable-geometry wing unmanned combat aerial vehicles, attack helicopters and rotary-wing unmanned combat aerial vehicles, warships, and missiles and missile launchers.

States that submitted a report to the Register provided information on transfers of small arms and light weapons (see [A/78/165](#)).

F. Silencing the Guns in Africa

79. The United Nations has continued its support for the African Union's Silencing the Guns by 2030 flagship initiative and implementation of its Master Road Map of Practical Steps for Silencing the Guns in Africa. The Office for Disarmament Affairs, together with the African Union Commission and with the support of the Regional Centre on Small Arms in the Great Lakes Region, the Horn of Africa and Bordering States, continued to deliver practical support to States for the implementation of Africa Amnesty Month. In this context, awareness-raising and outreach activities on the negative effects of illicit ownership of small arms and light weapons, and capacity-building workshops in stockpile management and the collection and public destruction of weapons voluntarily surrendered by civilians, were organized in Liberia, Madagascar, the Niger, Togo, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania. In 2022, a total of 12,335 small arms were securely collected, stored and destroyed under this programme.

G. Regional road maps for small arms and light weapons control

80. In the Western Balkans, authorities continued to make significant progress in implementing the commitments outlined in the Road Map for a Sustainable Solution to the Illegal Possession, Misuse and Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons and Their Ammunition in the Western Balkans by 2024 with the support of the South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons. Demonstrable progress was recorded, such as improved information-sharing; enhanced investigations of firearms-related crimes and operational cooperation through capacitated firearms focal points; improved security of weapons and ammunition storages; modernized record-keeping, marking and tracing mechanisms; strengthened cooperation with criminal justice structures and standardized approaches to raising awareness of the misuse and illicit possession of firearms. To support these endeavours, a dedicated multi-partner trust fund has accumulated over \$24 million since 2019, enabling effective coordination of efforts and resource allocation based on the identified needs and priorities set by the authorities. A midterm review of the Western Balkans Road Map affirmed its effectiveness as a regional initiative, relevant to both specific objectives related to small arms control and broader political priorities, including regional cooperation.

81. The operationalization of the Road Map for Implementing the Caribbean Priority Actions on the Illicit Proliferation of Firearms and Ammunition across the Caribbean in a Sustainable Manner by 2030, adopted in 2020, marks a significant step forward in addressing the specific regional challenges posed by the illicit proliferation of firearms and ammunition in the Caribbean.⁴⁷ Since 2021, participating States have commenced implementation of the Road Map by developing national action plans. A monitoring and evaluation framework has been developed, enabling States to report on their national implementation efforts against a set of key performance indicators. To facilitate coordination among partners and streamlined assistance, its co-custodians, the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean and the Caribbean Community Implementation Agency for Crime and Security, have established a coordination structure that includes regular partner meetings, a dedicated partner coordination

⁴⁷ See <https://unlirec.org/en/publicacion/caribbean-firearms-roadmap/>.

platform and the development of a comprehensive catalogue of assistance for States and potential donors.

82. During the fifty-second regular session of the General Assembly of the Organization of American States, in September 2022, the Organization's secretariat was mandated by member States to develop a proposal for a Central American road map for the prevention of illicit trafficking and proliferation of arms and ammunition. During its fifty-third regular session, in June 2023, the General Assembly of the Organization of American States expanded the mandate to include the implementation of the road map, once developed, led by the Organization in coordination with the Central American Integration System and the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as the creation of a follow-up mechanism to monitor progress and promote effective coordination among Governments, implementing partners and donors. The development of the road map is expected to be informed by the Central American Security Strategy and to leverage lessons learned from successful experiences in other regions and subregions.

83. Good practices and lessons learned from successful regional initiatives highlight the importance of strengthening the role of national small arms and light weapons commissions as key coordination and monitoring mechanisms. Regional road maps and action plans have been particularly effective when complemented by robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks incorporating performance indicators to measure progress in implementation. National and regional ownership is imperative to ensure the success and sustainability of these initiatives. The establishment of a dedicated trust fund for the Western Balkans and strong partner and donor coordination mechanisms in the Caribbean has proved to be impactful. To achieve meaningful and lasting outcomes, the format and content of regional road maps need to be tailored to the unique realities and priorities of each region.

IV. Concluding observations and recommendations

84. The Secretary-General's policy brief on A New Agenda for Peace, issued in July 2023, provides an opportunity for renewed action on small arms and light weapons control, addressing both the supply and demand of arms and ammunition. **In line with the recommendations of the policy brief, States are encouraged to develop and implement regional and subregional instruments, road maps and action plans to address region-specific challenges related to the diversion of small arms and light weapons and ammunition, as well as their proliferation and misuse, in accordance with international arms control treaties and political frameworks.**

85. Systematic integration of a small arms and light weapons control perspective into national strategies on conflict prevention, peacebuilding and development is key for coherent and sustainable responses. **States are encouraged to work with United Nations country teams to integrate small arms and light weapons considerations into the common country analysis and United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks.** This will promote effective and fully coordinated United Nations assistance on small arms and light weapons control, leading to more robust progress towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

86. The Security Council continues to examine the various linkages between weapons and ammunition dynamics and international peace and security. The increasing number of arms-related provisions in Council resolutions has underscored the key role of weapons and ammunition management in peace operations and other activities of the Council to address conflict-affected situations and the activities of armed groups. **The Secretary-General continues to advocate the full integration**

of the consideration of weapons and ammunition into the work of the Security Council, including in its country-specific, regional and thematic discussions. It is recommended that the Council consider systematically and comprehensively good practices related to weapons and ammunition management in relevant decisions, including by utilizing the *Aide-Memoire: Options for Reflecting Weapons and Ammunition Management in Decisions of the Security Council*.⁴⁸

87. Integrating risks associated with the illicit proliferation, circulation and misuse of arms and ammunition in conflict and risk analysis and assessments of peace operations is critical to identifying and addressing arms-related vulnerabilities and threats, including those that affect other mandated objectives of United Nations peace operations. The collection and analysis of arms-related information is also an important contribution to the monitoring of diversion and arms embargoes. **In line with resolution 2616 (2021), United Nations peace operations will continue to assist relevant national authorities in the monitoring of arms embargoes, identification of illicit sources of arms and tracing of seized, found and surrendered arms. It is recommended that the Security Council encourage peace operations to integrate conventional arms and ammunition-related risks in conflict analysis, prevention, management and resolution efforts.**

88. Arms embargoes continue to be an important tool for the Security Council to prevent the illicit transfer, destabilizing accumulation and misuse of weapons and ammunition, including small arms and light weapons. The effective implementation of Council resolution 2616 (2021) is paramount in this regard. **To strengthen compliance with arms embargoes, the Security Council is encouraged to continue to seek reports from Member States on the steps that they have taken to implement the arms embargoes and on their efforts to cooperate and share information with the panels of experts.**

89. The adoption of the Global Framework for Through-life Conventional Ammunition Management represents a milestone achievement, closing the gap of a dedicated regulatory instrument on conventional ammunition at the international level. **The Secretary-General will continue to advocate the universalization of relevant legally binding instruments, such as the Firearms Protocol and the Arms Trade Treaty, and the implementation of politically binding instruments, such as the Programme of Action on Small Arms and the International Tracing Instrument, as well as the new Global Framework.**

⁴⁸ United Nations, Office for Disarmament Affairs, *Aide-Memoire: Options for Reflecting Weapons and Ammunition Management in Decisions of the Security Council*, 2nd ed. (2020).