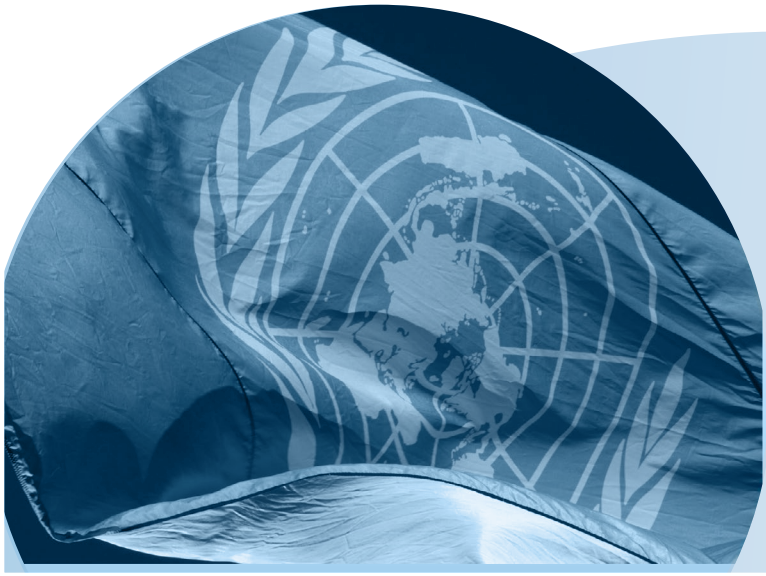
UNIDIR UNITED NATIONS INSTITUTE FOR DISARMAMENT RESEARCH

ADDRESSING CONVENTIONAL ARMS RISKS AND IMPACTS TO PREVENT CONFLICT AND BUILD PEACE: WHAT MORE SHOULD THE UNITED NATIONS DO?

REPORT OF THE FIRST COMMUNITY OF PRACTITIONERS WORKSHOP



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ABOUT UNIDIR

The United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) is a voluntarily funded, autonomous institute within the United Nations. One of the few policy institutes worldwide focusing on disarmament, UNIDIR generates knowledge and promotes dialogue and action on disarmament and security. Based in Geneva, UNIDIR assists the international community to develop the practical, innovative ideas needed to find solutions to critical security problems.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ACLED	Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project
AEC	Arms Embargo Cell
CoP	community of practice
CVR	community violence reduction
DDR	disarmament, demobilization and reintegration
DPO	Department of Peace Operations
DSRSG	Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General
FARC-EP	Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo
GoE	group of experts
IED	improvised explosive device
MINUSMA	United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali
MONUSCO	United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo
NGO	non-governmental organization
PoE	panel of experts
SALW	small arms and light weapons
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SPM	special political mission
SRSG	Special Representative of the Secretary-General
UNCT	United Nations country team
UNIDIR	United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research
UNMAS	United Nations Mine Action Service
UNMC	United Nations Mission in Colombia
UNOCC	United Nations Operations and Crisis Centre
UNOWAS	United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel
UNVMC	United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia
WAM	weapons and ammunition management

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The impact of armed conflict extends far beyond casualties in battle, often leading to forced migration; long-term refugee problems; the destruction of essential infrastructure and services; damage to social, political and economic institutions; and, more broadly, negative effects on development. Although the motives behind armed violence differ from context to context, the use of arms to perpetrate violence is a constant that is often poorly accounted for when seeking to prevent conflict.

To better understand the dynamics around armed violence and how conventional arms control can be leveraged by the United Nations to prevent it, between 5 May and 23 June 2020, the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research convened a series of online meetings in a community of practice (CoP) workshop. The goal of the CoP was to:

- Examine how conventional arms risks and impacts are understood and how tools to mitigate them are used by United Nations and partner practitioners
- Identify good practices or lessons learned on the application and integration of conventional arms control-related tools and activities in United Nations conflict analysis and prevention work
- Build links between conventional arms control and conflict prevention actors in the United Nations by establishing a forum for discussion between these two disciplines

Attendees of the CoP represented policymakers and practitioners working on a range of conflict prevention and management activities across the United Nations system, including arms control, organized crime, counter-terrorism, sanctions, mediation, ceasefire, conflict analysis, crisis prevention, peacebuilding and various components of peacekeeping in field missions and at headquarters. A select number of conventional arms control and conflict analysis experts from regional organizations and specialized non-governmental organizations also participated in the CoP to enhance knowledge among the participants of various ongoing efforts to address conventional arms risks and impacts in support of conflict prevention and management.

The workshop provided a unique opportunity for participants to share their perspectives on the challenges that collectively confront the United Nations in addressing the evolving risks associated with arms, both from a conceptual and an organizational perspective. Through interactive dialogue, the CoP enhanced the participants' knowledge of these risks and generated ideas for better integrating and using conventional arms control tools in support of United Nations conflict prevention activities. These ideas are summarized in the three ***key takeaways*** below. These are not intended to represent the opinions of the individual sponsoring organizations or a consensus view of workshop participants; they offer an insight into the ideas discussed and possible avenues for future research, dialogue and action. The discussions raised three recurring themes that may help in developing solutions to the most pressing issues around the integration of conventional arms control into United Nations conflict prevention activities and tools.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1

First, there is a need to reach a shared understanding among relevant United Nations entities on effective approaches to integrate conventional arms control into prevention efforts at a political level. The CoP revealed that the senior leadership of United Nations political missions, peace operations and country teams often perceive conventional arms control as either being too politically sensitive or too technical to address, with the result that it is often ignored. A starting point may be to facilitate dedicated dialogue on ways to better identify, understand and address arms-related risks and the potential benefits of these methods for conflict prevention and management among United Nations Special Envoys, representatives (e.g. Deputy Special and Special Representatives of the Secretary-General), Resident Coordinators, and Peace and Development Advisers.

2

Second, while various United Nations entities and their partners at headquarters and in the field actively assess risks and impacts associated with arms, armed groups or armed violence, they often do so in isolation from one another. This analysis rarely takes place in a manner that is both timely and encompassing of the interrelationships between these fields to allow for better informed conflict analysis by the United Nations. The CoP indicated that arms-related risks and impacts were least well understood by, and integrated into, existing United Nations conflict analysis tools at the national, regional and headquarters levels. This has resulted in gaps in knowledge among United Nations entities of the risks posed by evolving trends in arms proliferation and misuse; armed groups; types of armed violence; and their impact on security, humanitarian and development goals. The CoP indicated a need for a dedicated study to review the existing arms-related risk indicators in United Nations conflict analysis tools and another to review information management processes relating to arms at the national, regional and headquarters levels, in particular how information on conventional arms risks and impacts are taken into account in existing United Nations conflict assessment, analysis and reporting.

3

Third, various United Nations entities have already undertaken efforts to better integrate conventional arms control into their conflict prevention and management work. While this represents progress, implementation remains uneven and is often driven by the availability of expertise or project funding. Moreover, there remain areas where integration could be improved. In some areas, there has been notable progress in the integration of conventional arms control tools into United Nations conflict prevention and management efforts, such as mine action and explosive hazard mitigation; disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR); arms embargo monitoring; and counter-terrorism. Such integration has occurred, for example, through the development of dedicated guidelines, training and, at times, assessments and analysis that relate conventional arms control tools to broader conflict prevention and management activities. However, the CoP also revealed that, even among those United Nations entities that have made progress, challenges remain in the application of conventional arms control tools owing to a lack of understanding or of technical and resource capacity at field and national levels. Further, the CoP highlighted the need for – and potential benefits of – broader integration efforts, including in the areas of mediation, ceasefire design and monitoring, security sector reform, and conflict analysis at the national level (in particular, the common country assessment). Further research and dialogue with these relevant United Nations entities would help identify integration and application gaps and generate ideas to mitigate them.

ADDITIONAL FINDINGS

Beyond these three main takeaways, key findings from the CoP concerned the following areas:

National and local ownership. National and local ownership is essential to successful programming for conflict prevention and conventional arms control, and the effectiveness of programmes is affected by the degree of buy-in of national and local authorities and affected communities. The CoP revealed that United Nations entities working in the fields of sustainable development, governance, crisis prevention and peacebuilding often have limited engagements with the national and local authorities responsible for conventional arms control (e.g. national commissions of small arms and light weapons), while United Nations entities working on conventional arms control often did not engage with national stakeholders beyond the arms control community. These experiences point to gaps in integrating conventional arms control into consultations with national and local stakeholders working on conflict prevention, peacebuilding and violence reduction.

Political sensitivities around arms control. "Political sensitivities" and concerns about how host governments might react to the United Nations gathering information on arms to support analysis for prevention remain a major hurdle to integrating this into the Organization's work. This is particularly true for Resident Coordinators, who may not feel that they have a mandate for this activity or "political cover" from the United Nations system if doing so leads to a backlash from the host government. This finding highlights the need to strengthen mandates for conventional arms control at the national level and to identify appropriate incentives for the host government and the United Nations to engage in a mutually beneficial approach to reduce arms-related risks and impacts.

Awareness-raising on conventional arms risks and impacts, and benefits of their control. In reducing harm resulting from the misuse of arms, United Nations policymakers and practitioners working on peacemaking (e.g. Special Envoys, Special Representatives of the Secretary-General) and conflict prevention and peacebuilding (e.g. Resident Coordinators, Peace and Development Advisers) need to have greater awareness of the value and benefits of conventional arms control: in particular, the risks and impacts that illicit arms can pose to preventing the escalation of violence and advancing the Sustainable Development Goals, and how conventional arms control can help in implementing conflict prevention mandates, strategies and programmes.

Need for greater accessibility of conventional arms control in conflict prevention and peacebuilding. Generating support for conventional arms control as a key prevention activity will require those supporting conflict prevention and peacebuilding to be presented with information on arms risks and impacts and ways to address them in a timely manner that can be understood by non-arms control experts (e.g. those working on conflict analysis, the Women Peace and Security and Youth Peace and Security agendas). CoP participants suggested, as possible ways to make conventional arms control more accessible to United Nations entities that assess and design conflict prevention and peacebuilding programmes at the national level, that integration of arms-related risk indicators could be explored as part of common country assessments and that conventional arms control activities could be considered as part of Peacebuilding Fund projects.

Need for a more integrated approach during conflict management. Conflict management activities that include conventional arms control often occur in peacekeeping or post-conflict contexts. Implementation of conventional arms control activities, however, remains "siloed", often as a result of variations in mandates, resources and expertise within and between United Nations peace support entities. Where several United Nations entities may work on arms control-related activities at the national level (e.g. DDR, security sector reform, mine action, or Joint Mission Analysis Cells in a peacekeeping context), the CoP participants encouraged a more integrated approach to identify and understand arms-related risks and impacts and to develop, where appropriate, integrated strategy or programming for conventional arms control to maximize the knowledge, expertise and resources available to the United Nations.

Improvement of information coordination and management on arms. The silos in which arms control activities are implemented is often matched by poor information coordination and management across conventional arms control actors and between governments and United Nations missions, country teams and regional offices. This includes gaps in information gathering and assessment methods related to arms at the local, national, regional and headquarters levels. The use of arms-related information in analysing conflict dynamics continues to be largely missing in the United Nation's work at the national and regional levels. Further, reporting on arms-related risks and impacts is often limited to security incidents, meaning that the focus remains on understanding the violence that occurred as part of assessing the security situation rather than on understanding the types of weapon that contributed to that violence and the origins of those weapons. Such reporting also tends to be undertaken on a case-by-case basis (rather than systematic reporting dedicated to arms risks and impacts). Recognizing these gaps, the CoP participants identified a need for dedicated space or tools to better capture, report on and integrate trends in arms and related risks and impacts so as to inform United Nations conflict analysis, in particular at the national and regional levels.

Resources for conventional arms control in non-mission settings. The resources and types of conventional arms control activities can vary enormously depending on whether a United Nations peace operation or special political mission is deployed in support of a peace process. These missions' mandates unlock resources for activities (e.g. weapon and ammunition management, DDR) that are less common in non-mission settings. In light of competing priorities and possible cost-cutting measures in United Nations peace operations, integrated programming (as mentioned above) is essential to ensure that conventional arms control activities are adequately resourced in mission settings. Efforts are under way to broaden the application of conventional arms control tools, activities and expertise in non-mission settings (e.g. through the establishment of the United Nations Saving Lives Entity, or SALIENT, fund), but these efforts are underserved and under-resourced at this time. Sustainability of conventional arms control-related programming in non-mission settings was felt to be one of the key vulnerabilities of the United Nations, given competing priorities, mandates and resources within country teams, as well as the limited arms control expertise that may be available to Resident Coordinators. As one possible approach, the CoP recommended examining and reviewing existing pools and rosters of arms experts across the United Nations system (under sanctions, mine action, DDR or other areas) and assessing how this expertise can be better used in supporting conventional arms control-related programme design, implementation and monitoring in non-mission settings.

Linking of regional, national and local interventions. Although it is recognized that conflict prevention requires interventions at the regional, national and local levels, it was felt that many United Nations efforts on conventional arms control are focused at the national level, possibly reflecting the countrywide mandates of most United Nations field presences. Where local prevention efforts are under way (e.g. collection of obsolete small arms as part of community violence reduction activities), they do not always link in with national prevention efforts or strategies (e.g. such arms collection projects may not be linked or coordinated with broader national policing strategies aimed at providing security to the community participating in disarmament activities). The CoP also revealed two particular gaps in United Nations regional approaches to integrating conventional arms control into conflict prevention work. First, United Nations regional offices do not currently have regular, systematic assessment and analysis on arms risks and impacts. Efforts to remedy this gap may be impeded by the lack of national-level assessment and analysis of arms risks and impacts by the United Nations. Second, engagement by United Nations country teams, peace operations and special political missions with specialized arms control divisions or by units of regional organizations (e.g. the Small Arms Division of the Economic Community of West African States, or the Regional Centre on Small Arms) remain sporadic or limited. United Nations efforts to engage with relevant regional organizations on addressing arms risks and impacts may be affected by varied priorities, mandates and resources, and by a lack of technical knowledge on arms control at the national level. These findings point to integration gaps and challenges at both conceptual and structural levels.

Strengthening of the CoP. The CoP identified a need to continue discussions in forums such as the CoP so as to break down barriers and allow conventional arms control tools to be used in a more complementary manner, since their real potential emerges when interlinks are examined. The CoP should be maintained as a forum for exchange on arms control and conflict prevention.

This report seeks to capture the themes raised in the CoP sessions, which will serve to inform and guide further research and dialogue on integrating conventional arms control into conflict prevention and management.

INTRODUCTION

Armed conflict has surged globally in recent years, with more countries experiencing conflict in 2016 than at any time in more than 30 years.[1] Much has been written on the changing nature of modern conflict, with more non-international armed conflicts than in the past, multiple protagonists, and the introduction of new weapons and tactics. The impact of armed conflict has also been well chronicled and shown to extend far beyond casualties in battle, often leading to forced migration; long-term refugee problems; the destruction of essential infrastructure and services; and damage to social, political and economic institutions. In fact, conflict was found to have a detrimental effect on most of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) indicators.[2]

The cost and impact of conflict is illustrated in the global humanitarian appeal for 2017, which was a record $23.5 billion, targeting 93 million people in need. This is five times what it was a decade earlier, for more than three times as many people and "eight out of every ten dollars of humanitarian funding is accounted for by conflicts".[3] The High-Level Panel on Humanitarian Financing noted that "if current trends continue, by 2030, when the SDGs expire, the cost of humanitarian assistance will have risen to US$ 50 billion and 62 per cent of the world's poor could be living in fragile and conflict-affected countries."[4] Prevention, on the other hand, saves on humanitarian interventions, peacekeeping or peacebuilding activities. More importantly, it reduces the direct costs of conflict, both in terms of casualties and forgone economic growth.

CONFLICT PREVENTION AND CONVENTIONAL ARMS CONTROL

It is therefore not surprising that there has been a renewed international engagement on preventing conflict and advancing sustainable development, led in part by the United Nations, which has launched a series of reforms to better integrate its work in this field. Under the Sustaining Peace agenda, there has been a "recognition that efforts to sustain peace were necessary not only once conflict had broken out but also long beforehand, through the prevention of conflict and addressing its root causes".[5]

This places conflict prevention firmly in the hands of a wide array of United Nations actors, which include traditional prevention entities such as special political missions (SPMs), which seek to de-escalate conflicts and negotiate peace agreements, and peace operations, which support the implementation of peace agreements. It also includes development and humanitarian actors who address the underlying causes of conflict, with work including building resilience, addressing inequalities and exclusion, strengthening institutions, and ensuring that development strategies are risk informed. As such, the prevention actors referred to in this report represent the broad array of United Nations actors directly or indirectly working to prevent or resolve conflict and to build peace, typically United Nations country teams (UNCTs), whether or not supported by Peace and Development Advisers, SPMs, peace operations, and specialized funds and programmes.

Without weapons, there is no armed conflict. And it is the use of arms that tips a situation from non-violent conflict into violent armed conflict. Yet the risks and impacts of conventional arms are not well understood by the United Nations at the national, regional and headquarters levels.

There is one constant across all armed conflicts and throughout history: the presence and use of conventional arms. Without weapons, there is no armed conflict. And it is the use of arms that tips a situation from non-violent conflict into violent armed conflict. Yet the risks and impacts of conventional arms are not well understood by the United Nations at the national, regional and headquarters levels. Further, measures to address such risks and impacts – referred to in this report as "arms control" – remain largely absent in United Nations conflict prevention strategies and programming. This is not to say that conventional arms control and related activities are not undertaken by the United Nations, but rather that they are not systematically understood and integrated into wider United Nations analysis and strategies to prevent the occurrence, escalation and reoccurrence of conflict.

Key to this is the need to enhance understanding among United Nations arms control, peace and security, and development communities of how conventional arms control activities can support the implementation of

1 See the Uppsala Conflict Data Programme: https://ucdp.uu.se.
2 S. Gates et al., "The Consequences of Internal Armed Conflict for Development (Part 2)", SIPRI, 6 April 2015, https://www.sipri.org/commentary/blog/2015/consequences-internal-armed-conflict-development-part-2.
3 High-Level Panel on Humanitarian Financing, Too Important To Fail – Addressing the Humanitarian Financing Gap, Report to the Secretary-General, 2016, p. 7, https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/hlp_report_too_important_to_failgcoaddressing_the_humanitarian_financing_gap.pdf.
4 High-Level Panel on Humanitarian Financing, Too Important To Fail – Addressing the Humanitarian Financing Gap, Report to the Secretary-General, 2016, p. 2.
5 General Assembly and Security Council, Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace, Report of the Secretary-General, A/72/707–S/2018/43, 2018.

the prevention agenda. Weapons, and conventional arms in particular, are key enablers and drivers of armed conflict. Addressing their presence and misuse should therefore be central to any prevention agenda and should be applied at all stages of a conflict cycle, whether seeking to reduce the level of armed violence in non-conflict settings, prevent the formation of armed movements that wage war, control weapons during peace processes or disarm armed actors after a conflict.

ABOUT THIS RESEARCH AND WORKSHOP

The United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) is conducting a two-year research programme on integrating conventional arms control into United Nations conflict prevention and management. This research seeks to increase the Organization's understanding of the risks and impact of arms, how these can be better incorporated into United Nations conflict analysis, and how measures and tools for conventional arms control can contribute to United Nations conflict prevention, management and resolution in light of the changing nature of armed conflict. It also seeks to facilitate dialogue among United Nations peace, security, disarmament and development actors, and to inform improvements in the means and methods for using conventional arms control in support of United Nations conflict prevention and management activities.

In pursuing these objectives, UNIDIR convened a practitioners' workshop entitled, "Strengthening the Community of Practice: Integrating Conventional Arms Control into Conflict Prevention" between May and June 2020. This workshop represented a first meeting of United Nations actors working in the fields of conflict prevention and conventional arms control – including mine action, organized crime, counter-terrorism, sanctions, mediation, ceasefire, conflict analysis, crisis prevention, peacebuilding and various components of peacekeeping in field missions and at headquarters – to discuss the role of conventional arms control in supporting United Nations conflict prevention activities. The workshop's objectives were to:

- Examine how conventional arms risks and impacts are understood and how tools to mitigate them are used by United Nations and partner practitioners
- Identify good practices or lessons learned on the application and integration of conventional arms control-related tools and activities into United Nations conflict analysis and prevention work
- Build links between conventional arms control and conflict prevention actors in the United Nations by establishing a forum for discussion between these two disciplines

The workshop sought to address the following research questions:

- How are arms and ammunition affecting conflict dynamics, and what types of data are required to better understand the risks and impact of arms and related materiel in conflict- and violence-affected environments?
- How might the information collected on the risks and impact associated with arms and related materiel be used to inform United Nations conflict prevention strategies and actions?
- What conventional arms control activities are already being undertaken by the United Nations and other organizations? How can these activities and tools fit and contribute to strengthening the United Nations toolkit on conflict analysis and prevention?
- What are the key entry points for integrating conventional arms control into United Nations conflict prevention and peacebuilding activities, and what conceptual and structural barriers may be hampering integration efforts?

More broadly, the workshop was designed to contribute to building bridges between United Nations actors from the conflict analysis and prevention fields on the one hand and arms control on the other, and to initiate a dialogue to strengthen the community of practice (CoP) within the United Nations system. The workshop also sought to validate observations and experiences from United Nations staff at headquarters and in the field, from an initial perception survey of United Nations personnel working on arms control and conflict prevention, and from field visits carried out by UNIDIR in the first two quarters of 2020.

The workshop was originally intended to be held as an in-person event in Geneva over two days in March 2020. Owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, the workshop was redesigned as a series of eight online sessions of two

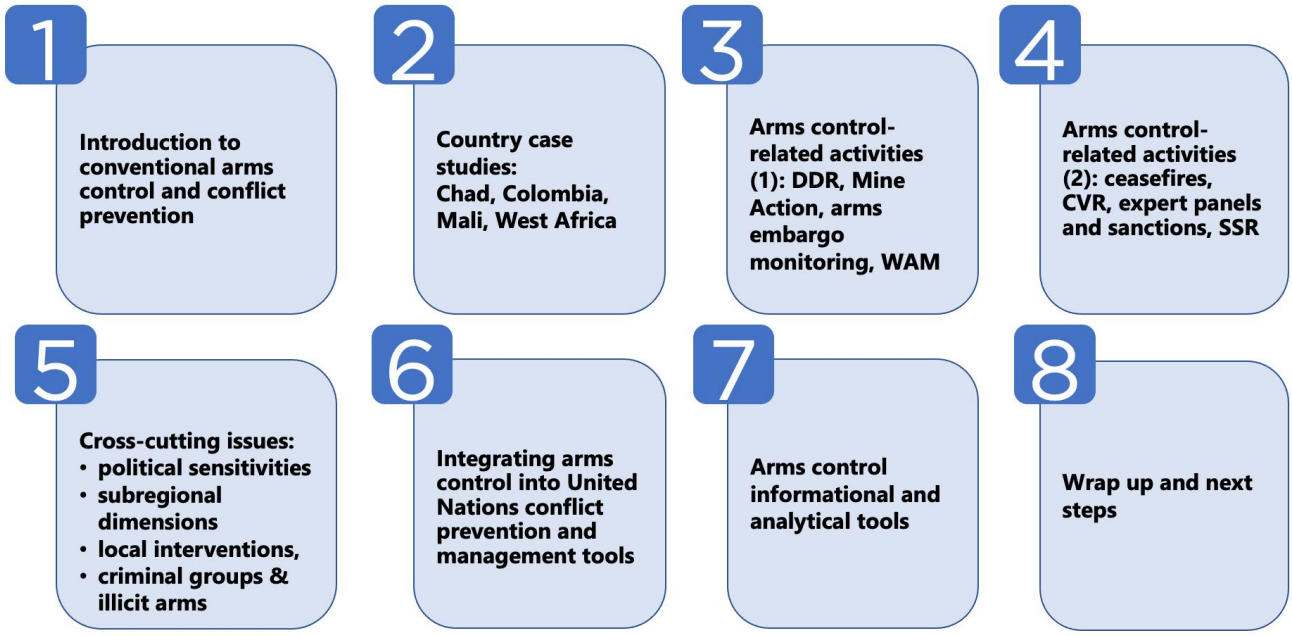
hours each, which took place between 5 May and 23 June (see figure 1 for an overview of the online sessions). The workshop was organized as invitation only, targeting United Nations practitioners working in the fields of conflict prevention, peacebuilding and conventional arms control – in particular:

- United Nations Headquarters staff working on conflict analysis frameworks and preparing analysis (data collection, analysis and reporting) for prevention and other activities
- United Nations field staff working on information gathering and preparing conflict analysis
- Conventional arms control personnel within the United Nations, both in the field and at headquarters
- United Nations personnel working on security-related issues such as disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR), security sector reform, United Nations police, and sanctions including arms embargoes

A select number of conventional arms control and conflict analysis experts from regional organizations and specialized non-governmental organizations (NGOs) also participated in the CoP to help enhance knowledge among participants of various ongoing efforts outside the United Nations to address conventional arms risks and impacts in support of conflict prevention and management. In total, the CoP online workshop benefited from the participation of 56 experts working at local, national, regional and headquarters levels.

The present report provides a summary of the workshop sessions and discussions, the key challenges, opportunities and takeaways collectively identified by the community, and the next steps for the CoP and the research. Findings from this workshop will form the basis of future research by UNIDIR on this topic.

FIGURE 1. *Community of Practice Sessions*



Note: CVR = community violence reduction; DDR = disarmament, demobilization and reintegration; SSR = security sector reform; WAM = weapons and ammunition management.

SESSION 1 INTRODUCTION TO CONVENTIONAL ARMS CONTROL AND CONFLICT PREVENTION

BACKGROUND

Conventional arms-related risks are present in each stage of a conflict, and arms control activities are implemented to reduce them, often alongside conflict prevention and management activities. All have a common goal of preventing or reducing violence. This session introduced participants to the United Nations approach to prevention throughout the life of a conflict – that is to say, before, during and after a conflict – and encouraged them to consider how prevention activities might vary over this time and what arms-related activities might be used to support prevention. These issues were to be further examined in future sessions.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Conflict prevention stretches across the prevention continuum, taking place before, during and after conflicts. Armed violence occurs throughout an armed conflict, and to reduce it, it is important to identify the arms control tools that could be used in each context and to apply them in a flexible and context-specific manner.
- The Sustaining Peace agenda promotes prevention at all stages of a conflict and tries not to differentiate between peacemaking, peacekeeping and longer-term development. However, United Nations structures tend to focus on working on each of these fields separately (e.g. Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs: peacebuilding and peacemaking; DPA: peacekeeping; UNCTs: development). This division is also reflected in the mandates of field presences (SPMs, peace operations and country teams), so the system is not necessarily structured to promote the desired integrated and coherent approach among relevant political, security and developmental actors. Achieving this will require a change of approach across United Nations entities working on prevention, including changing mandates where appropriate to integrate arms control into all United Nations field presences and ensuring that field presences are properly resourced to implement arms control activities (access to expertise and budgets).
- The CoP and broader research seek to understand how arms control tools can be applied in line with the Sustaining Peace approach. This involves seeing how existing tools that may at present be used primarily in one context, for example peacekeeping, can be adapted for use in peacemaking or longer-term development.
- Joint information sharing and gathering is key for understanding the dynamics around weapons and ammunition at each stage of a conflict and to inform the development of appropriate strategies and programming to address this. The question of who is responsible for managing this information and how it can be effectively used and disseminated should be the subject of further research to understand how such information can be leveraged as part of early warning and response planning for prevention at headquarters and in the field.
- The types of weapons and the ways they are used in conflicts are changing, as are other fundamental characteristics of wars. Arms control must change and adapt to meet the challenges of managing weapons in these new contexts.
- Arms control should be applied at different levels – regionally (within a geographic area encompassing several States), nationally (within the borders of a country) and locally (in a particular location within a country) – as conflicts occur at multiple levels.

SESSION SUMMARY

A first presentation explained that through the Agenda for Disarmament: Securing Our Common Future,[6] the United Nations has sought to generate fresh perspectives and explore how it can bring disarmament back into the heart of the Organization's work on peace and security. The Agenda recognized "the direct correlation between the over-accumulation of arms and armed violence" and that "there has been limited engagement within the system on how issues relating to arms, including arms trafficking, and how measures within the disarmament toolkit can be utilized for conflict prevention, management and resolution".[7] At the same time, the United Nations Sustaining Peace approach marks a clear break from the past, where efforts to build peace

6 United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, Securing Our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament, 2018, https://www.un.org/disarmament/sg-agenda/en.

7 United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, Securing Our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament, 2018, p. 42.

were perceived to be mainly restricted to post-conflict contexts.[8] It recognizes that a comprehensive approach is required across the peace continuum, from conflict prevention through to peacemaking, peacekeeping and longer-term development. It therefore necessitates an integrated and coherent approach among relevant political, security and development actors, within and outside the United Nations system. This has resulted in renewed international engagement on preventing conflict and advancing sustainable development, while putting emphasis on "pre-emptive" prevention: working to avoid conflict from occurring as opposed to managing it once it occurs.

The impact of armed conflict extends far beyond deaths in battle, often leading to forced migration; long-term refugee problems; the destruction of infrastructure; damage to social, political and economic institutions; and, more broadly, negative effects on development across many areas (demographic, economic, education, infrastructure, health, etc.). Although the motives behind the violence differ from context to context, the use of arms in perpetrating this violence is a constant that cannot be ignored, but is often poorly accounted for, when seeking to prevent conflict.

Although arms control activities may not be well integrated into current conflict prevention work, they still take place before, during and after conflict. Common types of arms control activity include ceasefires, sanctions including arms embargoes, DDR, community violence reduction (CVR), security sector reform, mine action, and weapons and ammunition management (WAM). These activities are, however, applied unevenly at different stages of a conflict, with notable gaps in the pre-emptive and post-conflict phases. Unless these gaps are addressed, the negative effects of the presence of arms will continue to reverberate over time. They will continue to fuel existing conflicts or, where peace has been achieved, contribute to crime, insecurity and instability as well as facilitate a recurrence of war.

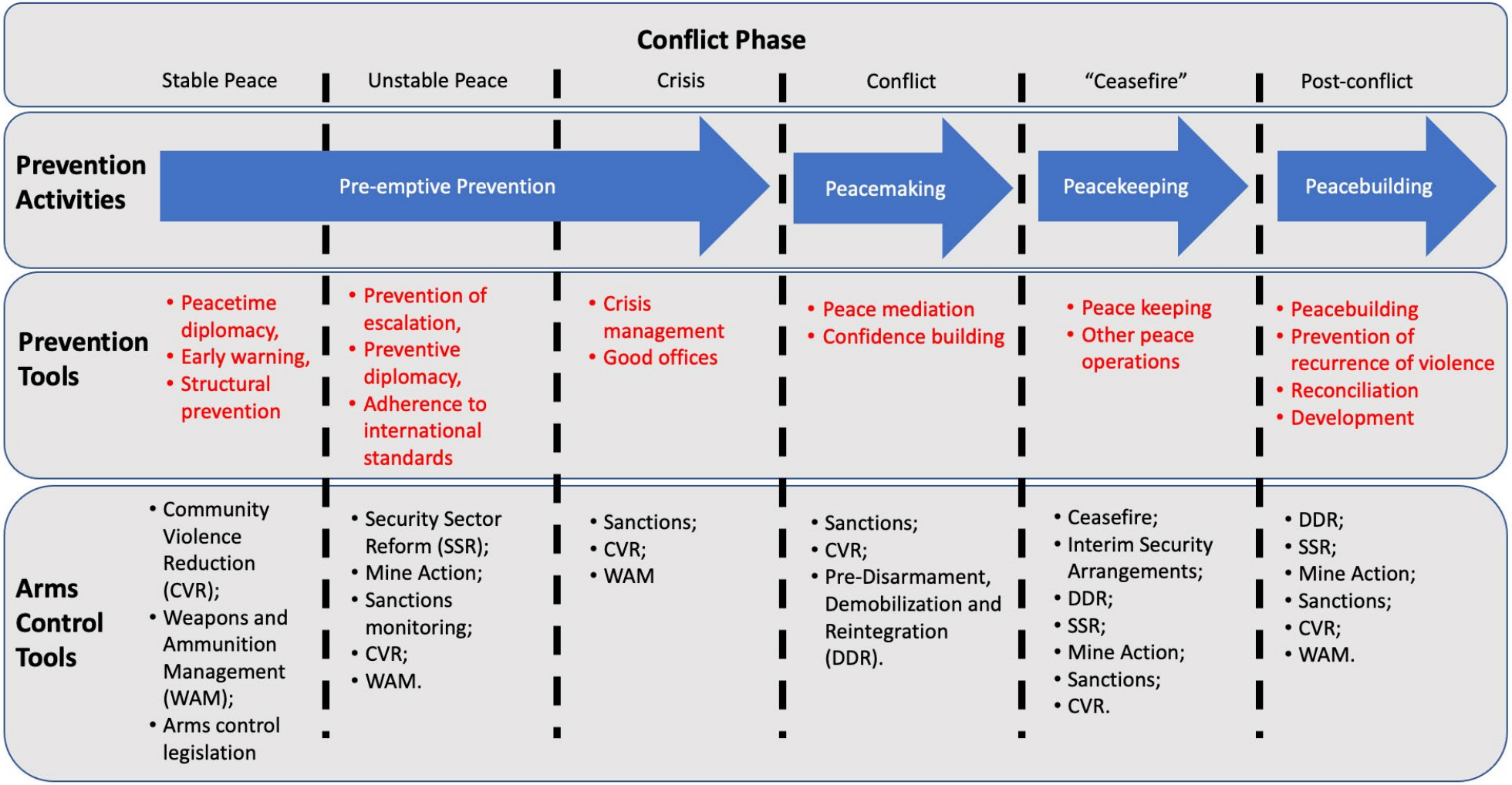
Following the presentation, a wide-ranging discussion in plenary raised several issues, many of which would be revisited in subsequent workshop sessions. Participants made the following points:

- They acknowledged the value in examining interlinks between conflict prevention and arms control but recognized that in most cases the latter was not necessarily integrated into broader United Nations prevention strategies.
- They noted that arms and ammunition should be considered as part of a prevention agenda as they form the primary instruments of armed conflict and that managing their availability and misuse can help reduce violence.
- Despite the United Nations approach putting added emphasis on pre-emptive prevention to stop conflicts from breaking out, most of the workshop participants felt that the current focus remained on preventing the recurrence of conflicts through peacekeeping and peacebuilding.
- Work will need to continue on conflict management and on prevention of the reoccurrence of conflict, as some pre-emptive conflict efforts will fail and armed conflict will break out.
- Activities related to arms control tend to take place post-conflict – which means, for example, that DDR, security sector reform, sanctions including arms embargo monitoring, and mine action are staples of peace operations – and there are fewer and often less well-resourced arms control activities undertaken in advance of a conflict breaking out.
- Even though an arms control activity such as shutting down the supply of weapons could prevent the formation of non-State armed groups and help prevent armed conflict, participants noted that UNCTs, SPMs and regional offices that usually support pre-emptive prevention are often not mandated or do not have the technical know-how and resources to support arms control.
- There is a need to consider the impact of weapons on the population when establishing prevention strategies.

Many of these points echo the findings of an initial perception survey on conventional arms control and conflict prevention carried out by UNIDIR in January 2020 with a select, representative sample of United Nations personnel. This survey found that (a) although arms control is seen as important, it is almost never integrated into prevention strategies or thinking; (b) arms control activities are split between numerous offices and departments within the United Nations, making it difficult to have an all-encompassing approach; (c) important arms control instruments and tools such as the Arms Trade Treaty, the Programme of Action on Small Arms, the Firearms Protocol and the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Treaty, some of which grew out of early prevention efforts, are not

8 General Assembly, A/RES/70/262, 2016; Security Council, S/RES/2282, 2016; General Assembly and Security Council, Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace, Report of the Secretary-General, A/72/707–S/2018/43, 2018.

FIGURE 2. *Slide presented to illustrate arms control and related activities that can be used in different stages of a conflict life cycle*



Note: CBM = confidence-building measure; CVR = community violence reduction; DDR = disarmament, demobilization and reintegration; SSR = security sector reform; WAM = weapons and ammunition management.

sufficiently leveraged to support prevention both generally and at a national level; and (d) there is a narrow base for gathering information used in conventional arms-related issues partly owing to a lack of guidance on where to find information and insufficient effective end use of the available information. Most importantly, these translate into low levels of reporting on the sources and presence of the different weapons used in different conflicts.Three main points came out of the discussions in this session.

First, the CoP felt that the lack of information on arms makes it more difficult for those developing conflict prevention strategies to understand the conflict dynamics they are dealing with. Increasing information on arms would require greater expertise, appropriate mandates and mechanisms to gather the information, profiling and tracing capabilities, and investment and resources. Just as importantly, the United Nations is hampered by a lack of clarity as to who is responsible for gathering and sharing information related to weapons. There is a need to improve access to existing information – both internal (e.g. the reports of groups of experts [GoEs] and panels of experts [PoEs] assisting Security Council committees in monitoring the implementation of sanctions including arms embargoes) and external (e.g. NGOs, other partners working on arms control) – by raising awareness of its importance and by creating channels through which it can be shared. In this context, it was suggested that information gathering by the United Nations is not coordinated, either within United Nations missions (e.g. between various sections within a peace operation: DDR, Joint Mission Analysis Cell, mine action, civil affairs, etc.) or between United Nations entities (e.g. between neighbouring peace operations or between regional SPMs and peace operations operating within a region).

The lack of information on arms makes it more difficult for those developing conflict prevention strategies to understand the conflict dynamics they are dealing with.

Second, there was consensus among participants that conflict prevention strategies have not necessarily kept up with the changing nature of conflicts. Participants expressed the need to adapt conflict prevention strategies by harnessing technological developments (e.g. information mapping and other tools). Similarly, the CoP concluded that arms control activities must include ammunition, parts and components, emerging weapon systems, and delivery platforms (e.g. improvised explosive devices [IEDs], drones) and must integrate more gender perspectives in the reflection on arms control. Likewise, the CoP noted a need to consider how to apply arms control at different geographic levels: regionally (within a geographic area encompassing several States), nationally (within the borders of a State) and locally (at particular locations within a State), as conflicts occur at multiple levels. It was felt that, especially at a local level, this would require a good grasp of the conflict dynamics and drivers, taking into account where the conflict is occurring, who the stakeholders are, the type of conflict and the accelerators (arms and ammunition). Attendees also noted that better information on the different types of weapons used in each specific conflict setting would allow for the development of more tailored arms control strategies in support of conflict prevention.

Finally, there was consensus that the lack of appropriate mandates for arms control was a fundamental issue. Attendees asserted that unless a United Nations mission or office is given a mandate that explicitly includes arms control, it can do little to implement arms control activities. Participants explained that this was because the political sensitivities surrounding arms control often led to a reluctance by United Nations missions and field presences to engage in arms control activities, even where the value of better understanding how arms impact a situation has been recognized. This reluctance was also linked to (a) a lack of awareness of arms control and how to leverage it to support prevention, (b) poor information gathering and use, (c) internal structural barriers to coordinating arms control efforts, (d) a lack of resources for arms control and (e) a lack of political will to act, even when information is available.

SESSION 2 COUNTRY CASE STUDIES

BACKGROUND

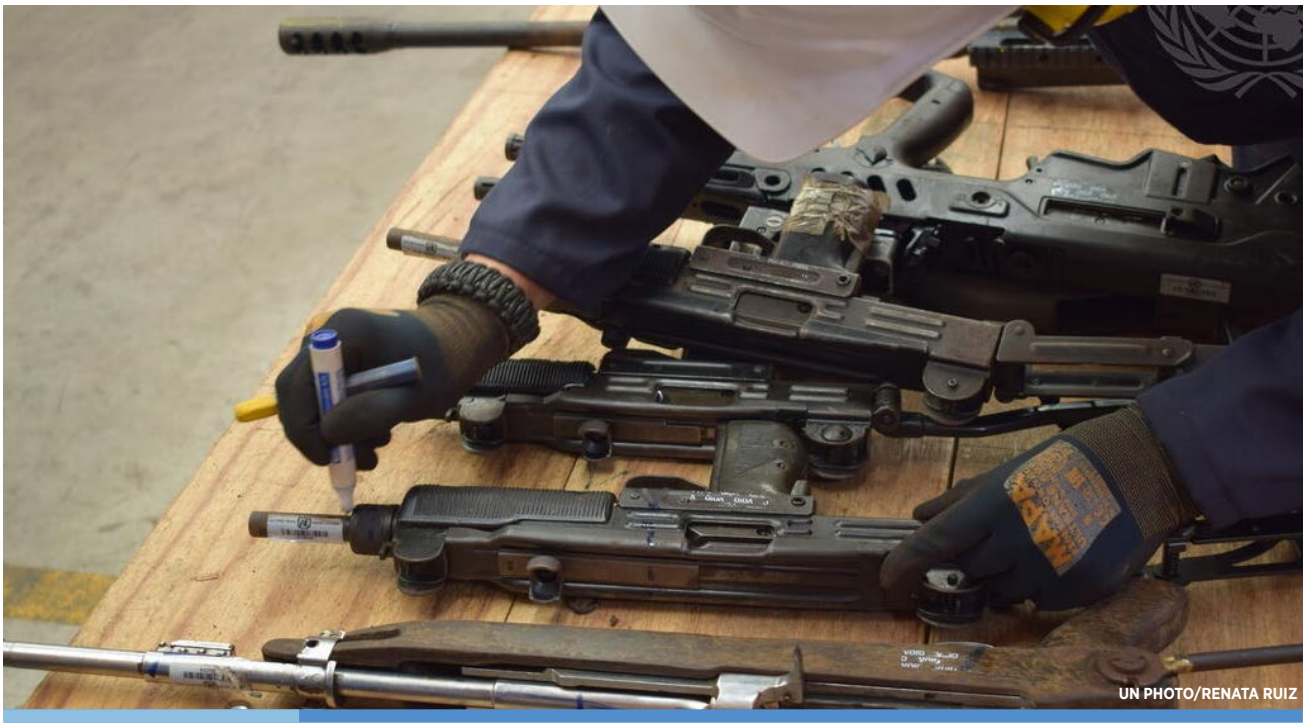
Conflict prevention activities take place in many different contexts and are initiated by different United Nations entities (e.g. missions, offices, country teams), sometimes explicitly mandated and deployed for conflict prevention, sometimes not. Session 2 focused on a series of case studies that illustrated the work of different United Nations entities in prevention in different contexts, the types of arms-related risks they face and how they approach these risks. The examples explored were:

- The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), an integrated United Nations peacekeeping mission
- The United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia (UNVMC), a United Nations SPM
- Chad and the work of the United Nations country office there
- The United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), a regional SPM

The session included presentations by personnel from these entities, work in subgroups, and plenary feedback and discussions.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Arms control and conflict prevention strategies must be tailored to the local, national and regional context, allowing for geographical specificities as well as the type of conflict, the type of weapons present, who possesses them, and why. This requires flexibility in the use of arms control measures and their application in a manner that is appropriate to each context.
- The lack of a mandate for arms control in some missions is an impediment to successful conflict prevention. When there is a mandate and enough resources for arms control, the lack of expertise, processes and coordination – both between and within United Nations actors – weakens the Organization's prevention efforts.
- The links between conflict and organized crime were raised in all the case studies. The CoP felt that there is a need to (a) better understand the links between organized crime and illicit or illegal arms and ammunition flows as well as their impact in conflict and (b) consider existing measures to tackle these links and how to better integrate such measures into conflict prevention work.
- Porous borders, a lack of security providers (which can drive populations to keep weapons for protection) and a paucity of national actors with whom to work, especially in remote areas or areas previously under the control of armed movements, can hamper arms control and prevention efforts. The ability to extend or restore State authority is important in addressing some of the underlying factors and structural issues that drive or facilitate conflict.
- Cross-border cooperation was considered essential in tackling conflicts that, although increasingly internal, often involve regional dimensions, especially as regards the movement of fighters and weapons. Improved inter-State and inter-mission cooperation and coordination would both improve early warning and support a more comprehensive approach to conflict prevention.
- Conflicts, especially at the local level, are increasingly driven by access to resources, including land and water. The illegal exploitation of natural resources is also an underlying conflict factor and facilitator, providing the means to acquire weapons and ammunition. Understanding how these issues can create or exacerbate tensions and influence demand for arms is important if conflict prevention and arms control efforts are to address the conflict drivers in a tailored manner.



BOGOTÁ, COLOMBIA

Weapons laid down by the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC-EP) are de-activated as part of the peace agreement between the Government of Colombia and FARC-EP.

SESSION SUMMARIES

The following sections summarize each country session and the plenary discussion.

Chad

The United Nations presence in Chad includes 14 United Nations agencies, funds and programmes under a Resident Coordinator, who is supported by a senior Peace and Development Adviser. Although the UNCT and its members do not necessarily have a mandate or dedicated programmes on arms control, they are managing a growing peacebuilding portfolio that includes (a) arms-related activities such as DDR planning undertaken by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the International Organization for Migration, and the Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate; (b) training for small arms and light weapons (SALW) life cycle management through the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa; and (c) planning to counter SALW illicit trafficking, with such planning undertaken by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. Although the country is not considered to be a conflict-affected State, Chad is confronted with different types of threats in different parts of the country. In the west, there are designated terrorist groups, including Boko Haram and the Islamic State; in the east, there are conflicts between farmers and herders; some armed opposition groups aiming at overthrowing the government are very active in the north and the south.

There is an urgent need to better understand illicit arms flows **in order to set up appropriate arms control strategies** and **make existing ones more effective.**

These different types of conflict and threat result in the presence of different types of weapon on the ground: SALW are prominent in the east and the west; heavy conventional weapons are significantly present in the north. The presence of IEDs is also increasing. In Chad, arms-related issues pertain to illicit trafficking rather than to diversion. An arms embargo is in place, but it is often violated, which might partly be explained by the porosity of Chadian borders. There is therefore an urgent need to better understand illicit arms flows in order to set up appropriate arms control strategies and make existing ones more effective, including improving border controls. Currently, some initiatives to tackle violent extremism are being implemented and some DDR initiatives have proven effective around Lake Chad.

Colombia – UN Verification Mission in Colombia

The UNVMC is the follow-on mission from the United Nations Mission in Colombia (UNMC). Both missions have supported the DDR of Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP), with the UNMC supporting disarmament and demobilization and the UNVMC supporting reintegration. More precisely, the UNMC's mandate was to verify the laying down of arms and monitor and verify the implementation of

the ceasefire and cessation of hostilities. No responsibilities were assigned to perform any other arms-related tasks. The UNMC counted 8,994 weapons, 1,765,862 pieces of SALW ammunition and 38,255 kilos of explosives, among other items. The UNVMC verifies the process of political, economic and social reincorporation of the FARC-EP; the implementation of personal and collective security guarantees; and comprehensive programmes on security and protection measures for communities and organizations in the territories.

Although the UNVMC no longer has a mandate for arms control-related activities, these continue to impact the situation in Colombia and are closely linked to the presence of non-signatory armed groups, militias and criminal organizations, many of which are also involved in cross-border drug and weapons trafficking – activities that are closely intertwined in Colombia. The region's geography makes border control particularly challenging, and several of Colombia's neighbours are said to be transit countries for weapons. It was explained that the trafficking of weapons is facilitated by a lack of State presence in many of the areas controlled by armed groups, through which weapons are transiting, owing both to insecurity and to a lack of human and economic resources to secure the borders. It was mentioned that better coordination at the United Nations level would help in developing more effective strategies to support Colombia in combating illicit arms flows. Joint enterprises (with support from the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund) that work with communities, involving both former combatants and civilians, are being implemented to support reintegration and to prevent re-recruitment into armed groups and criminal gangs, but mission funding for these activities is limited.

Mali – United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali

The conflict in Mali involves political violence by non-signatory armed movements; terrorist attacks that result in near-daily attacks on national and international armed forces; frequent community clashes; armed criminality and; cattle rustling. MINUSMA was established by Security Council resolution 2100 of 25 April 2013 to support political processes in that country and carry out several security-related tasks. Its mandate includes arms-related activities such as DDR, security sector reform, CVR and mine action. In carrying out these activites, MINUSMA is providing support to national actors (the national Small Arms and Light Weapons Commission) and to physical stockpile and security measures, such as the rehabilitation of armouries and depots by the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) and the temporary management of arms as a part of DDR and of the reintegration of ex-combatants into the national army.

It was stated that the conflict in Mali is largely fuelled by a previous proliferation of weapons and a continuing diversion of weapons from government stockpiles, much of which occurs during attacks by armed groups on the Malian security forces, as well as by regional trafficking. This was reported to sustain instability; create high numbers of victims, including civilians; displace populations; and limit humanitarian access to much of the country. Workshop participants were of the opinion that rather than a need for strengthened control, the Malian case displays a need for national capacity-building. It was noted that although the international community has provided help to the national authorities to reduce arms flows, this has not always borne fruit. Participants noted that this was in part because of a lack of cooperation between United Nations agencies present in Mali, which hampers their work; in addition, some United Nations capabilities were said to be underused. For instance, the United Nations might be able to provide meaningful assistance with tracing illicit arms, which would be a crucial element of a conflict prevention strategy in Mali, but there is no concrete cooperation on this with the government.

West Africa – United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel

UNOWAS is a regional office with responsibility for preventive diplomacy, good offices, and political mediation and facilitation efforts in West Africa and the Sahel.[9] UNOWAS also works to consolidate peace and democratic governance in countries emerging from conflict or political crises. The UNOWAS mandate includes monitoring political developments in West Africa and the Sahel; supporting conflict prevention, peacebuilding, and peace and mediation efforts; enhancing regional and subregional partnerships to address cross-border and cross-cutting threats to peace and security; supporting the implementation of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel to promote coherence in the international and regional response to the root causes and impact of conflict in the Sahel; and promoting good governance, respect for the rule of law, human rights and the mainstreaming of gender in conflict prevention, management and resolution.

The countries covered by UNOWAS are affected by several of the issues mentioned in other sessions: porous borders, farmer-herder conflicts, transnational crime and the presence of terrorist groups. In addition, there is an important lack of transborder cooperation, which makes regional conflict prevention strategies difficult to implement. It was explained that arms are widespread throughout the population, especially in rural areas where State presence is weak, and that arms flows continue, for instance, to armed opposition groups in southern

9 This region comprises Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, the Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo.

Libya, illegal gold miners in northern Chad, Boko Haram and Islamic State West Africa Province in the Lake Chad area, and herders and farmers.

It was noted that UNOWAS supports the development of networks of practitioners and subregional frameworks and mechanisms to address challenges related to security sector reform, transnational organized crime, illicit trafficking, conflicts between farmers and herders, terrorism, and violent extremisms as and when conducive to terrorism. However, ownership and responsibilities for arms control are not clearly defined, and the UNOWAS mandate does not distinctly refer to arms control and related issues. The reason may be that the United Nations Security Council did not deem arms control necessary or assessed it to be politically unsustainable. In the context of a regional organization, a firm definition of responsibilities between local, national and regional arms control entities and a high level of coordination were considered to be key to establishing successful strategies. Finally, the lack of accurate and verifiable data was raised as one of the main impediments to developing an appropriate conflict prevention strategy. The work of independent institutions, such as the surveys performed by the Small Arms Survey, were identified as a potential source of relevant information on weapons-related issues in the region.

PLENARY DISCUSSIONS

Although presenters noted that each country context was quite different, the following recurring themes were raised as relevant in several countries: illicit arms flows crossing porous borders, farmer-herder conflicts, transnational organized crime, and the presence of terrorist or related groups.

The group considered illicit arms flows to be a particularly important problem in Chad and Colombia, In both cases this was said to be linked to difficulties in policing borders and a need to better understand illicit arms flows so as to establish appropriate arms control and counter-illicit trafficking strategies and improve border controls. Participants felt that this would require a regional approach, but it was noted that in West Africa there is limited cross-border cooperation, which makes regional conflict prevention strategies difficult to implement. Participants also noted that the United Nations has made efforts to improve cross-border cooperation between United Nations presences (e.g. in Chad, the four United Nations coordinators of neighbouring countries were invited to discuss local issues and put together cross-border programmes), but it was claimed that such cooperation mechanisms remain the exception rather than the rule.

Chad and, more broadly, West Africa suffer from conflict between farmers and herders, which is exacerbated by climate change and competition for scarce resources. In some cases, these conflicts are historic but have been intensified by the presence of weapons and need to be managed locally.

Transnational organized crime was mentioned by all the presenters, and it was stated that this can be linked to illicit arms flows as organized crime provides not just a logistic pipeline for the weapons but also resources with which to purchase them.

Finally, the CoP discussed in some detail terrorist and related groups' presence in the African contexts. The consensus was that although these actors are an obvious presence that exacerbates conflicts and drives the acquisition and use of arms, it was not felt that the United Nations pays enough attention to this in its prevention work. Moreover, there was broad agreement among those present that the Organization's efforts to tackle this issue are diffuse and not well coordinated, in part because the entities on the ground who may be best placed to do so (peace operations, SPMs or country teams) do not have always a mandate or capacity (including technical knowledge or process) for this.

The presentations revealed that although the United Nations presences in each country differed in type and scale, there were several shared issues that merit further research. The group observed that information sharing between the field missions and other United Nations entities or other relevant actors (e.g. governments, NGOs, civil society) was poor, which the participants felt resulted in a limited grasp of the issues at stake and reduced the impact of efforts made to address them. The participants also referenced a lack of cross-border cooperation in almost all the contexts covered during this session. It was asserted that the lack of inter-State and inter-mission cooperation and coordination often resulted in the late identification of conflict factors, which constrain efforts to head off conflict before it breaks out.

Information sharing between field missions, other United Nations entities, governments, NGOs and civil society is poor, **limiting each actor's grasp of the issues and reducing the impact of their prevention efforts.**

Although arms were cited as an important factor in armed conflicts by attendees, they asserted that the lack of appropriate mandates for arms control made tackling armed conflicts difficult. It was also agreed that the lack of a directive to include arms control in the work of United Nations field presences heightened concerns that

KIDAL, MALI

A mixed commission visits Kidal in northern Mali to monitor the ceasefire after the Government of Mali and Tuareg rebels signed a ceasefire agreement on 18 June 2013

attempts to do so would be perceived as overstepping responsibilities and could alienate partners. Mali was the one country where the United Nations was more supportive of arms control through MINUSMA; however, those familiar with this example noted that efforts to trace arms and map illicit arms flows were hampered by a lack of, or insufficient, initial registration practices by MINUSMA of weapons it came into contact with as part of its mandate, as well as poor training and a lack of resources. Participants stated that proper and systematic registration would allow tracing, which in turn could inform incremental and targeted strengthening of WAM.

SESSIONS 3 & 4 ARMS CONTROL-RELATED ACTIVITIES

BACKGROUND

During Sessions 3 and 4, different arms control tools and related activities that the United Nations traditionally uses in its peace operations and missions, or that may be undertaken by country teams or other partners, were presented by expert practitioners. These tools and activities were DDR, mine action, arms embargo monitoring by a United Nations peace operation, WAM, arms control and ceasefires, CVR, sanctions including arms embargoes, and security sector reform. These sessions provided an opportunity to discuss challenges, practical considerations and good practices in the use of these tools, with an emphasis on how they support conflict prevention or how they may be adapted to do so in various contexts. Presentations by expert participants in subgroups were followed by subgroup work, feedback and a plenary discussion. A summary of the discussions on each tool is provided below.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration

Further efforts should be made to gather and use information from weapons and ammunition collected as a part of a DDR programme. Promoting such activities and establishing practical frameworks for implementing them merits further examination.

Mine action

UNMAS has supported activities such as SALW control, WAM, IED threat mitigation, and disposal of other explosive hazards in some contexts. It is also a service that may be present in countries where there are few other arms control activities such as DDR or CVR. As such, UNMAS could support SALW control and WAM in contexts where no one else is able to do so.

It was noted that there are links between mediation and mine action, where mine action can serve as a confidence-building measure. It was recommended to draw lessons learned from mediation processes where this has been done.

Monitoring the implementation of an arms embargo by a United Nations peace operation

The United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) Arms Embargo Cell (AEC) is a useful information analysis cell focusing on arms and could inform conflict prevention strategies. A more in-depth study of the AEC should be considered as part of further reflection on the replicability of this structure in other missions.

Weapons and ammunition management

Experience has shown that a holistic approach to WAM can help reduce violence, especially if efforts to better regulate arms and ammunition are undertaken in alignment with broader security sector, rule of law, armed violence reduction, counter-terrorism, and peacebuilding processes.

WAM can be used in different types of conflict (political violence, intercommunal violence, terrorism) but is not always given enough attention by United Nations field presences and national counterparts, leaving important gaps in arms control efforts.

The full life cycle approach to WAM includes the need to monitor arms flows. NGOs and other actors can support such monitoring but would need to engage with prevention actors.

Arms control and ceasefires

Beyond managing weapons already in use in a conflict, the integration of other arms control measures – such as sanctions or WAM measures – that prevent diversion can support ceasefires and peace mediation efforts by preventing "spoilers" from accessing weapons.

Arms control could also be leveraged as a confidence-building measure (see the above takeaway on mine action) and in many cases should be applied in a more targeted manner to support mediation, for example through benchmarking of arms control activities – especially DDR or integration of combatants and their weapons into security services – to political or other progress in a peace agreement.

Community violence reduction

If CVR is to be used to support pre-emptive conflict prevention strategies, it needs to be adopted by development or other actors who are present in such contexts. Further research should be done into how such adoption could be implemented and what resources would be required for it.

The links between CVR and arms control will depend on each context, as CVR operations do not always include an arms control element. Arms control should not necessarily be an integral part of all CVR activities – they are potent tools even when they do not involve arms control – and its inclusion should be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Sanctions including arms embargoes

Arms embargoes were viewed as inflexible, and workshop participants felt that there is a need to reconsider how they are used and how they can be made more responsive to the often-dynamic contexts they are imposed in. This would include greater consultation with prevention experts when establishing, renewing or lifting sanctions to ensure that embargoes support and do not hinder the experts' work.

A study of how sanctions are used in arms control, and the benefits and limitations of integrating them into prevention work, would be necessary to understand how they can be better leveraged for prevention.

Security sector reform

WAM in security sector reform is still often linked to the storage and management of arms and ammunition held by the security services. More attention needs to be given to "upstream" defence planning and material acquisition factors.

SESSION SUMMARIES

Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration

DDR processes take place in complex environments, characterized by political instability, acute violence, myriad armed actors – including violent extremists – and a prevalence of weapons, ammunition and explosives. These programmes deal both with armed actors and their weapons; the United Nations defines the disarmament component of a DDR programme as "the collection, documentation, control and disposal of small arms, ammunition, explosives and light and heavy weapons of combatants and often also of the civilian population" and as including "the development of responsible arms management programmes".[10] To address the latter point, efforts have been made to effectively and safely design, plan, implement and monitor WAM activities tailored to these challenging environments.

The presenters noted that arms control is becoming more integrated in DDR operations, which used to focus primarily on the removal of weapons from non-State armed groups, with little regard given to how they were managed beyond that. The presenters highlighted a joint project of the Department of Peace Operations (DPO) and Office for Disarmament Affairs that is seeking to change this by mainstreaming WAM into DDR programming and observed that further efforts could still be made to gather and use information from weapons and ammunition collected as part of a DDR programme. For example, it was stated that efforts to trace the origin and supply routes of these weapons to (or from other) non-State armed groups and other actors remain rare, while there was a recognition by those present that this could inform not only DDR programming but also other arms control-related tools and activities, including sanctions and efforts to prevent or combat the illicit trade in SALW. The group noted that the rarity of tracing is not always due to a lack of trying but that such tracing activities require engagement and cooperation with the government and relevant national authorities (e.g. in one case, a government was reluctant to trace weapons collected from militias that were disarmed as many of these weapons came from government stockpiles). Finally, the experts noted that DDR personnel in United Nations-supported programmes are also able to support wider prevention and often work closely with non-State armed groups and have a good understanding of them.

Mine action

The objective of mine action is to identify and reduce the impact and risk of landmines and explosive hazards to a level where people are safe. Mine action entails more than removing landmines from the ground. It includes efforts aimed at protecting people from danger, helping victims become self-sufficient and active members of their communities, and providing opportunities for stability and sustainable development.

10 United Nations, Note by the Secretary-General on Administrative and budgetary aspects of the financing of United Nations peacekeeping operations, A/C.5/59/31, 2005; United Nations, Third report of the Secretary-General on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, A/65/741, 2011.

UN PHOTO/ESKINDER DEBEBE

NEW YORK, UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Security Council unanimously decides to extend the arms embargo against the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and the mandate of the Group of Experts established to monitor those sanctions.

The mine action subject matter experts explained that mine action activities take place primarily in post-conflict settings, allowing a return to civilian life, income and livelihoods through concrete actions such as decontaminating land and roads. Mine action activities have, however, also been used during peace negotiations as confidence-building measures by bringing conflict parties together in joint demining operations, as was done in Colombia. The subject matter experts explained that there is a push to replicate this and bring mine action more prominently into "upstream" peace negotiations so they can be leveraged even before a ceasefire agreement is finalized. This would, however, require technical experts to be part of the technical discussions accompanying the negotiation process and team. The CoP raised some challenges to using mine action in this manner, the primary one being that the humanitarian sector sees mine action as a conflict-neutral activity and making it part of a peace process may risk politicizing and "securitizing" it. The presenters also pointed out that UNMAS has supported activities such as SALW control, WAM, IED threat mitigation, and disposal of other explosive hazards in some contexts. This broadens mine action's potential role in conflict prevention work and potentially provides an alternate partner for these activities where others may not be present.

Monitoring the implementation of an arms embargo by a United Nations peace operation

This session was facilitated by experts from the MONUSCO AEC. The AEC was established in 2015 but only became fully operational in 2018 when it was staffed by five qualified AEC experts and staff. It draws it roots from the Arms Embargo Working Group, which it continues to coordinate. The Arms Embargo Working Group first met in 2014 to support MONUSCO's efforts on an existing arms embargo and in particular to monitor the implementation of the arms embargo in cooperation with the group of experts established by resolution 1533 (2004) and to observe and report on flows of military personnel, arms or related materiel across the eastern border of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The presenters explained that this is currently the only cell of its kind in a United Nations field mission. The AEC monitors the arms embargo regime in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and coordinates this work within the Mission through the Arms Embargo Working Group. The AEC registers and traces illicit arms, ammunition and related material processed by the Mission and gathers attributing and contextual information (on non-State armed groups, supply networks and illicit arms flows). The AEC's work has informed headquarters, a neighbouring United Nations mission, the GoE on the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and other PoEs. The AEC experts observed that this is a recently revitalized cell, which has led to some misunderstandings and misperceptions of its work methods within the Mission. This has at times been compounded by potential misperceptions by the Mission and the government about some of the AEC's work, which was likened to intelligence work, potentially making it difficult for the host nation to accept it. The presenters also pointed out challenges regarding the Mission's registration of weapons and broader issues with Mission information collection and sharing practices. Acknowledging that this has been a challenge in other contexts, the presenters noted that the AEC had a very

positive relationship with the GoE on the Democratic Republic of the Congo assisting the 1533 Security Council Sanctions Committee. The group concluded that the AEC was a useful information analysis cell, focusing on arms, which could inform conflict prevention strategies. A lessons learned exercise with the MONUSCO AEC was suggested by CoP members, with a view to how this could be duplicated for other missions, noting that this would require a mandate; an institutional set-up; specialized personnel and expertise; procedures for the registration of arms, ammunition and related material processed; and information sharing and management.

Weapons and ammunition management

WAM is a set of activities and processes that cover the oversight, accountability and governance of arms and ammunition throughout their management cycle in a comprehensive manner, including the establishment of relevant national frameworks, processes and practices for the safe and secure production and acquisition of materiel, stockpiling, transfers, end use control, tracing, and disposal. WAM's scope includes all conventional weapons – not limited to SALW – and their associated ammunition, parts and components. This holistic approach allows efforts to better regulate arms and ammunition to be undertaken not in isolation but in alignment with broader security sector, rule of law, armed violence reduction, counter-terrorism, and peacebuilding processes in pursuit of a national and regionally owned process.

UNIDIR carries out baseline assessments and research on how WAM can support conflict prevention, which provide a useful baseline of information on actors and processes in the country of operations and support donor coordination across a wide range of arms control activities.

The presenter reported that WAM requires a comprehensive approach that necessitates coordination with a wide set of United Nations actors. UNIDIR carries out baseline assessments and research on how WAM can support conflict prevention, which provide a useful baseline of information on actors and processes in the country of operations and support donor coordination across a wide range of arms control activities. These assessments and research do, however, need to be translated into practical actions; experience has shown that when this is done and weapons and ammunition are controlled, violence is reduced. The assessments also highlighted that (a) there is a need for a regional or subregional approach to address cross-border issues and to enable arms control to be an integral part of peace processes, and (b) information and data collection is important to inform programmes, projects and policies.

Group and plenary discussions highlighted the applicability of WAM initiatives to different types of conflict (political violence, intercommunal violence, terrorism), but the CoP agreed that WAM is not always given enough attention by United Nations field presences and national counterparts, leaving important gaps in arms control efforts. The full life cycle approach to WAM includes the need to monitor arms flows, and it was recognized by those present that the ability and resources to do this were greater in United Nations peace operations than in SPMs, regional offices or country teams. It was noted that there are NGOs and other actors, some of whom were represented in the workshop, who could support such monitoring, but they would need to engage with prevention actors.

Arms control and ceasefires

Ceasefires do not address the underlying causes of a conflict; they address the symptoms of that conflict, which is the violence and the tools that fuel it – that is, the weapons. Although ceasefire provisions vary from context to context, there are a number of ways in which weapons might be taken into account in ceasefires, such as prohibiting certain types of attack or certain types of weapon; refraining from moving troops and weapons to avoid being seen as taking advantage of a situation; refraining from offensive actions or implementing rules on "no show of weapons" that place limitations on the movement of troops with weapons outside of official duty; disengagement; or withdrawing forces and weapons from certain areas. Increasingly, transitional arms control measures are also being used to regulate arms during a predefined period, often as part of ceasefires that accompany negotiations or a political transition. These measures seek to limit or control the parties' use of certain weapons without necessarily removing the parties' access to them. This can be useful in situations where there is a need to build trust, de-escalate violence or create a favourable environment for talks. The measures can include elements of transitional WAM[11] as the parties are asked to strengthen oversight and governance over their arms and ammunition.

Once a conflict has broken out, ceasefires usually provide the entry point for addressing arms control. The presenter explained, however, that ceasefire agreements remain a tool for managing conflict and that conflict resolution will occur through political negotiations, which should accompany a ceasefire. The presenter made the point that arms control within a ceasefire agreement should therefore be linked to progress in negotiating

11 UNIDIR, The Role of Weapon and Ammunition Management in Preventing Conflict and Supporting Security Transitions, 2019, https://unidir.org/publication/role-weapon-and-ammunition-management-preventing-conflict-and-supporting-security.

PORT-AU-PRINCE, HAITI

The UN mission in Haiti's Community Violence Reduction section has employed 1345 local residents in a Cash-for-Work programme on the hilly outskirts of Port-au-Prince, building rock walls and planting vegetation.

and implementing provisions on other tracks in the process, such as political or economic provisions. The presenter further explained that the type of arms control provisions instituted through a ceasefire agreement (see above) may depend on when in the peace process arms control provisions are required and the type and purpose of the ceasefire.

Community violence reduction

CVR refers to programmes, implemented by the disarmament, DDR or CVR component of a United Nations peace operation, aiming at preventing and reducing violence at the community level in ongoing armed conflict or in post-conflict environments. CVR has the same strategic objectives as DDR: to contribute to peace and security by supporting programmes that reduce armed violence, to create political space and to help build a secure environment conducive to recovery and development. CVR differs from DDR in that it works directly with target communities to find solutions to causes of armed violence from within and explicitly targets youth at risk of recruitment by armed groups in addition to ex-combatants. CVR uses a bottom-up approach, emphasizing community engagement. While the strategic direction of CVR is set from above, decisions related to participant and project selection, training and education options, and monitoring and evaluation are discussed and agreed on with local communities.[12]

The CVR experts leading the session noted that their programmes take place primarily in peace operations, although the programmes are also starting to be integrated into the mandate and work of SPMs. The programmes often include efforts to collect or otherwise limit the circulation or use of weapons and reduce violence. The experts explained that CVR can also incorporate outreach and sensitization on issues related to arms and armed violence, as well as vocational training, the institution of weapon-free zones, voluntary community weapons disposal, voluntary disarmament of gangs, and support for consultations on WAM legislation and risk education. The links between CVR and WAM are being strengthened through a joint DPO and Office for Disarmament Affairs project on CVR and WAM; as an example, in Haiti WAM in communities is one of the eligibility criteria for obtaining access to CVR. These activities are implemented through United Nations peace operations and SPMs and, as such, they are mainly used in conflict and post-conflict settings where these missions are deployed. The experts noted that although CVR could also support pre-emptive conflict prevention strategies, such support would require the adoption of CVR or related programmes by development or other actors present in such contexts. They pointed out that CVR has grown considerably over the years and is increasingly mandated in peace operations, but they mentioned that senior-level personnel, in particular Special Representatives of

12 United Nations, Community Violence Reduction: Creating Space for Peace, 2017, https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/ddr-and-cvr-creating-space-for-peace.pdf.

the Secretary-General (SRSGs) and Special Envoys, need to learn how to embed CVR into their political and prevention strategies.

Sanctions including arms embargoes

United Nations arms embargoes have, for the most part, been adopted in conflict or peacekeeping contexts – that is, in contexts where the WAM capacity of State actors has been significantly degraded or depleted; diversions are routine; pre-crisis procurement procedures and management tools have been abandoned; volumes and types of materiel held in State arsenals are not known; and boundaries between formal security agencies and non-State actors are often blurred. However, many sanctions regimes "spill over" and support national authorities in their stabilization and post-conflict reconstruction efforts, including the completion of DDR and security sector reform.[13]

Discussions in this group centred on the examples of sanctions regimes in Yemen (including the arms embargo regime) and Mali (where there is a sanctions regime but not an arms embargo),[14] and some of the challenges faced by GoE or PoE sanctions regimes. The presenters explained that sanctions including arms embargo regimes are, for the most part, adopted by the Security Council to manage a conflict armament situation. They pointed out that in most situations, the WAM capacity of State actors has been significantly degraded or depleted, and transfers of military materiel into these settings present high security risks. Within the United Nations, arms embargoes are imposed by the Security Council, and their implementation is typically monitored through GoEs or PoEs. Sanctions typically relate to transfers (into and out of the country), but that practice has evolved and, for example, in Somalia the arms embargo includes requirements for improved WAM as part of post-delivery controls to prevent diversion.

The challenges raised by the presenters were mainly to do with the lack of cooperation, including a lack of information sharing between GoEs or PoEs and United Nations missions (even when explicitly mandated to do share such information), which can make the former's work difficult. Member States were generally seen as more forthcoming with information, although it was noted that they may have an alternate agenda for being so. The presenters pointed out that sanctions including arms embargoes tend to be used in situations of peaking or ongoing conflict as a tool to pressure parties and reduce their capacity to wage war, whereas they could be used before a conflict breaks out. Participants noted that this would require political will and a united Security Council to authorize such sanctions. Finally, participants asserted that some arms embargo regimes are not flexible tools, and processes to review and modify them (e.g. to partially or fully lift them) can be difficult or take a long time. They also noted that although recent efforts have been made to benchmark arms embargoes so as to facilitate their lifting when certain conditions are met (including linking the lifting of sanctions to improved WAM),[15] in some cases, the embargoes continue to reflect the situation at the time they were mandated and may remain "frozen in time" while the context to which they apply changes.

Security sector reform

The presenters observed that security sector governance and reform is both a preventive measure and a long-term development goal. They pointed out that the United Nations supports security sector reform in peace operations, in non-mission settings and in transition settings, where peace operations are withdrawing but where ongoing security sector assistance is needed. In societies emerging from conflict, security sector reform is a determining factor for early recovery, sustainable peacebuilding and longer-term development. The presenters explained that although security sector reform is mostly used in post-conflict settings, it applies to the whole of the conflict cycle and is anchored in the United Nations conflict prevention framework, in line with the Sustaining Peace agenda. They illustrated this with examples from Libya and Yemen, where the United Nations is undertaking security sector reform activities to support peace mediation efforts. The experts noted that in situations where conflict has not yet broken out, monitoring the power dynamics and vulnerabilities in the security sector can be part of an early warning mechanism. They explained that security sector reform and WAM are emerging topics and that the link between the two is recognized in Security Council resolution 2151 (2014). A practical example was given: In the Central African Republic, under sanctions that included arms embargo

13 For further information on arms control and sanctions, see UNIDIR, Applying Conventional Arms Control in the Context of United Nations Arms Embargoes, 2018, https://www.unidir.org/publication/applying-conventional-arms-control-context-united-nations-arms-embargoes.

14 Globally, at the time of writing: "There are 14 ongoing sanctions regimes which focus on supporting political settlement of conflicts, nuclear non-proliferation, and counter-terrorism. Each regime is administered by a sanctions committee chaired by a non-permanent member of the Security Council. There are 10 monitoring groups, teams and panels that support the work of 11 of the 14 sanctions committees." Security Council, Sanctions, https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/sanctions/information.

15 For example, Security Council Resolution 2385 (2017) of 14 November 2017 links the lifting of the arms embargo on Somalia to improvements in weapons management, notes that further improved weapons management is vital to prevent the diversion of weapons, and reiterates that the Security Council is committed to monitoring and assessing improvements in order to review the arms embargo when all conditions set out in Security Council resolutions are met.

regime security sector reform, the Security Council established Disarmament Demobilization, Reinsertion and Reintegration and WAM benchmarks. Finally, the presenters pointed out that WAM-related benchmarks include the establishment by the government of a planning document for arms and ammunition storage facilities and the development of an arms registration and management protocol for the security services.

POINTS RAISED IN THE PLENARY DISCUSSIONS

Several important points were also raised during discussions that were considered to cut across many of the arms control tools presented. Some of the points raised by the participants were as follows:

- There is a need for arms control and prevention experts to consider how to better use existing tools and how those tools can complement one another because the real power and potential emerges when we look at the interlinks. It was observed that more conversations among all the relevant stakeholders, such as those taking place in the CoP workshop, would be helpful.
- Those developing prevention strategies (SRSGs, Special Envoys, Peace and Development Advisers) were reported to perceive arms control measures as "technical" tools, whereas prevention is seen as a political activity (especially in ongoing and post-conflict contexts). CoP members viewed this distinction as an impediment for actors working on the political track in developing prevention strategies that integrate measures perceived as technical, such as arms control.
- Arms control can be very politically sensitive and, if not approached in a considered manner, can alienate national and other key prevention partners, including Member States. The need to guard against this, compounded with a lack of understanding on how best to approach arms control, can lead prevention actors to shy away from it.
- The arms control and related measures covered in the sessions are already widely used by the United Nations. Many of these tools, however, continue to be used almost exclusively in conflict management (e.g. ceasefires) and post-conflict (e.g. mine action) settings. Thought should be given to how to adapt them for other contexts, particularly pre-emptive prevention. This is already being done for CVR and DDR.
- Peacekeeping operations and non-peacekeeping settings are marked by very uneven access to tools, know-how and resources to run arms control and related programmes. This is linked to mandates and resources, with peacekeeping operations having access to staffing and programmatic funding through the peacekeeping budget, which is not available to other United Nations entities. Using arms control in pre-emptive settings will require greater support to the United Nations presences on the ground, in terms of both expertise and funding.[16]
- Although several arms control tools are used in prevention contexts, these are often implemented as a series of related but uncoordinated actions and are rarely integrated into prevention strategies. There is a need for research into how to better incorporate arms control into prevention work and ensure that it becomes an integral part of the United Nations prevention toolkit and strategies.
- Prevention strategies and arms control activities are usually developed and implemented at the national level. The changing nature of conflicts, however, means that there is increasingly a need to work at the regional and local level, especially in pre-emptive or post-conflict peacebuilding settings. More research needs to be done on national and local prevention and arms control strategies.
- Coordination and information sharing are weak, both across various arms control activities (e.g. DDR, arms embargo monitoring) and between United Nations entities working in or on the same theatre (e.g. a regional SPM covering a region where a peace operation is also deployed). Participants felt that this hampered a more cohesive approach to arms control.
- In mission settings (peace operations, SPMs, regional offices), there is a need to raise awareness about how arms control measures and opportunities can contribute to and be integrated into prevention work at the most senior level: SRSGs, Deputy SRSGs (DSRSGs), Special Envoys. In non-mission settings Peace and Development Advisers should integrate arms control information into country assessments.

16 The United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office have launched the Saving Lives Entity (SALIENT). This new funding facility, established within the Peacebuilding Fund, will support a comprehensive, crosssectional and multiyear approach to addressing the challenge of illicit small arms and armed violence in most-affected countries.

SESSION 5 CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

BACKGROUND

Although not in the original programme, Session 5 was added to provide participants with an opportunity to discuss in greater depth "cross-cutting" issues that had been raised both within the CoP and as a result of other research into conventional arms control and conflict prevention undertaken by UNIDIR. Discussions took place in a series of parallel break-out groups, each covering one of the following topics:

- Managing political sensitivities around arms control
- Subregional dimensions of arms control and conflict prevention
- Local interventions in arms control and prevention
- Criminal groups and illicit arms flows

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Conventional arms control is a sensitive issue, and not all governments (whether Member States or host governments in countries where the United Nations has offices or missions) will accept that the Organization engages on this subject. There is a need to support prevention actors in finding ways and narratives to overcome this reticence, including by emphasizing the impact of arms or the positive outcomes for authorities if they can stop the flow of weapons and ammunition to armed opposition movements.
- Participants noted that there is a perception among prevention actors that arms control is technical and "old fashioned," which can be a disincentive for them to engage on this. There is a need for awareness-raising and capacity-building, including for senior personnel in field missions and at headquarters, to understand how it can be useful. A change is also required in the way arms control information is produced so that it is easier for prevention actors to integrate it into their work.
- Conflict occurs at different levels (regional, national and local), and the conflict drivers will vary from level to level. Conventional arms control programmes are often applied at the national level and must be adapted to support regional or local-level prevention strategies as part of a wider approach to addressing the root causes of a conflict.
- Tackling arms control on a regional level is complicated by porous borders, poor monitoring (training) of security forces and poor information sharing between neighbouring States. Information sharing between United Nations presences in neighbouring countries also needs to improve if a regional approach to prevention and arms control is envisaged. The development of a framework for regional arms control and prevention, based on best practices, would be a useful step in improving the Organization's work in this field.
- The Sustaining Peace approach to prevention puts added emphasis on anticipating conflicts and impeding them from breaking out. Activities to do this will primarily be undertaken by UNCTs, and the role of Resident Coordinators and UNCTs will therefore be key in designing and implementing pre-emptive prevention strategies that include arms control. This will require awareness-raising on arms control among UNCTs as well as appropriate support to allow them to integrate arms control into their work.
- Arms control tools for use at the community level should be adapted so as to appropriately respond to local dynamics identified through careful analysis of a situation. This may require additional expertise to bring an "arms control lens" to analysis and help design appropriate programmes to address arms in the community.
- Tackling issues around illicit arms will require more data on illicit arms flows and weapons in the hands of criminal actors. This should be considered in coordination with judicial and anti-corruption issues and economic tracing of illicit arms financing. This more holistic approach would require some breaking of silos, as at present these areas are often examined in isolation.

SESSION SUMMARIES

Managing political sensitivities around arms control

Arms control remains a subject that many actors in the prevention field are reluctant to address. It is therefore unsurprising that political sensitivities were recurrently mentioned by participants as an obstacle to integrating conventional arms control into prevention work. There would appear to be several "levels" of sensitivity, which

UN PHOTO/ALBERT GONZALEZ FARRAN

NORTH DARFUR, SUDAN

Water is distributed in El Srief (North Darfur) where the nearest water point is 15 kilometres away. The activity fosters Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR).

include reticence of host States to share information with the United Nations on diversion, including potential losses of weapons; reluctance of United Nations political leadership (here the groups referred specifically to SRSGs and DSRSGs) to bring up arms control for fear of angering or alienating national or other partners; and concerns that Member States may not want to be "exposed" if they are seen to be contributing to the proliferation of arms in certain areas or regions. Without addressing political sensitivity, it is unlikely that conventional arms control will gain much traction in conflict prevention work; there is a need to better understand these sensitivities and how to address them.

During the discussions, participants pointed out that for the host country, the gathering and use of sensitive information on arms can expose weaknesses and uncover "embarrassing" issues such as the diversion of weapons from State stockpiles. It was therefore agreed that the United Nations must balance discussions on such sensitive topics with the need to keep good relations with the host government and that this can lead to a reluctance by Special Envoys, SRSGs, DSRSGs and resident representatives to engage on these topics.

Participants acknowledged that setting up mechanisms, practices and procedures to gather the information required to better integrate arms control into peace actors' work can be a challenge as there is a lack of knowledge or expertise on arms control within the DPO and the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and in United Nations peace missions, political missions and country teams. The majority felt that this was closely tied to mandates, mission priorities and budgets that are agreed with Member States, since if arms control is not an explicitly mandated activity, it is unlikely to be undertaken, in part because resources to do so will be linked to its inclusion in a mandate and Mission budget. Moreover, even when United Nations field presences have the ability to gather information on arms, which in many cases may be considered to be sensitive, it was pointed out by those present that this can lead to questions on how to handle that information, how to hold parties accountable and what impact on other objectives of the United Nations presence it would have if this information were shared. These questions also relate to relationships with Member States, including Security Council members, who may, for example, be exporting arms to conflict-affected or neighbouring zones or flouting embargoes. However, attendees noted that the United Nations in-country presences are often well placed to consider cross-border issues, although this would require much better cooperation between United Nations entities within a region.

The group suggested that senior personnel in peace operations and SPMs, Resident Coordinators (i.e. the highest United Nations official in-country in non-mission settings) or heads of United Nations agencies should be "protected" if they work on arms control. The concerns raised centred on protecting the careers and reputations of personnel who in the process of doing their job may be targeted by host nations or others who may not want them to examine issues around arms control. To avoid this, some CoP members noted that Resident Coordinators

could delegate difficult conversations to other members of the country team to avoid being personally targeted but that, as their role changes and Resident Coordinators take on additional "political" tasks, this may become more difficult. Where feasible, attendees felt that regional offices could provide cover and support to Resident Coordinators engaging in political tasks as the latter have more of a political mandate. Most important, however, was the participants' view that appropriate mandates were key to undertaking arms control work. They pointed out that although host governments may be reluctant to accept United Nations presences, and especially Resident Coordinators, taking on a more political role – peace operations and SPMs are inherently political – a mandate would allow them to do so. Likewise, making sure that provisions on arms control are part of a peace agreement could open the door for work in this area if the United Nations is mandated more broadly to support the agreement.

Including arms control provisions in peace agreements could **open the door for the United Nations to work on arms management and control as a part of it support to these agreements.**

The CoP observed that implementing implicitly or explicitly mandated arms control activities will require (a) more United Nations staff to be trained in arms control, especially in the field; (b) guidance for SRSGs, DSRSGs, Special Envoys and Resident Coordinators on how to meet these mandates; (c) host country buy-in and close cooperation with national SALW control committees and national commissions; and (d) cooperation with regional organizations. One suggestion for "nationalizing" arms control in non-mission settings was to include arms-related metrics in the common country assessment undertaken by UNCTs.[17]

Regional dimensions of arms control and conflict prevention

Although United Nations presences typically have a mandate within national or regional boundaries, non-State armed groups do not, and they often operate across borders and subregions. This is matched by the cross-border movement of conventional arms, including SALW and ammunition. It is therefore difficult to ignore the regional dimensions of many conflicts and the arms that fuel them. However, many conflict prevention and arms control activities are run at a national level, meaning that they do not necessarily address the regional dimensions of these issues. This potential disconnect was seen by participants as exposing a gap in arms control and prevention work, and it was felt that understanding the need to apply a regional approach, as well as some of the challenges and good practices in doing so, would support more sustainable and appropriate solutions.

The discussion highlighted that some of the main cross-border issues related to conventional arms control and to prevention remain illicit cross-border arms flows, which are often facilitated by weak border control, itself often linked to long and difficult to police borders. Difficulties in addressing this issue can be exacerbated by what participants referred to as "fault lines" or gaps between the different levels where action may be needed at regional, national and local levels.

Addressing cross-border or regional issues in conventional arms control and in prevention work requires distinguishing between inter-State and intra-State conflicts, as the measures required to address them must be adapted to the type of conflict at hand. It also requires information on which actors and supporters to involve (e.g. national governments, neighbouring States, regional institutions or bodies, non-State armed groups, and communities). Frameworks such as the Economic Community of West African States Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons may already be in place and can support efforts to address arms control at a regional level. However, it was also noted that regional frameworks and processes can be undermined if there is insufficient domestic capacity to implement them or insufficient capacity for the regional bodies to monitor them, and if national political dynamics and priorities override regional priorities and aspirations, or if the frameworks are dependent on donor support that is not forthcoming. There is thus a need to foster political goodwill at the national and regional level if such frameworks and processes are to be effective and to ensure resources are available for implementation if they are to be effective. In situations where such frameworks do not exist, it was felt that support should be given to creating them. Finally, it was noted that there is a need for more resources for effective border control, civil-military cooperation, efforts to create willingness to engage (political will), and trust-building between State officials on both sides of the border.

It was considered that the United Nations can better adapt its work or existing tools by (a) promoting the institutionalization of partnerships for regional frameworks; (b) supporting a holistic approach that includes measures that not only target the security forces that may have a role in addressing cross-border issues (military, and intelligence units from customs, police and other law enforcement) but also take into account socioeconomic, cultural and management issues; and (c) continuing to advocate for addressing cross-border issues, including by creating a sense of urgency where necessary and, if required, by pushing for mandates to address these issues. All these issues point to the need to research what exactly regional arms control and prevention mandates and

17 The common country assessment is a country-based process, undertaken by the United Nations with close involvement of the government, to review and identify key development challenges based on a common analysis and understanding of the development situation of the country.

activities should include and whether there are existing good practices that can be identified and replicated.

Local level conflicts destabilize national political processes **by undermining the parties' confidence in the process and represent primary drivers of violence against civilians.** Tackling local conflicts is key to prevention work.

Local interventions in arms control and prevention

The CoP raised the issue of local-level conflicts in several sessions, including the country case studies from Session 2. Local-level conflicts were mentioned in relation to all stages of a conflict life cycle. They were said to destabilize national political processes by undermining the parties' confidence in the process, create local incentives to spoil the process, create insecurity so that agreements cannot be implemented, and represent primary drivers of violence against civilians. Tackling local conflicts was therefore felt by the CoP to be a key to prevention work, and one that was often not given enough attention. CoP members noted that addressing the root causes of conflict and avoiding a recurrence of conflict often require an understanding of, and programmes to address, local-level conflict and violence, which can be instrumentalized or otherwise fuel broader conflict. Such local-level, possibly intercommunal, conflicts are facilitated by the presence of conventional weapons, mainly SALW and ammunition, and these tensions or open conflicts may also be a factor driving the influx of weapons into certain communities. Limiting communities' access to arms could be expected to reduce the levels of violence but would only address the symptoms of the conflict.

As such, participants felt strongly that arms control measures must be supported by local mediation and reconciliation initiatives and that these would have to happen in a balanced fashion so as to avoid leaving communities at the mercy of other groups who have not been disarmed. At the same time, there may be cultural factors or underlying reasons for communities to arm themselves (e.g. as security providers in an insecure environment), and in some cases the formation of community-level militias or self-defence groups is encouraged by authorities as a security provider or proxy in a larger conflict. The CoP noted that the need to consider local dynamics around arms and conflict is often overlooked by prevention actors within the United Nations, who tend to focus on "high-level", national activities, but that local dynamics cannot be ignored if the Organization is to support sustainable solutions.

The group noted that arms control tools are less adapted to managing violence within communities than to managing violence among communities. Despite this, there has been an evolution in thinking, and the root causes of a conflict (i.e. why weapons are acquired) are now considered more widely. Some members noted that arms control is about not only removing weapons but also empowering communities so that they have more agency in controlling the arms flows that fuel and escalate local conflicts and that tackling local conflict requires focusing on the accountability of local actors. As such, participants noted that the reduction of weapons within communities should not be an objective in and of itself; it must be adapted to the community, which implies a need to understand why a community is weaponized and who the local security providers are and give the local population a chance to voice and find a solution to their violence-related issues.

The issues raised in the discussion speak to the diversity of violence and armed violence at the local level, the causes of which can be wide ranging and might include ethnic or communal tensions, cattle rustling or conflicts around natural resources. It was noted that violence is perpetrated not only by groups but also by individuals and that local conflicts may be instrumentalized by the private sector or for political purposes (State-sponsored violence); such conflict requires political will if it is to be addressed. In such situations, unless local conflicts are resolved, it is very difficult to address higher-level conflicts, and it was felt that there is a role for the United Nations in these processes, but that the Organization must be prepared to include and share this role with other actors who may be active in the communities.

Responding to local-level violence requires localized analysis, especially when there is a governance vacuum, as there are different sources or causes of violence, including within a single locality. Responding to such violence also calls for a deeper understanding of the local population and of armed actors' underlying grievances as well as how local dynamics affect the supply and demand for weapons, and vice versa. It also requires an acknowledgement that weapons are both factors in and the result of violence; they need to be considered across their whole life cycle. Arms control tools for use at the community level therefore need to be adapted to address the local dynamics that have been identified through careful analysis. Additional expertise may be required to bring an "arms control lens" to analysis and to help design appropriate programmes to address arms in communities.

It was generally felt that the United Nations is currently ill-equipped to address local conflicts, especially if they have cross-border dimensions, but that doing so would offer an opportunity for real engagement with local actors through civil society components. Participants noted the need to address local-level supply and demand through local-level arms control initiatives. It was pointed out by some that traditional and religious leaders, who can be very influential in many areas, often play a role in these initiatives; however, other local-

level "gatekeepers" can be hard to identify and are not always listened to by the international community. Consequently, the group felt that there may be an over-reliance on some community representatives, who may not always be the right people to have around the table.

Criminal groups and illicit arms flows

In previous sessions, the CoP had raised the blurring of lines between armed groups and criminal organizations. This can make it difficult to apply political solutions to groups that are also engaged in criminal activities, and it was felt that there is a need to (a) better understand the links between organized crime and illicit or illegal arms and ammunition flows and their impact in conflict and (b) better integrate these measures into conflict prevention work. The group looking into criminal groups and illicit arms flows made the observation that conventional arms control activities are often focused on efforts to control weapons in the hands of actors that are "easy to reach", such as government security forces and allied groups, or signatory parties to a peace agreement. However, UNIDIR noted that a survey of arms control and prevention actors revealed that violence linked to criminal groups, often perpetrated using illicit or illicitly held weapons, was seen to be as prevalent as "political violence", even in peacekeeping settings. In some countries, there may be no open conflict but extremely high levels of violence related to criminal groups or gangs; in others, "politically" or "ideologically" motivated groups may be heavily involved in criminal activities and networks.

Although gathering information and data on illicit arms flows and criminal activities may seem difficult, several of the tools presented highlighted where such data and information already exist. The workshop organizers proposed that these groups and their weapons represent the often-neglected actors and instruments of violence that fuel instability and conflict, possibly pushing other actors to arm themselves as a means of protection. The arms in the hands of criminal actors may be the most difficult to monitor and control, and the involvement of armed movements in criminal activities may be difficult to broach when seeking to mediate a conflict; however, this is also something that cannot be ignored and that will require greater support.

Criminal groups and networks with links to illicit arms flows are **a major source of insecurity and a negative influence on local balances of power.**

Discussions revealed that the CoP perceived criminal groups and networks linked to illicit arms flows as a major source of insecurity and a negative influence on local balances of power (e.g. through the control of revenues and resources, and the ability to access more, better or different weapons). The economic links between criminal networks and non-State armed groups, where they provide services to one another, were viewed as particularly difficult to address. This made it challenging for international actors to engage with non-State armed groups, as it was unclear whether they should be considered as political or criminal entities, each of which would require a different approach and different programmes.

All participants agreed that the key challenges in addressing criminal groups and networks linked to illicit arms flows were (a) a lack of data collection and analysis on criminal networks and illicit arms and (b) a lack of investigative capacity and weak and underfunded systems to track and address illicit trafficking. Addressing illicit economic activities is made more difficult by them being the only source of income in some areas; denying access to them would create further problems. Likewise, for armed movements that are dependent on criminal activities to pay their fighters, preventing them from doing so may lead to the groups fragmenting, making negotiations with them more difficult.

Addressing criminal groups and illicit arms flows from an arms control perspective was seen to require better data collection and analysis on arms and ammunition (e.g. where weapons come from, how they come into the area, and how they reach criminal groups). The need to raise political awareness at higher levels to integrate arms control issues into law enforcement capabilities was also brought up. It was emphasized that it is not sufficient to consider institutional structures; there is a need to better understand the financial flows and how criminal groups are using these financial networks to serve their goals and activities, as this might provide leverage on how to address the criminal groups.

It was felt that the issues raised in this discussion merit further research if the criminal dimensions of armed groups, the presence of other criminal groups and the illicit flows of armed weapons are to be better integrated into conflict prevention work. UNIDIR will therefore commission further research into the key links between organized crime and illicit arms and ammunition flows at the various stages of conflict prevention; the impacts of illicit arms and ammunition flows linked to organized crime that fuel and sustain conflict; and the United Nations frameworks, strategies and policies that can be used to support prevention activities related to organized crime and illicit or illegal arms and ammunition flows.

SESSION 6 INTEGRATING ARMS CONTROL INTO UNITED NATIONS CONFLICT PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT TOOLS

BACKGROUND

Session 6 aimed to better understand United Nations requirements related to arms control information and draw on participants' expertise and experience in conflict analysis or assessments or in gathering conventional arms-related information that might be useful for conflict analysis. This session included a presentation of the preliminary findings of UNIDIR research into United Nations conflict analysis frameworks, which showed that arms-related information was not included in the conflict analysis frameworks used by most United Nations agencies and departments, including the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and the DPO. The session examined arms control information requirements for pre-emptive prevention, peace mediation, and peacekeeping and peacebuilding activities. The summaries below represent a consensus view of workshop participants, as expressed in the discussions.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Integrating arms control into prevention activities at different stages of a conflict life cycle requires a more complete and nuanced evidence base, which should be based on clear data. To allow for this, information needs to be gathered in a more systematic manner and categorized and organized according to analytical and informational needs.
- Challenges related to information and data include the level of detail and type of data required (e.g. allowing arms, ammunition and related material traceability); specific collection mechanisms; capacity-building (e.g. in peacekeeping operations); information and data sharing and management; analysis for specific purposes; and the production of actionable analytical products and their dissemination.
- When integrating conventional arms control into prevention work, the latter's focus on the regional, national and local levels should not detract from the need to integrate information on international arms supplies into the analysis. This includes data on the origins and transfers of arms and ammunition as well as the supply networks and actors involved, including spoilers.
- The role of conventional arms information as part of an early warning mechanism remains a key yet underexplored area for conflict prevention. More broadly, however, arms control indicators are not well integrated into conflict analysis at any stage of the conflict life cycle, and more needs to be done to ensure their inclusion.
- Some of the primary arms control indicators mentioned were arms categories, types and quantities available to or held by the conflict parties; the international arms trade, its dynamics at regional levels and implications at the national level; baseline information on the stocks of national defence and security forces; analysis of minimum conditions for conventional arms control and interventions; and information and data on arms and security perceptions, including on changes in arms-related threats and risks.

SESSION SUMMARIES

Pre-emptive prevention

When discussing the arms-related information that would be useful to support efforts to prevent the outbreak of a conflict, there was broad agreement among participants of the need for an understanding of (a) the international arms trade, its dynamics at regional levels and implications at the national level; (b) national commitments to international and regional arms control norms; (c) which national actors hold arms, and for what purposes; and (d) how national legislative frameworks regulate civilian arms possession.

Session members noted that the presence of arms in situations of existing political or social tensions can fuel grievances and support the formation of non-State armed groups. Therefore, a mapping and typology of armed actors' holdings by weapon types, categories and (mis)uses was seen a useful benchmark under which to track the formation of armed movements and escalating levels of violence, which may provide early warning of broader conflict. It was agreed that the presence, availability and (mis)uses of arms in different contexts can also serve as proxy indicators for correlating issues. Furthermore, when combined with other

The presence of arms in situations of political or social tensions can support the formation of non-State armed groups. **A mapping and typology of armed actors' weapons provides a useful benchmark for tracking the formation of armed movements and early warning of conflict.**

JUBA, SOUTH SUDAN

United Nations Mission in South Sudan Civil Affairs Division holds a Conflict Management Forum with Internally Displaced Persons held under the theme "The Role of Women in Community Dialogue and Mediation".

related information, variations in civilian arms possession, including significant increases, could serve both as an indicator of rising insecurity and potential conflict and as a comparable baseline against which to measure progress in de-escalating tensions and controlling arms.

Participants suggested that information sources for pre-emptive prevention might include national reports under relevant international and regional instruments; reports from the United Nations and other international organizations; data and information generated by specialized NGOs and research institutes; information from civil society organizations, including community leaders and local sources; and information generated from engagements with non-State armed groups.

Peace mediation

This subgroup discussed what arms-related information was pertinent or required during the peace mediation phase, that is, when a conflict has broken out and attempts are made to resolve it through political and security negotiations. During this stage, it was felt to be important to understand the arms categories, types and quantities available to or held by the conflict parties, as well as the (mis)use and impact of those arms in specific locations. These factors were seen to reflect the "balance of power" and capabilities of conflict parties and could help identify possible external support to the parties, all of which mediation teams would need to take into account in their mediation strategies, particularly when negotiating ceasefires and other security provisions that relate directly to arms control.

Similarly, those present felt that it was important to gather information on the motivations of conflict parties to hold and (mis)use weapons (e.g. political, financial or revenue creating; protection of territories; protection of populations and communities). Such information might include the number and types of international humanitarian law violations or, where existing and at that stage, violations of ceasefires. This would inform how the mediation team might engage the parties and respond to their motivations to fight or enter into a peace process and could help shape negotiations on security arrangements so that they are appropriate for responding to the situation at hand. The subgroup also noted that there could be "red-line" weapon categories, the use of which would indicate a threshold for mediation activities or the imposition of sanctions on parties in an attempt to avoid further escalation and bring reluctant actors into a mediation process.

Furthermore, knowing the origins (e.g. domestically manufactured, imported, or otherwise transferred from outside; the manufacturers; the countries of manufacture), sources (e.g. transit routes, networks, financers, markets), transfers, and supply networks of conflict parties and their proxies, as well as links to proxy armed conflicts that could have an impact on conflict parties, was also deemed critical by the subgroup. Such knowledge could help mediation teams identify and engage with "power players", stakeholders and potential spoilers,

including those outside the conflict zones who could influence the peace process. Information pertaining to the risks of weapons being diverted into other countries was also highlighted, as this could lead to regional instability.

The relationship between peace mediation and sanctions including arms embargo regimes was acknowledged. It was felt that specific arms embargo information could be helpful, depending on the context (e.g. the sanctioned and embargoed entities and individuals) and depending on the information-sharing mechanisms (e.g. between the GoEs or PoEs monitoring sanctioned entities, individuals and their networks, and the United Nations missions supporting mediation activities, including activities that may tap into those networks or have ties to those individuals or entities) and limits (e.g. where sanctions and arms embargo objectives do not converge but diverge, or are perceived and interpreted to do so).

The subgroup also saw informational elements pertaining to armaments as critical for the design not only of a conflict prevention process and framework (for a ceasefire and its modalities, its monitoring mechanism(s), security arrangements, security sector reform and DDR, and so on) but also for early warning mechanisms and indications on re-armament as opposed to de-escalation by conflict parties, especially in cases of "cheating ceasefires", where parties use the space afforded by negotiations to re-arm and then break off negotiations and return to conflict.

Among the sources of arms-related information that could be used in the peace mediation phase, the subgroup mentioned the following: monitoring mechanisms and reports for sanctions including arms embargo (e.g. PoEs and GoEs); United Nations agencies and missions (e.g. Joint Mission Analysis Cells, DDR, United Nations police, UNMAS); other international partners in the conflict area (e.g. military, police); national authorities, security providers and experts; intelligence services (while noting that this could compromise a mediation team's impartiality in the eye of the conflict parties); the International Committee of the Red Cross and other humanitarian actors; specialized expert NGOs such as Conflict Armament Research, the Small Arms Survey, and the Armed Conflict Location and Event Project (ACLED); Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International; in-country, on the ground non-State armed groups and (ex-)combatants; local communities in the conflict area; and social media.

Peacekeeping

Peacekeeping is seen as the deployment of efforts (often involving missions with armed or unarmed peacekeeping troops) to support a peace agreement and avoid an escalation or resurgence of violence and conflict. When discussing the pertinence of arms-related information and requirements during the peacekeeping phase, the working group underlined the links between the categories and types of weapons employed, both by State and non-State armed groups, and the resulting types of armed violence. Information on the arms and political economy nexus was also considered important. Further, arms-related information was seen as critical (a) to understanding, and acting on, changes in threats and risks to the civilian population and local communities, as well as to the State and national authorities (e.g. the emergence of new non-State armed groups or changing patterns of violence, such as from political conflict to intercommunal conflict), and (b) for mitigating threats and risks to the implementation of United Nations mission mandates.

The subgroup also noted that information on the arms and holdings of non-State armed groups needed more attention to better understand the groups' "fire power" (e.g. strengths, capacities, suppliers, support networks), to support missions in conflict resolution activities and identify spoilers in peace processes, and to understand and forecast challenges during stabilization phases.

Two sets of information were considered as particularly pertinent, including for tracing and conflict analysis purposes. On one side, baseline information on the stocks of national defence and security forces (which was regarded by participants as useful for right-sizing national stockpiles as defence and security forces develop after conflict) and information on the national marking and registration system; on the other side, baseline and continuous information generated when processing and registering illicit (e.g. captured, seized, surrendered, collected, found or recovered) arms and ammunition. Despite relevant international standards and technical guidelines developed by the United Nations requiring this information, it was noted by the subgroup that providing such information is not (yet) a standard practice of United Nations peacekeeping missions and that although information and data may be collected and available within missions, there was a need for harmonization, systematization or centralization of the information, including for conflict analysis purposes. This would aid in determining whether arms and ammunition in circulation originate from within or outside the country (i.e. the first type of information can inform analysis, mitigation and addressing of risks nationally or locally, whereas "newly" arriving arms inflows could be part of an early warning mechanism, in addition to potentially informing – through the right channels – manufacturing States and their export risk assessments, due diligence and safeguarding provisions).

Peacebuilding

Whereas peacebuilding is often seen as consolidating peace after a conflict, the Sustaining Peace approach has meant that peacebuilding is now equally applicable as a tool to prevent the outbreak of conflict. Discussions in this session, however, focused largely on post-conflict efforts, and the group noted a general need for an evidence-based dialogue on arms control and management, with all actors involved at this stage. Like in the discussions on peacekeeping information needs and requirements, those for peacebuilding were reported to include stocks of State and holdings of non-State armed groups, which were also deemed important for DDR and security sector reform. In addition, the subgroup highlighted informational needs and requirements that would allow for an evidence-based and comprehensive analysis of minimum conditions for conventional arms control and interventions, including for actors outside the official processes, such as civilians, communities, self-defence groups and militias. For such analysis, the need for information and data on arms and security perceptions was also noted.

A fuller picture with arms, ammunition and related information was generally considered important for several reasons, including to detect possible risks for conflict recurrence or resurgence, to inform early warning mechanisms and indicators, and to inform day-to-day, mid- and long-term stabilization programming and planning.

The impact of arms, the categories and types of arms most frequently used or misused (including in violation of international humanitarian law), and the direct or indirect impact of arms on human rights and civilians were informational needs and requirements identified by the subgroup. While such arms casualty monitoring does not take place in all missions, it was noted that such monitoring could contribute information and evidence to domestic or international justice mechanisms and accountability, both at the individual and the State level. Still within the discussion of arms impacts, and unsurprisingly, the need for information and data on contamination by explosive hazards such as explosive remnants of war, IEDs and anti-personnel landmines was also highlighted.

Similar information sources were noted by this subgroup as had been mentioned by other working groups in other sessions. These sources included the United Nations (e.g. PoEs and GoEs, United Nations missions, monitoring field missions, the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, UNIDIR); specialized NGOs; household surveys; security and SALW proliferation perception surveys; national sources and reports under relevant instruments; open source intelligence; new media, including social media; and conflict-affected communities and individuals.

SESSION 7 ARMS CONTROL INFORMATIONAL AND ANALYTICAL TOOLS

BACKGROUND

Session 7 showcased a series of select arms control and conflict analysis data tools developed or used by specialized United Nations or non-United Nations actors and partners. It provided an opportunity to see what the different types of information gathered and processed by the tools are; how they are being made available to target audiences; if and how these tools could be better incorporated into United Nations prevention work; and what would be required to do so. This session included presentations of informational and analytical tools by ACLED, Conflict Armament Research, the Small Arms Survey and the United Nations Operations and Crisis Centre (UNOCC). UNOCC also presented on its methodological and analytical framework.

This session also heard interventions by expert participants on informational and analytical tools available at and used by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons, the United Nations Development Programme, and the Centre for Armed Violence Reduction. Background information on all the above-mentioned tools were shared with participants of the CoP.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Existing arms data collection, survey and analysis tools cover a wide variety of arms and conflict-related information – some with a geographic focus and others with different levels or depths of coverage – that can be used to inform prevention work. There was general acknowledgement of the value of exploring how these tools can be better used by conflict analysts and prevention personnel.
- Much of this information is gathered in silos, and there is a need to establish more systematic links between the different types of conventional arms data collected by and available to United Nations and other actors. Unless this is done, those analysing a situation will only have a partial picture of arms-related issues. A meta-analysis of arms control informational elements included in existing databases, resources and analytical tools was recommended.
- Arms control actors need to better understand United Nations conflict prevention architecture, analysis frameworks and analysis tools (e.g. methods, indicators, sources of information and data sets used, and risk assessment and analysis mechanisms and processes) to identify entry points for introducing conventional arms control and indicators into prevention activities.
- Conflict prevention actors need to become more aware of the risks and impacts of arms as well as the tools at their disposal to mitigate or avoid risks and impacts. This includes better understanding how to integrate arms control tools into prevention strategies.
- The information on arms that is gathered, both by the United Nations and its partners, should be systematically included in conflict analysis. As an entry point for this, the indicators used in conflict analysis should be reviewed to ensure that, where appropriate, arms control indicators are included, and data collection methods should be adapted to allow for their inclusion.
- A dedicated review of the meta-level analysis of arms risks and impacts would be a useful starting point to assess what the current mechanisms tell us, and a case-specific examination could be used to improve understanding of the details and depth required at local and national level for effective early warning.

SESSION SUMMARIES

Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project and database

ACLED, an independent NGO that emerged from an academic project, collects information on political violence and demonstrations, with data and information (e.g. events-based data by date, location, event type, subevent type, actor and actor type, as well as conservative fatality estimates) publicly available and updated on a weekly basis by a remote team of researchers through international partnerships. ACLED collects reports from over 8,000 sources (e.g. traditional media, trusted new media sources, international organizations, and partnerships with local conflict observatories), covering 75 languages so far. ACLED produces weekly regional overviews, infographics, briefings and reports. Its data set and indicators do not include specific arms-related information; however, information on categories and types may be reported as may movements of armed forces, non-State armed groups and clashes.

Conflict Armament Research and the iTrace tool

Established in 2011, mandated through a Council of the European Union decision and operating with financial support primarily from the European Union but also from other donors, Conflict Armament Research is currently working globally and in almost 30 countries with defence and security forces operating in conflict zones, to identify and document illicit arms, ammunition and related material, as well as to provide verified evidence on sources and patterns of supply and procurement. The primary objective is to enhance and inform the pretransfer assessments of European Union members and other States of diversion risks. Its data set already includes 600,000 items; more than 500 manufacturers, in more than 60 manufacturing States; more than 14,000 unique chains of custody in 27 conflict-affected States; and more than 1,000 specifically identified points of diversion. Conflict Armament Research's primary information management tool, iTrace, is publicly available online, providing detailed information and using pattern analysis to present data and reports; it is complemented by a specific iTrace portal, which is only accessible to member States. Conflict Armament Research has several other related products, including the recently launched sanction alerts, which combine information and data on arms, ammunition, related material, IEDs and drones with enhanced investigations including network analysis and analysis of financial flows.

Small Arms Survey and assessment tools including SALW surveys

Established in 1999 as a project of the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies in Geneva, the Small Arms Survey is an internationally recognized centre that generates evidence-based, impartial and policy-relevant knowledge and analysis on small arms and armed violence issues. Since its inception, the Small Arms Survey has developed methodologies and protocols for undertaking "small arms baseline assessments" in countries affected by SALW trafficking and related violence. These assessments aim to provide national authorities and the international community with actionable data to design and implement interventions in the field of SALW control and armed violence reduction. The South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons renamed and codified these tools as "SALW surveys" in its 2004 regional standards, and the dedicated 2012 Modular Small-arms-control Implementation Compendium (known as "MOSAIC") summarizes good practices in undertaking these assessments. SALW surveys use mixed quantitative and qualitative research methods to map out SALW distribution, impacts, capacities and perceptions in a given country or region. The Small Arms Survey has, to date, conducted more than 15 such assessments in Africa, the Balkans, Europe and Central Asia, including in several post-conflict or transitioning contexts. Challenges for the conduct of SALW surveys include the time and resources needed. However, there are opportunities to undertake "light" versions of SALW surveys and to explore cost-saving synergies with other fields of practice for which such types of assessment are also relevant (e.g. Preventing Violent Extremism security sector reform).

United Nations Operations and Crisis Centre

Established at United Nations Headquarters in New York in early 2013, UNOCC provides support to senior leadership across the United Nations system for informed, timely and coordinated decision-making processes and strategic engagements on United Nations field operations and crisis-related issues. It also serves as the secretariat for the implementation of the Secretary-General's conflict prevention agenda by supporting the implementation of systematic risk assessments for cross-pillar prevention discussions. In that context, establishing risk baselines using external source risk models as well as internal United Nations feedback, followed by informed discussions, allows the United Nations system to generate concrete options for ways forward. Overall, the external source risk indices and models presented include references or specific indicators pertaining to conventional arms control. However, where conventional arms control elements are referenced, they are found within lower sublevel indicators, which may obscure arms control issues during risk analysis and visualization.

PLENARY DISCUSSION

During the plenary discussion that followed, CoP members observed that most prevention actors base their information collection and analysis on indicators of fatalities or of incidents in which arms are being (mis)used. From a life cycle arms management, control and preventive perspective, this would mean that an important amount of information and data available on arms, be it in the legal/licit sphere or the illegal/illicit sphere prior to such (mis)uses, events or fatalities, is not adequately taken into account in conflict prevention considerations including risk assessment methodologies.

Available information on legal and illegal arms **is not adequately taken into account in conflict prevention.**

The potential of strengthening cooperation and collaboration between United Nations entities – including missions, PoEs and GoEs – and specialized expert NGOs such as Conflict Armament Research, including for information and data-sharing purposes, was also examined. Such cooperation and collaboration exist in some contexts, and sometimes on an ad hoc basis, but more can be done in this regard, including making better and more targeted use of actionable information that is already or is becoming available.

TOULÉPLEU, CÔTE D'IVOIRE

United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) peacekeepers conduct arms embargo inspections on government forces in western Côte d'Ivoire.

Some participants made a similar point regarding SALW surveys and related tools, and their resulting information and findings, claiming that even when conducted in a light version (i.e. requiring less resources and time), these surveys and tools have not always been used to their full potential.

When discussing UNOCC's internal data collection process (e.g. through surveys and interviews or meetings), it became clear that if United Nations in-country entities and individuals participating and contributing to processes do not have a sufficient background and understanding of the cross-cutting nature of comprehensive conventional arms control and its role in conflict prevention, there is little prospect of arms control matters being appropriately and accurately taken into account. Based on UNOCC's presentation of the external baselines, the group also noted that a meta-analysis of existing information in the arms control sphere could be conducted to better examine how or which of these baselines could be integrated into conflict prevention indicators.

At the end of the session, participants were invited to raise issues that they would like to discuss before the workshop closed and that were to be explored in the final session.

SESSION 8 WRAP UP AND NEXT STEPS

BACKGROUND

Session 8 provided an opportunity to present initial findings and conclusions from the workshop and to revisit some of the issues raised. The session was opened by UNIDIR's Director and was followed by a presentation in plenary and a discussion. The presentation revisited each session in turn, drawing out key points raised in these sessions. The second part of the session focused on issues flagged by participants in the previous sessions that they would like to examine. It concluded with a summary of several recurring themes that had come up during the workshop.

SESSION SUMMARY

The session opened with a presentation of the main findings of the workshop, during which the organizers provided a summary of the points raised during the previous seven sessions:

- Prevention and arms control activities are carried out in support of a host government, and the effectiveness of programmes is affected by the degree of buy-in of the national authorities. Obtaining host government consent and cultivating and maintaining good relationships with the national authorities is therefore key in being able to have a positive impact.
- Political sensitivities and concerns about how host governments might react to the United Nations gathering information on arms remain a major hurdle to integrating such information gathering into the Organization's work. This is particularly true for Resident Coordinators, who may not feel that they have a mandate for arms information gathering or "political cover" from the United Nations system if doing so leads to a backlash from the host government.
- There is a need to raise awareness among United Nations decision makers and prevention experts (Special Envoys, SRSGs, Resident Coordinators) of the value of arms control information and programming in prevention work if they are to support such initiatives. In particular, it would be important to improve their understanding of how arms control can help in meeting conflict prevention mandates or goals and how it can be included in prevention strategies.
- Generating support for arms control as a key prevention activity will require prevention actors to have access to information presented in a manner fit for purpose, that is, information that can be understood by non-arms control experts and that provides actionable recommendations. Including arms control in common country assessments and United Nations development assistance frameworks is a starting point and would get arms control "on the radar". In dynamic prevention contexts, this information needs to be collated on a regular basis and kept up to date. In peace operations, information analysis and collation may best be done through a single entity that coordinates and presents information compiled from a diverse array of actors within and outside the mission. In non-mission settings, the Peace and Development Advisers deployed to support Resident Coordinators may provide an entry point for arms control information and could ensure that Resident Coordinators are provided with regular updates.
- Activities that include arms control are being implemented, often in peacekeeping or post-conflict contexts. Implementation remains "siloed", for example with parallel efforts on DDR, security sector reform, mine action, and information gathering and analysis in Joint Mission Analysis Cells. There is not a comprehensive approach to arms control, resulting in disjointed efforts and gaps in efforts to better control weapons and prevent conflicts.
- The siloing of arms control activities is often matched by poor information coordination and management across arms control actors and between governments and United Nations missions, country teams, and regional offices. It would be important to improve this coordination if prevention actors are to act in an informed manner.
- The resources for and the types of arms control activities can vary enormously depending on whether a United Nations peace operation or SPM is deployed in support of a peace process. These missions mandate and provide resources for activities (e.g. DDR, security sector reform) that are less common in non-mission settings. Efforts are under way to broaden the application of arms control tools in non-mission settings, but non-mission settings remain underserved and under-resourced for such activities. Changing this will require better mandates and directions for the integration of arms control into conflict prevention work and the availability of expertise to support it.

Although it was recognized that conflict prevention requires interventions at the regional, national and local level, it was felt that many of the United Nations efforts are focused on the national level, possibly reflecting countrywide mandates and, in some cases, limited presence at local levels. Where local prevention efforts are under way, they do not always link in with national prevention efforts or strategies. Regional efforts were facilitated by United Nations regional offices and other regional bodies, such as the Economic Community of West African States, but the former remain under-resourced to integrate arms control into a lot of their work.

During the discussion that followed, participants observed that the research ties in closely with the broader work of the United Nations on the SDGs of Agenda 2030, including SDG 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions.[18] They also noted that conventional arms control is an intrinsically political process and that this needs to be addressed at the highest level of a mission and at headquarters. They raised the point that doing so will require not just "knowing things" but having in place a system for gathering and sharing information between mission components, between missions (especially in cross-border contexts), within the United Nations system and with non-United Nations actors. However, it was widely acknowledged that those Member States who are also arms suppliers may not want information on their arms supplies to be "exposed". Some participants observed that the more arms control-related information is shared and these issues are raised, the harder it will be for States to ignore, and the more actors raise these issues, the easier it will become to confront some sensitive issues around arms control that might otherwise be "swept under the carpet". Making the need for arms control as part of a peace agreement or mandate gives it legitimacy, and it becomes a duty that no one can fault the United Nations for undertaking. Interestingly, some present observed that it is Member States who fund many of the arms control organizations who presented their work in Session 7, but that the latter have little information on how their reports influence decision-making or are used by Member States.

Attendees made the point that some areas of work, such as DDR, are mature and already have strong correlations with arms control, in which case it may be more pertinent explore whether there are gaps in implementing those arms control measures. Other fields of work may not yet have integrated arms control to the same degree and may need a different approach.

CoP members also suggested that it would be interesting to look across the databases and other information gathered by experts and do a meta-analysis to consider the information available as a combined data set. For instance, this might involve combining information on weapons, profiling or tracing with information gathered by others on incidents and patterns of violence to paint a broader picture than is currently available. It was suggested that this could be a useful case study.

The last presentation envisaged how to take the CoP forward after the workshop. The organizers explained that this workshop report would be prepared and that it is expected that the CoP will be maintained and used as a platform for further targeted or specific consultations with groups or certain members of the CoP. The organizers proposed that the CoP could be convened at the request of members to discuss topics of joint interest, and it was also explained that as part of the research on conventional arms control and conflict prevention and management, a second workshop is expected to be held in 2021. The session closed with an overall evaluation of the workshop.

18 This includes target 16.4: "By 2030, significantly reduce illicit financial and arms flows, strengthen the recovery and return of stolen assets and combat all forms of organized crime."

NEXT STEPS AND WAYS FORWARD FOR THE COMMUNITY OF PRACTITIONERS AND FOR CONVENTIONAL ARMS CONTROL AND CONFLICT PREVENTION RESEARCH

The CoP workshop in conflict prevention and conventional arms control represented a first meeting bringing together actors from both disciplines. Many ideas on potential areas that UNIDIR could explore to improve the integration of arms control and conflict prevention emerged from the presentations and interactive break-out and discussion groups. In some cases, these discussions identified new avenues of research and in other cases they further validated observations from the perception survey and fieldwork already undertaken. These discussions are being integrated into the Institute's wider research on arms control and prevention and have informed several follow-on areas of enquiry.

A number of points came up throughout several sessions, most notably the need to:

- Better understand how arms control tools can be used in each phase of conflict prevention and how to implement this by considering the expertise and other resources required to do so
- Consider arms control at a regional and local level, not just a national one
- Further research the impact of organized crime on conflict and on arms control and prevention efforts
- Tackle the political sensitivities around arms control and possible reluctance by United Nations personnel to address these sensitivities
- Improve information sharing both within United Nations field presences and between them
- Continue the discussion and make further efforts to break down the siloes both between arms control and prevention experts and within the different arms control activities the United Nations undertakes.

These points all provide useful guidance on how to move the thinking on arms control and prevention forward by opening avenues of research that UNIDIR will address in the second half of this research project.

The CoP has served to build a bridge between arms control and conflict prevention actors.

The CoP has also served to build a bridge between arms control and conflict prevention actors, raising awareness of the cross-over between the two fields and how the former can be leveraged in support of the latter. Moving forward, the CoP provides the research project on conventional arms control and conflict prevention with a platform for consultation with key partners and actors, which will be used to gather information and validate findings. A second such workshop in 2021 will do exactly this. Until then, it is anticipated that further sessions involving CoP participants will be organized as research progresses around some of the themes identified in this workshop.

ADDRESSING CONVENTIONAL ARMS RISKS AND IMPACTS TO PREVENT CONFLICT AND BUILD PEACE: WHAT MORE SHOULD THE UNITED NATIONS DO?

REPORT OF THE FIRST COMMUNITY OF PRACTITIONERS WORKSHOP

The impact of armed conflict extends far beyond casualties in battle, often leading to forced migration, long-term refugee problems, the destruction of essential infrastructure and services, damage to social, political and economic institutions, and more broadly, negatively affecting development. Although the motives behind armed violence may differ from context to context, the use of arms to perpetrate violence is a constant that is often poorly accounted for when seeking to prevent conflict.

In order to better understand the dynamics around armed violence and how conventional arms control can be better leveraged by the United Nations (UN) to prevent it, in May and June 2020 the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) convened a series of online meetings in a Community of Practice (CoP) workshop.

This report captures the themes raised in the CoP sessions, which will serve to inform and guide further research and dialogue on integrating conventional arms control into conflict prevention and management.

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