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Inputs for Action on Small Arms: Conclusions and Recommendations from the Thematic Expert Seminars

RUBEN NICOLIN

Acknowledgements

Project team

Author: Ruben Nicolin.
Research team: Alexandra Kuimova, Manuel Martínez Miralles, Sarah Grand-Clément.

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Note

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Executive Summary

Inputs for Action on Small Arms: Conclusions and Recommendations from the Thematic Expert Seminars

DESTROYING SMALL ARMS. DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO, 2014.
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An estimated 1 billion small arms are in circulation worldwide and kill approximately 250,000 people each year. They drive conflict, instability and physical and psychological harm that has far-reaching consequences for peace, security and sustainable development. With the aim of stopping the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons (SALW) and reducing human suffering, in 2001 States adopted the United Nations Programme of Action on SALW (PoA) and then in 2005 the International Tracing Instrument (ITI) on identifying and tracing SALW. The Fourth Review Conference of the PoA (RevCon4), in June 2024, will provide an important opportunity for States to strengthen the implementation of the PoA and the ITI in support of efforts to address the diversion, illicit proliferation and misuse of SALW.

This report aims to support States in their substantive preparations for RevCon4 by identifying challenges and providing expert recommendations, for States' consideration, to overcome these challenges. It is the outcome of four online expert seminars convened between May and September 2023, co-organized by the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs and the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research and funded by the European Union. The seminar series brought together a diverse group of experts from Member States, United Nations entities, regional and international organizations, specialized non-governmental organizations (NGOs), civil society, and, where relevant, the private sector to discuss key challenges in SALW control and to identify actionable steps that States could consider at RevCon4 to advance PoA/ITI implementation. The seminars provided **five key recommendations** for consideration at RevCon4 on how to support and strengthen effective implementation of the PoA and the ITI in order to address the illicit small arms trade in all its aspects.

1. RevCon4 should encourage States to **strengthen national ownership of PoA/ITI implementation,** including by using baseline assessments, developing and implementing national action plans (NAPs), and setting voluntary national targets. RevCon4 could also acknowledge the role of regional processes to support target setting.

▶ States should consider using baseline assessments to comprehensively identify strengths, weaknesses and gaps in the national SALW control system as well as opportunities to address these gaps and weaknesses.

▶ Setting national targets and developing and implementing NAPs enable States 1) to prioritize which gaps to address first; 2) to formulate and coordinate actions to reach national targets; 3) to identify needs for international cooperation and assistance; 4) to coordinate assistance projects in line with national priorities; and 5) to collect data on the progress towards reaching national targets. In the RevCon4 outcome document, States should be encouraged to utilize target setting and NAPs to strengthen PoA/ITI implementation.

▶ National ownership can also be supported through regional processes, which can play an important role to support States in addressing the transnational issues of illicit SALW. Regional processes allow States to develop national targets that are coordinated with nearby States, yet are tailored to the national context. RevCon4 could underline the value of regional processes in PoA/ITI implementation through voluntary target setting.

2. In order to fulfil the recommendations of previous PoA Review Conferences and Biennial Meetings of States to **effectively facilitate international cooperation and assistance in support of implementing the PoA and the ITI,** RevCon4 should consider how to improve information sharing, enhance coordination, and ensure sustainable funding.

▶ Of critical importance is enabling national authorities to make use of available information to formulate detailed requests for international cooperation and assistance. RevCon4 should also take steps to improve the sharing of information on assistance needs, projects and offers between all stakeholders at the international level.

▶ Similarly, coordination both at the national and international level is essential for effective international cooperation and assistance. National authorities – in particular, the dedicated national coordinating mechanisms for SALW control in those States that have one – play an important role in coordinating assistance projects to ensure that they effectively, efficiently and sustainably contribute to national targets and strategies. RevCon4 should encourage States to strengthen the capacity of national authorities to coordinate international cooperation and assistance. At the international level, there is a need for a mechanism under the PoA/ITI to match assistance requests with resources.

▶ To help ensure adequate, predictable and sustainable funding, which is a prerequisite for effective international cooperation and assistance, RevCon4 should encourage States to strengthen the use of official development assistance (ODA) to support SALW control assistance projects.

3. The negative impact of illicit SALW and armed violence on all aspects of sustainable development is well documented and therefore RevCon4 should consider practical measures to better **integrate SALW control into development processes** at the international and national levels.

▶ States should link national SALW control processes to national development strategies, inter alia by including issues associated with SALW and armed violence in national development strategies. RevCon4 should further strengthen the synergies between the PoA/ITI process and the Women and Peace and Security (WPS) agenda.

▶ While the PoA/ITI process contributes to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) framework through supporting data collection for relevant indicators (in particular SDG Indicator 16.4.2 on significant reduction of illicit arms flows), considerable challenges with data collection remain. In order to overcome such challenges, RevCon4 could consider options for strengthening national capacity for data collection and analysis for SDG Indicator 16.4.2, including enhancing national coordinating mechanisms, collaborating with civil society and sharing lessons learned through the United Nations.

4. In order to **ensure inclusive approaches for SALW control**, States at RevCon4 should agree to remove obstacles to the effective participation of all key stakeholders at the national and international levels.

▶ Recognizing the important role played by civil society in implementing the PoA and the ITI, States should engage the different areas of expertise within civil society and better include civil society in SALW control processes at the national level. Furthermore, donors and funding mechanisms should ensure that civil society organizations can gain access to funding.

▶ RevCon4 should explore how to ensure that the important contributions made by women and women's organizations to SALW control can be shared and further strengthened to support effective PoA/ITI implementation.

▶ It is well-documented that the issues associated with illicit SALW are inherently gendered. To reach the goals of the PoA and the ITI, it is central that all stakeholders strengthen their efforts to mainstream gender and to ensure that SALW control programming is gender responsive.

5. RevCon4 will need to provide a platform for all relevant stakeholders to share challenges, opportunities and effective practices for **managing new technologies and innovation** in the context of PoA/ITI implementation. Innovation and new technological developments are usually one or two steps ahead of regulation efforts, which creates regulatory gaps that can be exploited, including for criminal purposes.

▶ RevCon4 should consider how to address the regulatory challenges posed by polymer components, modular designs, additive manufacturing, as well as the use of online platforms to facilitate the illicit small arms trade. It should also explore how new technologies can provide States with opportunities to strengthen PoA/ITI implementation and ways in which States can use the PoA/ITI process to exchange knowledge with other stakeholders (in particular the private sector) on effective and efficient technological solutions and the barriers to using such solutions.

▶ States at RevCon4 will consider the establishment of a technical expert group to ensure the continued applicability of the ITI and the PoA. This could take the form of a standing technical expert group that provides continuous support and expertise to the PoA/ITI process, or an ad hoc open-ended working group (OEWG) mandated to address long-standing challenges and current gaps within a set time frame.

United Nations Blue Helmets Help Disarm Militias. Côte d'Ivoire, 2007. © UN Photo / Ky Chung

Acronyms & Abbreviations

BMS	Biennial Meeting of States to consider the implementation of the PoA
CNC	Computer numerical control
ITI	International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons (International Tracing Instrument)
MFA	Ministry of foreign affairs
MOSAIC	Modular Small Arms Implementation Compendium
NAP	National action plan
NGO	Non-governmental organization
ODA	Official development assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
POA	United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects
REVCON	United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the PoA
SALIENT	Savings Lives Entity
SALW	Small arms and light weapons
SCA	Stockpiles of conventional ammunition
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SECRETARIAT	UNODA acting as the Secretariat of the PoA and the ITI
UNIDIR	United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research
UNODA	United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs
UNSCAR	United Nations Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation
WPS	Women and Peace and Security

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Marking of SALW. Bangui, Central African Republic, 2022. © MINUSCA / Hervé Cyriaque Serefio

Introduction

Small arms and light weapons (SALW) have devastating impacts. In the words of the United Nations Secretary-General in A New Agenda for Peace, the "proliferation, diversion and misuse [of SALW] undermine the rule of law, hinder conflict prevention and peacebuilding, enable criminal acts, including terrorist acts, human rights abuses and gender-based violence, drive displacement and migration and stunt development".[1] The Small Arms Survey estimates that there are more than 1 billion small arms in the world today, killing approximately 250,000 people every year.[2] SALW cause short- and long-term physical and psychological harm and can have far-reaching negative consequences for the sustainable peace and development of societies around the world.

In 2001, United Nations Member States adopted the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (PoA) and then in 2005 the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons (International Tracing Instrument, ITI).[3] These instruments provide a global framework for action to prevent and address the illicit trade of SALW, thereby reducing armed violence. States have committed to implement SALW control measures at the national, regional and global levels by addressing a range of issues, including the "illicit manufacture, control, trafficking, circulation, brokering and trade, as well as tracing, finance, collection and destruction of small arms and light weapons".[4]

States meet every two years in a Biannual Meeting of States (BMS) to consider implementation of the PoA and the ITI. Every six years, States convene a Review Conference (RevCon) to review progress in implementation, discuss how to overcome new and emerging challenges, and determine priorities for the next 6-year meeting cycle. The BMS and RevCon outcome documents outline persistent and new challenges, gaps in implementation, and measures to support implementation. The Fourth Review Conference (RevCon4) will take place in June 2024, preceded by a Preparatory Committee meeting in February 2024. Twenty-three years after the adoption of the PoA, many issues related to the illicit trade in SALW persist, while new ones have emerged and must be addressed. RevCon4 will provide States and other stakeholders with an important opportunity to strengthen the implementation of the PoA and the ITI in support of efforts to address the diversion, illicit proliferation and misuse of SALW.

This report is the outcome of a series of four online expert seminars convened between May and

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1   United Nations, Secretary General, Our Common Agenda Policy Brief 9: A New Agenda for Peace, July 2023, **https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/our-common-agenda-policy-brief-new-agenda-for-peace-en.pdf**, p. 23.

2   Karp estimates that there are 1 billion "firearms". However, as his definition of firearms is approximately the same, the term "small arms" was used here for consistency of terminology. A. Karp, Estimating Global Civilian-held Firearms Numbers, Small Arms Survey, 2018, **https://www.smallarmssurvey.org/resource/estimating-global-civilian-held-firearms-numbers**, p. 3; Small Arms Survey, Global Violent Deaths (GVD) Database 2004–2021, 2023 Update, Version 1.0, 1 December 2023, **https://doi.org/10.5281/ZENODO.8215005**.

3   United Nations, General Assembly, Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, A/CONF.192/15, 20 July 2001; United Nations, General Assembly, Report of the Open-ended Working Group to Negotiate an International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons, A/60/88, 27 June 2005.

4   United Nations, General Assembly, Programme of Action, A/CONF.192/15, Section II, paragraph 4.

September 2023. The seminars were co-organized by the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) and the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) and were funded by the European Union. They brought together experts from different disciplines to discuss key challenges in SALW control and identify actionable steps that States could consider at RevCon4 to advance PoA/ITI implementation. Each seminar focused on a different topic: (a) international cooperation and assistance; (b) new technology; (c) linkages between small arms control and sustainable development; and (d) target-setting in PoA/ITI implementation.[5] A wide range of experts from Member States, United Nations entities, regional and international organizations, specialized non-governmental organizations (NGOs), civil society, and, where relevant, the private sector, were invited. This ensured a diversity of perspectives including, as far as possible, a balanced regional and gender representation.

The report is intended to help States to better prepare for RevCon4. To support this goal, rather than provide a summary of each of the four seminars, the report focuses on five key issues that emerged across the seminars and will be discussed during RevCon4. For each issue, the report first provides relevant background information, including recommendations from previous BMS and RevCon outcome documents. It then highlights challenges and introduces recommendations to be considered before and during RevCon4. These were identified by the experts who participated in the seminars and, in some cases, have been complemented by the research team in line with the findings of the seminars. The views expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the position of UNODA, UNIDIR or the European Union.

The rest of this report consists of five chapters. Chapter 1 focuses on the importance of national ownership for effective PoA/ITI implementation, identifying gaps in SALW control at the national level and setting national targets. Chapter 2 examines international cooperation and assistance, specifically information sharing, coordination and sustainable funding. Chapter 3 considers the linkages between SALW control and sustainable development, providing recommendations for integrating SALW control into development processes and collecting data in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Chapter 4 underscores the importance of inclusive approaches for effective PoA/ITI implementation, an issue that was raised in all seminars. Finally, Chapter 5 explores the implications of new technologies and innovation: the challenges they pose to established SALW control measures, the opportunities they present to strengthen PoA/ITI implementation, and options to keep both instruments up to date in the face of continuous changes.

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5   The series consisted of the following seminars: Improving International Cooperation and Assistance in Implementing the PoA (28 June 2023), SALW Control and the Implications of New Technologies (25 July 2023), Integrating SALW Control into Sustainable Development Processes (6 September 2023), and Target Setting under the PoA (27 September 2023).

Smelting of confiscated SALW. Kosovo, 2014. © Arben Llapashtica

1. Strengthening national ownership

National ownership can be defined as each State exercising effective leadership over its SALW-control policies and strategies, and the coordination of actions to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in SALW (see Box 1). It is a cornerstone of effective PoA/ITI implementation. In the PoA process, States recognize that "the primary responsibility for solving the problems associated with the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects falls on all States".[6] At BMS8, States further "underlined the importance of States assuming strong national ownership of the full and effective implementation of the [PoA] and the [ITI]".[7]

This chapter summarizes obstacles and pathways to ensure the full national ownership of PoA/ITI implementation in terms of:

▶ Identifying gaps and issues at the national level.
▶ Setting targets and monitoring implementation.
▶ Supporting national target setting through regional processes.

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6 United Nations, General Assembly, Programme of Action, A/CONF.192/15, Section III, paragraph 1.

7 United Nations, General Assembly, Report of the Eighth Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, A/CONF.192/BMS/2022/1, 12 July 2022, Annex, paragraph 4.

Box 1: Definition of national ownership

National ownership of PoA/ITI implementation can be described as States exercising effective leadership over their SALW-control policies and strategies, and the coordination of action to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in SALW.[8]

The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness identified three key aspects of national ownership:

1. "[National authorities] exercise leadership in developing and implementing their national . . . strategies through broad consultative processes"
2. "[National authorities] translate these strategies into prioritised results-oriented operational programmes".
3. "[National authorities] take the lead in co-ordinating aid at all levels in conjunction with other development resources in dialogue with donors and encouraging the participation of civil society and the private sector".[9]

1.1 Using baseline assessments in national SALW control

National baseline assessments have emerged as an important tool through which a State can identify the gaps and challenges in its national SALW control system in order to implement countermeasures. In the outcome document of BMS8 in 2022, States encouraged "the conduct of voluntary, nationally determined baseline assessments . . . with a view to addressing needs in a comprehensive and sustainable manner [and] preserving and strengthening national ownership of requesting States"[10]. A baseline assessment brings together all national stakeholders – including the security sector, pertinent government ministries and, where relevant, civil society and the private sector – to allow for a holistic analysis of the national SALW control system and its strengths, gaps and weaknesses. A good gap analysis forms the basis for identifying effective measures to address the problem of SALW and armed violence and thereby to implement the PoA and the ITI. It can also allow national authorities to accurately identify their needs for international cooperation and assistance and pave the way for international cooperation and assistance requests.

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8   Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, 2005, paragraph 14, **https://www.oecd.org/dac/effectiveness/34428351.pdf**; K. Maze, Searching for Aid Effectiveness in Small Arms Assistance, UNIDIR, 2010, **https://unidir.org/sites/default/files/publication/pdfs/searching-for-aid-effectiveness-in-small-arms-assistance-105.pdf**. See also United Nations SSR Task Force, Security Sector Reform: Integrated Technical Guidance Notes, 2012, p. viii, **https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/un_integrated_technical_guidance_notes_on_ssr_1.pdf**.

9   Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, paragraph 14. The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness was agreed at the Second High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in 2005 (convened by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, OECD) and was signed by 138 States.

10 United Nations, General Assembly, Report of BMS8, A/CONF.192/BMS/2022/1, Annex, paragraph 89.

Challenges

The potential of national baseline assessments to inform PoA/ITI implementation remains under-utilized. This is due not least to capacity constraints or the lack of a national coordinating mechanism that would be well-placed to take the lead on a baseline assessment process.

Ensuring that baseline assessments are inclusive has been another difficulty. Securing the participation of all relevant national authorities presents a hurdle, in particular as SALW control requires a whole-of-government approach and baseline assessments would therefore benefit from the presence of a wide range of national authorities. Civil society and the private sector also constitute crucial stakeholders that are often not sufficiently or meaningfully included in baseline assessments. Moreover, participating stakeholders disproportionally nominate men to attend such meetings (for further detail see Chapter 4). Assessments that lack inclusivity or diversity are unlikely to be comprehensive in their findings and are more likely to overlook important gaps in the national SALW control system because important perspectives are not taken into account.

Beyond inclusive participation, baseline assessments often do not sufficiently account for the different impacts of SALW on women, men, girls and boys in collecting data during a baseline assessment and identifying the issues faced. Collected data might not be disaggregated by sex, age and disability, which can make identifying issues and root causes difficult.

Furthermore, even when a comprehensive baseline assessment has been conducted, its impact depends on whether national authorities use its findings for national planning. This can include formulating national strategies, such as national security and development strategies, and a national action plan (NAP).

Recommendations

▶ National authorities should take a leading role in identifying the gaps and issues in the national SALW control system and identifying a way forward. A State can make use of existing methodologies and tools to facilitate its baseline assessment. These include UNIDIR's Weapons and Ammunition Management Baseline Assessment Reference Methodology and the model of assessment visits drawn up by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) as well as its assistance request questionnaire under its SALW and stockpiles of conventional ammunition (SCA) assistance mechanism.[11] United Nations entities and specialized organizations can support States with baseline assessments, for example, by fulfilling a facilitating role or offering additional technical expertise when needed.

▶ A baseline assessment should pay particular attention to the capacity, knowledge and skills of competent national authorities involved in SALW control. This should include a review of the

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11 H. Giezendanner and H. Shiotani, A Reference Methodology for National Weapons and Ammunition Management Baseline Assessments, UNIDIR, 2021, **https://www.unidir.org/publication/reference-methodology-national-weapons-and-ammunition-management-baseline-assessments**; Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, "OSCE SALW and SCA assistance mechanism", n.d., **https://salw.osce.org/Home/Resources/1-assistance-mechanism**.

functioning of any existing national coordinating mechanisms and national control systems to determine effective practices and areas to be strengthened. In cases where such a national coordinating mechanism is not present, a baseline assessment should examine the case for establishing and maintaining one.

▶ States and other entities conducting a baseline assessment should ensure that it is gender responsive and includes a gender analysis.

▶ National authorities should use baseline assessments when identifying international cooperation and assistance needs. This will allow them to gain an accurate and comprehensive understanding of the gaps, to make informed and prioritized requests for international cooperation and assistance, and to measure progress against a baseline.

▶ States could use RevCon4 to highlight the utility of baseline assessments as a basis for supporting PoA/ITI implementation. In the outcome document, States should be encouraged to conduct baseline assessments to inform national SALW through-life control efforts, including the setting of voluntary targets, and to help monitor progress towards attaining those nationally set targets.

1.2 Setting targets and implementing national actions plans in SALW control

National ownership entails that States exercise leadership in developing national strategies or goals and "translate these strategies into prioritised results-oriented operational programmes" (see Box 1).[12] In the context of SALW control, national targets and national action plans constitute tools that support States with these key aspects of national ownership.[13] In the BMS8 outcome document, States agreed "to consider establishing voluntary national targets" and encouraged "the development and implementation of voluntary [NAPs]" in support of the implementation of the PoA and the ITI.[14] Similarly, the United Nations Secretary-General recommended in A New Agenda for Peace that States "set national and regional targets and measure progress toward the implementation of regulatory frameworks, including via data collection and monitoring".[15]

Although setting targets and implementing a NAP are treated separately in the BMS8 outcome document, they are closely linked, with national targets frequently becoming part of a NAP on SALW. They are therefore treated side-by-side in this section. Existing national targets can inform the development of a NAP, while the process of designing a NAP also includes target setting. When well implemented, setting national targets and formulating a NAP allow a State to:

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12   Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, paragraph 14.

13   A NAP can be described as should be a whole-of-government "plan to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade, destabilising accumulation and misuse of SALW at the national level and to address associated social, economic and environmental impacts". United Nations, Office for Disarmament Affairs, "MOSAIC 04.10", 2018, p. 2, **https://disarmament.unoda.org/ convarms/mosaic/**.

14   United Nations, General Assembly, Report of BMS8, A/CONF.192/BMS/2022/1, paragraphs 24, 26.

15   United Nations, Secretary-General, "A New Agenda for Peace", p. 23.

▶ Identify priority areas to be addressed, based on results of a completed baseline assessment (see Section 1.1).

▶ Define national targets that the State will use to determine that the priority areas have been addressed.

▶ Formulate and organize the actions necessary to reach the targets in a given time frame and define the responsibility of national actors for implementing these actions, taking into account available resources and capacity.

▶ Identify national needs for international cooperation and assistance, develop assistance requests that support reaching the national targets or implementing the NAP, and coordinate the implementation of assistance activities with national authorities responsible for related actions.

▶ Monitor and evaluate implementation by defining clear and realistic indicators for which data can be collected that will measure progress from an established baseline towards achievement of the targets.

▶ Collect data that can help to draw lessons learned and that meet national, regional and international reporting obligations.

A prerequisite for national ownership of SALW control is that national authorities have the capacity to exercise effective leadership. Obviously, this also applies to setting targets and designing and implementing NAPs. In discussions in the seminars, participants underlined that a national coordinating mechanism would be well positioned to take the lead on setting national targets and designing NAPs. In the PoA, States agreed to establish such a national coordinating mechanism.[16]

National targets could be utilized to inform the PoA/ITI process. In 2019, the United Nations Secretary-General in his report to the General Assembly suggested that the PoA/ITI process be made more bottom-up and State-led by giving national targets a more prominent role.[17] BMSs and RevCons could provide a platform for States to exchange views and information on progress made and challenges faced in implementing national and regional targets. They could also provide support to States in reaching national targets through international cooperation and assistance.

National targets and NAPs in a range of areas other than SALW control have been endorsed by the international community as effective means to support progress in national and regional implementation of international instruments. For example, the Women and Peace and Security (WPS) agenda and the Business and Human Rights agenda have endorsed NAPs as an effective means to make progress at

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16 United Nations, General Assembly, Programme of Action, A/CONF.192/15, Section II, paragraph 4. This report consistently uses the term "national coordinating mechanism" in line with the Modular Small Arms Implementation Compendium (MOSAIC).

17 United Nations, Secretary General, "The Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and Assistance to States for Curbing the Illicit Traffic in Small Arms and Light Weapons and Collecting Them", Report of the Secretary-General, A/74/187, 12 July 2019, paragraph 69.

the national level.[18] Frameworks such as the Paris Agreement on climate change and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development have utilized national targets or national strategies to channel action, mobilize resources and report on progress. In regional processes on SALW, States have repeatedly decided to use NAPs to facilitate the national implementation of agreed regional goals and targets (see Section 1.3).

Challenges

As of 2022, 31 States have indicated in their PoA national report that they have set national targets in support of PoA/ITI implementation, while 23 States have noted having a NAP (including 20 that have also established national targets). Key factors behind the lack of targets or a NAP include:

▶ The limited capacity of a national coordinating mechanism.
▶ The lack of a national coordinating mechanism.
▶ Limited political will to allocate the resources to set national targets and implement a NAP.

Where national targets have been set, progress is often hampered by insufficient government leadership and existing government siloes. Lack of capacity, in particular of the national coordinating mechanism, has a direct negative impact on the effective design and implementation of national targets and NAPs. In cases where the financing of the development and implementation of NAPs has been primarily reliant on international cooperation and assistance (in large part due to the absence of dedicated funds from the national budget), targets have been missed and implementation has not been sustainable. At the same time, siloes often exist within the government, with the government ministry, agency or department that hosts the national coordinating mechanism frequently developing national targets and NAPs with little involvement of other relevant government ministries. Consequently, these ministries and other stakeholders might not be aware of the existence or the contents of the national targets or NAP.

A further weak point in the elaboration of targets and the implementation of SALW NAPs has been their frequent disconnect from national security, prevention[19] and development strategies. This has been identified as an important factor contributing to government ministries being unwilling to commit resources to implement the NAP. In addition, stakeholders in civil society and the private sector are often excluded from developing national targets and implementing NAPs.

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18 The Business and Human Rights agenda is centred around the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, endorsed by the Human Rights Council in 2011. These principles outline due diligence obligations of businesses to "prevent and address the risk of adverse impacts on human rights involving business activity". To implement the Guiding Principles, the United Nations Working Group on human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises encouraged States to develop NAPs. See, e.g., United Nations, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights: Implementing the United Nations "Protect, Respect and Remedy" Framework, 1 January 2012, https://www.ohchr.org/en/publications/reference-publications/guiding-principles-business-and-human-rights; Danish Institute for Human Rights, "National Action Plans on Business and Human Rights", n.d., https://globalnaps.org/about/.

19 Prevention as an overarching term includes issues such as conflict prevention, preventing violent extremism or armed violence prevention.

The generation and collection of data to monitor and evaluate the effective implementation of national targets and NAPs often remain weak (also see Section 3.2 on data collection challenges). Traditionally, NAPs frequently lack a monitoring and evaluation framework. Limited attention has therefore been paid to ensuring that sufficient resources are made available for measuring progress (or lack thereof) in implementing the NAP and attaining national targets. This makes it difficult for national authorities to track whether and which parts of the NAP have been implemented, identify and respond to implementation challenges, and make improvements for a potential follow-up NAP.

Recommendations for setting targets and designing and implementing NAPs

▶ In the RevCon4 outcome document, States should be encouraged to use national targets and NAPs as a means to strengthen national ownership of PoA/ITI implementation.

▶ National authorities should include all relevant stakeholders – including government ministries and, where relevant, civil society organizations and the private sector – in processes to set targets and design and implement NAPs.

▶ National authorities designing and implementing a NAP should, at least in part, fund the NAP process through the national budget to ensure the sustainability of the NAP. Relevant national authorities such as the ministry of finance should be involved in the process of designing a NAP.

▶ National authorities should ensure that national targets and NAPs on SALW contribute to and are linked with the State's overarching security, prevention and development strategies. National authorities could also consider how to increase synergies between NAPs on SALW with overlapping processes such as Security Sector Reform (SSR), implementation of the WPS agenda, or implementation of the Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement.[20]

▶ States should take steps to ensure that the officials responsible for setting targets and designing and implementing NAPs have the necessary capacity, skills and experience. States with a national coordinating mechanism could ensure that it has access to and utilizes a wide range of relevant expertise across government and beyond. States could also consider how the PoA and the ITI can be used to mobilize support for capacity building of national officials, including through international cooperation and assistance.

▶ States should define concrete indicators as part of the monitoring and evaluation framework to enable the measuring of progress towards national targets, NAP implementation and strengthening SALW control. National coordinating mechanisms should use monitoring and evaluation data to inform government processes and strategies and to facilitate the formulation of requests for international cooperation and assistance.

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20 United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), S/RES/1325 (2000), 13 October 2000; United Nations, Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials, Havana, 7 September 1990, https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/basic-principles-use-force-and-firearms-law-enforcement.

Recommendations for utilizing the PoA/ITI process to support targets and NAPs

There are several ways in which the United Nations can support target setting and NAPs:

▶ States could recommend that the Secretariat update Module 04.10 of the Modular Small Arms Implementation Compendium (MOSAIC) with examples of national targets and frameworks as well as new and emerging good practice that is relevant for designing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating SALW NAPs and national targets.[21]

▶ The Secretariat and other United Nations entities, in collaboration with regional and sub-regional organizations, could facilitate cross-regional learning on setting targets and implementing NAPs by sharing lessons learned across national and regional instruments and by strengthening exchange and cooperation between States and regional organizations.

▶ States should make use of the PoA reporting tools to provide their latest SALW strategic document, national targets, NAP, etc. to the PoA/ITI Secretariat through voluntary reporting. The Secretariat should continue ensuring that this material is made available on the PoA website and promote its dissemination.[22] For example, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) hosts a database of NAPs on WPS,[23] and this could be one approach that could be taken up by the PoA/ITI Secretariat to further support information sharing on NAPs.

1.3 Supporting national target setting through regional processes

Regional and subregional processes, mechanisms and instruments play an important role in supporting national target setting for SALW control.[24] They are also an important reason for renewed interest in NAPs on SALW. While it is the primary responsibility of States to solve the problems associated with the illicit trade in SALW, coordination between national approaches is necessary given the transnational nature of the problem. In this context, regional mechanisms can support States in developing solutions that are coordinated with nearby States, yet are tailored to the national context.

▶ **Operationalizing regional instruments:** The East Africa chapter of the African Union's Silencing the Guns Continental Plan of Action on SALW formulates, on the subregional level, actions to implement commitments under Silencing the Guns, the PoA and the ITI, and regional instruments.[25]

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21 United Nations, "MOSAIC 04.10".

22 United Nations, "Global Implementation Status of the Programme of Action on SALW", n.d., **https://smallarms.un-arm.org/statistics**.

23 Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), "1325 National Action Plans", n.d., **http://1325naps.peacewomen.org/**.

24 United Nations, General Assembly, Programme of Action, A/CONF.192/15, Section III, paragraph 1.

25 African Union, Peace and Security Council, "Silencing the Guns: Continental Plan of Action on the Control of Illicit SALW East Africa chapte", n.d. See also Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Commission, "Meeting on ECOWAS Regional Strategy to Implement the African Union Vision 2020 'Silencing the Guns'", n.d.

In a region with several subregional bodies with varying mandates and overlapping membership, the East Africa chapter aims to provide a framework for consolidated action. Regional chapters for Silencing the Guns have also been or are being drafted for the other African subregions.

▶ **Regional road maps:** Participating States adopted the Western Balkans SALW Control Roadmap in 2018, agreeing upon common goals to be achieved by 2024 to reduce the illegal possession, misuse and trafficking of SALW and their ammunition.[26] The road map includes several key performance indicators to measure progress towards the common goals. It is implemented by national authorities through national SALW strategies and NAPs. At the regional level, progress is reviewed based on data reported by participating States, and States can exchange information and coordinate approaches. Finally, the Western Balkans SALW Roadmap informs and channels international cooperation and assistance in support of national implementation of the road map. Regional road maps also exist or are under development in the Caribbean and Central America, while South East Asia is making progress on a regional road map approach.[27]

▶ **Regional action plans:** The 2020–2025 European Union action plan on firearms trafficking defines European Union priorities and derived actions and sets accompanying key performance indicators. European Union member States and partners in South Eastern Europe are required to report yearly on the key performance indicators to the European Commission.[28]

The outcome documents of BMS7 and BMS8 encouraged States to "consider, where appropriate, the establishment and implementation of further regional and/or subregional action plans, which could include goals and targets, measurable objectives and concrete indicators, with a view to addressing the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in a comprehensive, sustainable and coordinated manner in the respective regions".[29] Similarly, the United Nations Secretary-General in A New Agenda for Peace recommends that States "strengthen, develop and implement" regional and subregional frameworks and road maps to improve SALW control.[30]

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26 South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SEESAC), "Roadmap for a Sustainable Solution to the Illegal Possession, Misuse, and Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) and Their Ammunition in the Western Balkans by 2024", 2018, https://www.seesac.org/f/docs/publications-salw-control-roadmap/Regional-Roadmap-for-a-sustainable-solution-to-the.pdf; SEESAC, "Joint statement by the Deputy Ministers of Interior and Deputy Ministers of Foreign Affairs in South East Europe", 1 February 2018, https://www.seesac.org/f/docs/publications-salw-control-roadmap/Joint-StatementFINAL.pdf.

27 United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean (UNLIREC), "Caribbean Firearms Roadmap", 13 November 2020, https://unlirec.org/en/publicacion/caribbean-firearms-roadmap/; UNLIREC, "OAS and UNLIREC initiate the development of the Central American Road Map to prevent the illicit trafficking and proliferation of arms and ammunition", 6 July 2023, https://unlirec.org/en/oas-and-unlirec-initiate-the-development-of-the-central-american-road-map-to-prevent-the-illicit-trafficking-and-proliferation-of-arms-and-ammunition/

28 The key performance indicators of the European Union action plan draw strongly upon the Western Balkans SALW Roadmap. European Commission, "2020–2025 EU Action Plan on Firearms Trafficking", Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, COM/2020/608, 24 July 2020, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0608.

29 United Nations, General Assembly, Report of the Seventh Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, A/CONF.192/BMS/2021/1, Annex, paragraph 58; United Nations, General Assembly, Report of BMS8, A/CONF.192/BMS/2022/1, Annex paragraph 44. See also United Nations, General Assembly, Report of the Third United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, A/CONF.192/2018/RC/3, 6 July 2018, Annex, Section II paragraph 7.

30 United Nations, Secretary-General, "A New Agenda for Peace", p. 23.

Recommendations

▶ In the outcome document, States could underline the important role (sub-)regional processes can play in supporting States with implementing international commitments at the national level through target setting.

  ▶ Following the principle of national ownership, it is States' responsibility to take the lead in identifying SALW challenges, setting priorities and coordinating actions to address these challenges including by developing and implementing NAPs.

  ▶ At the regional level, States could set common goals and commitments to tackle the issue of illicit SALW and its transnational challenges.

  ▶ Regional and subregional organizations can provide capacity and expertise for such processes. States can also work at the regional level to set targets and develop common monitoring frameworks.

▶ Work at the international level, including the PoA/ITI process, can encourage States to develop NAPs, support national and regional processes with expertise, provide a platform for multilateral and cross-regional exchanges on challenges and best practices, and help to coordinate international cooperation and assistance.

Côte d'Ivoire, 2007. © UN Photo / Basile Zoma

2. Facilitating international cooperation and assistance

While noting that States bear the "primary responsibility" to address the illicit trade in SALW, the PoA recognizes that international cooperation and assistance have central roles in enabling national implementation.[31] This balance constitutes another key aspect of national ownership: States must take the lead on requesting and coordinating international cooperation and assistance in line with national needs and priorities. This, in turn, is essential for successful and sustainable outcomes of international cooperation and assistance projects. National coordinating mechanisms for SALW control are often well-placed to coordinate and manage assistance requests and project implementation at the national level. They are able to ensure these are done in accordance with a national strategy, action plan or government policies for national SALW control, as well as with regional instruments and road maps. At the same time, an important facilitating role can be played at the international level: the BMS8 outcome document underlined "the need for enhanced, effective and sustainable international cooperation and assistance".[32] States also agreed at BMS8 to develop options for enhancing the effectiveness of the existing international assistance frameworks, including by establishing a structured procedure within the Secretariat to process requests for assistance.

This chapter focuses on specific ways to strengthen international cooperation and assistance at the national and global levels:

▶ Information sharing and coordination.
▶ Sustainable funding.

The chapter includes suggestions on how to enhance the delivery of international cooperation and assistance under the PoA and the ITI, with consideration of the role of requesting States, donor States, the Secretariat and implementing organizations.

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31 United Nations, General Assembly, Programme of Action, A/CONF.192/15, Section III, paragraph 1.

32 United Nations, General Assembly, Report of BMS8, A/CONF.192/BMS/2022/1, Annex, paragraph 87.

2.1 Improving information sharing and coordination for international cooperation and assistance

Effectively communicating requests for international cooperation and assistance is essential for a requesting State to engage with potential donors and implementers. Baseline assessments of gaps and national targets and related actions to address these gaps can be a good basis for States to identify assistance needs and formulate assistance requests.[33] States can include requests for international cooperation and assistance in their PoA national reports. The BMS8 outcome document recognized "the importance of such [voluntary national] reports in . . . identifying needs and opportunities for international cooperation and assistance".[34] The PoA national reporting template enables States to indicate assistance needs in a structured way. These needs are then processed, mapped and presented on UNODA's dedicated PoA national reporting website. Some other instruments have more detailed formats for requesting assistance (see Table 1).

As mentioned above, to match requests with offers of international cooperation and assistance, effective communication is crucial. More broadly, sharing information on international cooperation and assistance is a precondition for the effective and efficient coordination of support at the international level. Requesting States, donors and implementers all need reliable information on:

▶ The requesting State's assistance needs and national priorities, including its national targets .
▶ Its past, present and planned assistance projects and their outcomes.
▶ Actual and potential implementing partners, donors and funding mechanisms and their focus and area of expertise.

Access to such information allows requesting States to reach out to potential donors, implementers or funding mechanisms. It also enables donors and implementers to offer tailored assistance, taking into account past projects in order to avoid duplication of efforts (i.e., providing assistance that has already been rendered by another donor or implementing organization).

Beyond information sharing, BMSs and RevCons of the PoA and the ITI play a role in coordinating international cooperation and assistance. Currently, the PoA and the ITI have no dedicated mechanism that matches assistance requests with available resources. Instead, States can indicate assistance needs in their national report and attach project proposals to national reports, to be shared through the Secretariat's PoA website. Potential donors and implementers can consult this information, and trust funds such as the United Nations Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation (UNSCAR) take such assistance requests into account when considering applications for funding.

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33 United Nations, General Assembly, Report of BMS8, A/CONF.192/BMS/2022/1, Annex, paragraphs 24, 26, 89.
34 United Nations, General Assembly, Report of BMS8, A/CONF.192/BMS/2022/1, Annex, paragraph 27. See also United Nations, General Assembly, Report of RevCon3, A/CONF.192/2018/RC/3, Annex, Section I, paragraph 20, Section II, paragraph 66.

However, the BMS8 outcome document mandated UNODA to "establish a structured procedure . . . to process requests for assistance submitted under the [PoA/ITI]".[35] Seminar participants underlined the importance of establishing such a structured procedure under the PoA/ITI that can efficiently match needs with resources, along the lines of a recommendation on this subject made by States at BMS8.

Table 1 : Matching needs and resources – examples from other mechanisms	
MECHANISM	**DESCRIPTION**
OSCE: SALW and SCA mechanism for matching assistance needs.[36]	The OSCE provides a "peer response mechanism", whereby an OSCE participating State can call upon other participating States to provide international cooperation and assistance via the OSCE. Upon receiving a request for assistance from an OSCE participating State using a dedicated assistance-request questionnaire, the OSCE liaises with other participating States for technical experts to assess the requesting State's needs. It then coordinates the international assistance and cooperation intervention to meet the needs determined by the requesting State and the assessment team.
United Nations Security Council 1540 Committee: Mechanism for matching needs with resources.[37]	The 1540 Committee has an established procedure to respond to requests for international cooperation and assistance and to actively match these with donors and implementers as well as experts.

Challenges to effectively communicating assistance needs and resources

Despite opportunities offered by PoA national reports, needs and offers for international cooperation and assistance are often communicated ineffectively and inefficiently. A lack of national capacity to identify needs, collect data and compile reports that could form the basis for partnerships is a challenge for many States (see Chapter 1). National officials might not have the necessary data or might lack

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35   United Nations, General Assembly, Report of BMS8, A/CONF.192/BMS/2022/1, Annex, paragraph 87.

36   OSCE, "OSCE SALW and SCA assistance mechanism", n.d., **https://salw.osce.org/Home/Resources/1- assistance-mechanism**.

37   United Nations, Security Council, 1540 Committee, "Assistance – General Information", n.d., **https://www.un.org/en/sc/1540/assistance/general-information.shtml**.

expertise to formulate assistance requests. However, even when national authorities have conducted baseline assessments, formulated national action plans and are collecting data to monitor the implementation of the plan, this information is not always used to draft assistance requests or is not reflected in sufficient detail in requests. Relevant information on assistance needs often does not reach potential donors and implementers, making it difficult to determine the type of assistance required and to match requests with existing or potential offers of assistance. For instance, assistance requests made through PoA national reports often lack the level of detail necessary to accurately communicate the needs. Systematic analyses of national reports have found this to be a long-standing and widespread issue.[38]

Stakeholders also face difficulties in finding information related to international cooperation and assistance. For instance, a national authority that has a clear understanding of its assistance needs might struggle to obtain information on how and where to request such assistance. Similarly, assistance providers might lack information on what type of assistance is needed and where. Several factors contribute to this issue:

▶ Stakeholders might not collect data on assistance needs, projects or offers.
▶ Where such data is available, it is often not published or shared with national and international partners.
▶ Publicly available data is scattered across several databases and websites, maintained by multiple actors at the regional and global levels.

Challenges to coordinating international cooperation and assistance

Some States do not sufficiently coordinate their national requests for international cooperation and assistance. Often, this is due to the limited capacity of the national coordinating mechanism to fulfil such a role or the lack of such a mechanism. Therefore, some assistance projects do not address the most pressing needs of recipient States, duplicate previous projects or are not sustained after project funding runs out.

Similarly, coordination of international cooperation and assistance remains underdeveloped at the international level. Currently, relevant information on assistance needs does not reach potential donors or implementing partners, while States seeking assistance are not aware of the resources available. Consequently, requests for assistance frequently remain unanswered. Furthermore, efforts at the national, regional and global levels are often not sufficiently aligned. Issues include insufficient coordination across different global and regional instruments that overlap with the PoA and the ITI, such as the Firearms Protocol, the Arms Trade Treaty, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

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38 P. Holtom and M. Ben Hamo Yeger, Implementing the Programme of Action and International Tracing Instrument: An Assessment of National Reports, 2012–17, Small Arms Survey, June 2018, https://www.smallarmssurvey.org/resource/implementing-programme-action-and-international-tracing-instrument-assessment-national; M. Bromley, G. Maletta and R. Nicolin, "SALW-Related Assistance to States in Sub-Saharan Africa: Hitting the Target or Missing the Mark?", Backgrounder, SIPRI, 12 January 2022, https://www.sipri.org/commentary/topical-backgrounder/2022/salw-related-assistance-states-sub-saharan-africa-hitting-target-or-missing-mark.

or regional roadmaps, and a lack of coordination with international cooperation and assistance offered outside the United Nations system, such as bilateral cooperation and assistance programmes.

Recommendations

▶ States at RevCon4 should consider options to improve the quality of requests for international cooperation and assistance that are communicated through PoA national reports and other related documents submitted to the Secretariat in advance of BMS and RevCon meetings. In the outcome document, they could make the following recommendations:

- ▶ Building and sustaining the capacity of national coordinating mechanisms to develop requests in their national reporting should remain a priority for States, and also for international cooperation and assistance under the PoA and the ITI.
- ▶ States should strengthen the capacity and knowledge of national coordinating mechanisms on where and how to find relevant information on assistance offers and resources.
- ▶ States requesting assistance should focus on ways to utilize and communicate existing information – including baseline assessment findings, national targets and implementation challenges identified through monitoring and evaluation – in order to minimize additional burdens on their SALW control officials.
- ▶ States could request the Secretariat to develop a dedicated request template to structure and communicate requests for international cooperation and assistance via UNODA. The template used by the SALW and SCA assistance mechanism of the OSCE could inform such a template.

▶ Data collection and sharing between the national, regional and global levels and between different instruments should be streamlined. There is a pressing need to explore how to ensure easier access to the information contained in different resources and databases, with proposals including:

- ▶ Each database providing links to the other databases.
- ▶ Strengthened information exchange between the managers of such databases.
- ▶ Ensuring that databases are compatible with each other.
- ▶ Establishing a centralized database and information-management system.

▶ The Secretariat could take a lead in mapping existing information platforms and developing a central data hub that provides an overview of international cooperation and assistance needs, offers and activities (a) in support of PoA/ITI implementation; (b) in support of related international and regional instruments; and (c) provided bilaterally. States could consider providing such a mandate and resources to the Secretariat to collate and share this information.

▶ Secretariats and managers of funding mechanisms should hold regular meetings to share information on international assistance and cooperation requests, offers, and ongoing or completed projects. States should encourage such meetings across instruments and mechanisms and request the PoA/ITI Secretariat to outline how such coordination would feed into funding decisions.

▶ Providers of international cooperation and assistance should tailor projects to the resources, capacities and expertise available in the recipient State and should ensure that projects are nationally owned and integrated into NAPs and national strategies. Recipient States should also consider allocating resources from the national budget to the project to ensure ownership and enhance sustainability.

▶ States should explore how to align international cooperation and assistance under the PoA and the ITI with regional assistance mechanisms and regional instruments and programmes, where these exist. While the PoA/ITI process should utilize synergies with regional processes, it should also effectively support international cooperation and assistance in regions without such regional processes or capacities.

2.2 Ensuring sustainable funding for international cooperation and assistance

International cooperation and assistance are contingent on funding and technical and material assistance made available by donor States, international and (sub-)regional organizations, specialized NGOs, civil society, etc. The amount of available funding is an important factor as it directly determines the number and extent of assistance projects that can be implemented. In the PoA/ITI context, it is possible to distinguish between two broad streams of funding: official development assistance (ODA) and security sector assistance. Since 2005, small arms control projects can qualify as ODA under the rules of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC).[39] However, SALW control is traditionally seen as a security issue, rather than a development issue, and funding primarily comes from donor States' ministries of foreign affairs (MFAs) and, to some degree, ministries of defence.

Predictability of funding is similarly important. Progress towards preventing the illicit proliferation of SALW and reducing armed violence often takes time. Long-term projects are critical for building sustainable outcomes and having an impact. For instance, the Western Balkans SALW Control Roadmap, often cited as an example of regional SALW control, is the outcome of more than 20 years of engagement and international support to national authorities in the subregion. Sustainable funding for international cooperation and assistance is therefore an important issue for the implementation of the PoA and the ITI. Similarly, the BMS8 outcome document encouraged "States in a position to do so to support the funding of assistance projects over several years to allow for sustained capacity-building and multi-stakeholder coordination that includes civil society".[40]

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39 OECD Development Assistance Committee, Conflict Prevention and Peace Building: What Counts as ODA?, 3 March 2005, https://web-archive.oecd.org/2015-01-29/337955-conflict prevention.pdf.

40 United Nations, General Assembly, Report of BMS8, A/CONF.192/BMS/2022/1, Annex, paragraph 86.

Challenges

Despite understanding how critical diverse and predictable funding is, the limited amount of funding available and the dependency on a few key donors remain a challenge to the effective implementation of the PoA and the ITI. The needs of international cooperation and assistance persistently exceed available resources. Moreover, although international cooperation and assistance for SALW control can be classified as ODA, the OECD recently reported that assistance for "'reintegration and SALW control' . . . consistently receives one of the lowest shares of official development assistance". In 2021, such assistance constituted 0.04 per cent of total ODA (USD 80.7 million).[41] As funding comes from a relatively small number of donor States, and few funding streams within those States, international cooperation and assistance for SALW control is susceptible should any of these donors become unable or unwilling to continue their support.

SALW control often requires long-term efforts and engagement to achieve sustainable impact. However, funding cycles for international cooperation and assistance are generally short and project-based, with long-term funding becoming increasingly scarce. It is hard for donors to lengthen funding cycles due to their budget cycles and uncertainties over their budget. Even successful projects might not be continued if no new funding can be found. This can endanger the sustainability of project outcomes and can lead to setbacks in developing the capacity of recipient States to fulfil these functions themselves. It can also cause duplication of efforts when projects cannot build on past project achievements and maintain momentum because they were not sustained.

Recommendations

▶ Donor States should seek to make use of official development assistance to support SALW control.
  ▶ While MFAs have traditionally taken the leading role in funding international cooperation and assistance in SALW, donor States should also engage their development agencies and make a more concerted effort to explore opportunities to access development funds, which can provide longer-term funding.
  ▶ States could increase ODA to eligible trust funds such as UNSCAR and the Saving Lives Entity (SALIENT) of the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund.

▶ Implementers and States seeking international assistance could use evidence of the important role that SALW control plays in attaining the SDGs to communicate to donors the legitimacy of funding projects.

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41 OECD, Peace and Official Development Assistance, 2023, p. 29, **https://www.oecd.org/dac/peace-official-development-assistance.pdf**.

New York, USA, 2015. © UN Photo / Cia Pak

3. Linking SALW with sustainable development

SALW control has implications for development and vice versa. The illicit trade and misuse of SALW can contribute to instability, sustain armed conflict and fuel violence, including organized crime. Moreover, it is recognized that the excessive accumulation and uncontrolled spread of SALW have both direct and indirect impacts on human and global development.[42] Effective SALW control, including through implementation of international, regional and national instruments, can play a key role in preventing armed conflict and creating the conditions for sustainable peace and development. Likewise, more equitable development can help to address some of the drivers behind the illicit trade in SALW in all its aspects.

The linkages between SALW control and sustainable development are recognized in the PoA and the ITI, the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda processes, and the 2006 Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development.[43] At RevCon3 in 2018, States stressed "the importance of the full and effective implementation of the [PoA] and the [ITI] to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable

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42 United Nations, General Assembly, Programme of Action, A/CONF.192/15, Section I, paragraph 15; Small Arms Survey, "Development Denied", Small Arms Survey Yearbook 2003, **https://smallarmssurvey.org/resource/small-arms-survey-2003-development-denied**.

43 Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development, 7 June 2006, **https://web.archive.org/web/20151216034747/http://www.genevadeclaration.org/fileadmin/docs/GD-Declaration-091020-EN.pdf**.

Development".[44] Similarly, the Geneva Declaration Secretariat has documented the interrelation between armed violence and the lack of all types of development.[45] These processes acknowledge that the illicit trade and misuse of SALW have devastating humanitarian and socioeconomic consequences and hinder the attainment of practically all of the SDGs.

This chapter summarizes the seminar discussions on recognizing and utilizing the linkages between SALW control and development processes. In particular, it outlines two issues related to development:

▶ Integrating SALW control into national development processes.
▶ Data collection challenges in relation to the SDGs.

3.1 Integrating SALW control into national development processes

While the linkages between SALW proliferation, armed violence and the lack of all types of sustainable development have received considerable attention, much less progress has been made in "better integrating, mainstreaming or supporting development- and SALW-related activities at the programming level".[46] Traditionally, SALW control has been regarded as a security issue that is dealt with by the security sector and the MFA. While stakeholders increasingly understand the importance of engaging with the development community, in practice SALW control and development remain deeply siloed. At BMS8, States therefore agreed "to ensure that the national, regional and global implementation of the Programme of Action is integrated into the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including all relevant Sustainable Development Goals and targets, in particular Goal 16".[47]

Some progress has been made in operationalizing the linkages between SALW control and national development processes, although the focus is often limited to SDGs 5 and 16. For instance, in recent years the United Nations system has been working to better integrate SALW control into United Nations system-wide approaches at the country level, in particular Common Country Analyses and United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks. These two documents, which are administered by the respective United Nations Country Team, led by the United Nations Resident Coordinator and frequently supported by Peace and Development Advisors, are central planning instruments for "United Nations development activities at country level in support of the implementation of the 2030

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44   United Nations, General Assembly, Report of RevCon3, A/CONF.192/2018/RC/3, Annex, Section I, paragraph 13, Section II, paragraphs 68–70.

45   Geneva Declaration Secretariat (ed.), Global Burden of Armed Violence, 2008; K. Krause, R. Muggah and E. Gilgen (eds.), Global Burden of Armed Violence 2011: Lethal Encounters, 2011; Geneva Declaration Secretariat (ed.), Global Burden of Armed Violence 2015: Every Body Counts, 2015, https://www.smallarmssurvey.org/sites/default/files/resources/GBAV2015-Full-Publication-ENG.pdf.

46   Maze, Searching for Aid Effectiveness in Small Arms Assistance, p. 38.

47   United Nations, General Assembly, Report of BMS8, A/CONF.192/BMS/2022/1, Annex, paragraph 49.

Agenda for Sustainable Development".[48] In addition, the SALIENT funding facility was explicitly set up to comprehensively address both the security and development aspects of SALW control.[49] Through several resolutions and reports, the Human Rights Council has built bridges by addressing the impact of arms transfers and civilian acquisition, possession and use of small arms on human rights.[50] Also, there has been some increase in coordination between SALW control efforts and the implementation of the WPS agenda (e.g., by including issues of SALW control in NAPs on WPS and targets related to gender mainstreaming and gender-based violence in NAPs on SALW; see Box 2: The WPS agenda and gender mainstreaming SALW control).

Challenges

Operationalizing the linkages between SALW control and development processes at the national and regional levels is a persistent challenge. During the seminars, participants underlined that there continues to be a strong compartmentalization of issues and actors at the national, regional and global levels. This leads to parallel discussions on controlling the illicit proliferation of SALW, reducing armed violence and achieving sustainable development. As outlined above, NAPs on SALW are frequently not linked to national development strategies, and more development-oriented ministries are often not consulted or involved in designing a NAP on SALW. This compartmentalization contrasts with the reality of affected communities that experience how the availability of SALW, occurrences of armed violence and lack of economic development are tightly interlinked.

The efforts underway to integrate SALW control into United Nations country-level approaches presents one opportunity to bridge this gap. However, United Nations Country Teams and Peace and Development Advisors can lack the necessary expertise and capacity on issues associated with SALW. In addition, United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks support States with implementing their national development strategies and goals and are therefore constrained by the issues States include in their development planning. Currently, Common Country Analyses and Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks frequently include issues of violence and armed actors but rarely make linkages to the subject of arms control or to arms control actors.

Recommendations on strengthening linkages between the PoA and the ITI and sustainable development

▶ States should use RevCon4 to move the discussion forward and consolidate the programmatic linkages between peace, security and development.

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48 Executive Committee of the United Nations Secretary-General, "Executive Committee Meeting: Small Arms, Light Weapons and Their Control" 23 April 2020); United Nations Sustainable Development Group, "United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework – Internal Guidance", 1 June 2022, p. 8, **https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/2022-06/UN Cooperation Framework Internal Guidance -- 1 June 2022.pdf**; United Nations General Assembly resolution 72/279, 31 May 2018, A/RES/72/279.

49 UNODA, "SALIENT: The Savings Lives Entity", n.d., **https://disarmament.unoda.org/salient/**.

50 See, for instance, United Nations, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), "OHCHR: Arms and Human Rights", n.d., **https://www.ohchr.org/en/arms-and-weapons**; United Nations Human Rights Council resolution 53/15, "Impact of Arms Transfers on Human Rights", A/HRC/RES/53/15, 21 July 2023, **https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/ UNDOC/GEN/G23/150/41/PDF/G2315041.pdf**.

▶ In their preparations for RevCon4, States should consider how these linkages can be operationalized. States could make recommendations based on their national experiences on how the PoA/ITI process could be better linked to existing international, regional and national processes on peace, security and development, including instruments focused on the demand for SALW.

▶ The PoA/ITI process could mandate the Secretariat and UNODA Regional Centres to work with the broader UN system to support, develop and integrate tools and guidance into development, prevention and human rights structures within and outside the United Nations.

▶ Complementarities between SDG 5, the WPS agenda and the PoA and the ITI should be leveraged whenever possible. This can include facilitating women's participation in decision-making in SALW policy making, including SALW in discussions on WPS and, where relevant and possible, including indicators on the prevention of SALW-facilitated sexual and gender-based violence in NAPs on SALW and NAPs on WPS.

▶ States, with the support of the United Nations, should utilize RevCon4 to consider the place of SALW control in a potential follow-up process to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Stakeholders should draw lessons learned from the challenges faced with Indicator 16.4.2 (see Section 3.2).

Recommendations on integrating SALW control and development processes at the national level

▶ States should pursue a whole-of-government approach to foster collaboration between the arms control and development communities within government ministries, including by linking NAPs to the national development and prevention strategies.

▶ States should include issues associated with SALW and armed violence in national development strategies and encourage United Nations Country Teams to similarly include SALW control in Common Country Analyses and Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks.

▶ United Nations entities working on arms control and disarmament should raise awareness among Resident Coordinator Offices, United Nations Country Teams, and Peace and Development Advisors on SALW control and the linkages between arms flows, armed violence and development.

▶ The United Nations, in particular through UNODA Regional Centres, should also strengthen the capacity of Resident Coordinator Offices and Peace and Development Advisors to integrate SALW control tools and instruments into their work.

▶ National authorities should engage a more diverse range of stakeholders in national arms control processes in order to overcome siloes. The arms control community should include actors that work on prevention, peacebuilding and development processes, including government agencies, international and (sub-)regional organizations, civil society including youth and other marginalized groups, practitioners, and the private sector. Similarly, States should take steps to ensure the active participation of women, women's organizations and LGBTQI+ groups, who often play central roles in community safety and armed violence reduction initiatives. This could be done in the context of baseline assessments, developing and implementing NAPs, or data collection.

3.2 Overcoming data collection challenges for SALW control and the SDGs

A significant contribution of the PoA/ITI process to the 2030 Agenda is currently made through supporting data collection for relevant indicators. In particular, this relates to data on SDG Indicator 16.4.2 (on significant reduction of illicit arms flows) collected as part of the PoA national reporting process (see Table 2). Data is collected by UNODA through PoA/ITI national reports and by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) through its Illicit Arms Flows Questionnaire. Data collection is central for evaluating progress towards targets, whether at the national level in the context of NAPs, or at the global level (e.g., under SDG Target 16.4).

At the same time, due to the linkages between small arms, armed violence and sustainable development, SALW control contributes towards achieving a large number of other SDGs. For example, while not currently reflected in any data-gathering efforts under the SDGs, preventing the illicit proliferation and misuse of SALW contributes towards Target 16.1 (significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere).[51] Gender-responsive SALW control policies can contribute to achieving SDG 5 on gender equality (see Box 2). Also, SALW control can help to reduce urban violence and contribute towards safer cities (SDG 11).

Table 2: SDG Indicator 16.4.2[52]	
Goal 16	Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.
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.
Indicator 16.4.2	Proportion of seized, found or surrendered arms whose illicit origin or context has been traced or established by a competent authority in line with international instruments.

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51 The number of SALW destroyed by national authorities can be a relevant data set as an effective measure to prevent future diversion of SALW to the black market. In this regard, another indicator (possibly 16.4.3) was proposed and discussed but finally not agreed upon: Number and percentage of seized, found or surrendered small arms and light weapons that have been marked and recorded, or destroyed in accordance with relevant international instruments, to prevent diversion into illicit flows.

52 United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, "Goal 16", n.d., **https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal16#targets_ and_indicators**.

Challenges

Seminar participants identified data collection at the national level as a challenge. National authorities might face capacity constraints on data collection, including lack of skilled personnel or technological solutions (such as databases) to efficiently store and utilize the data. Where databases are in use, they might no longer suit the evolving data needs of national authorities or may lack compatibility with other databases. In consequence, available data might be limited (e.g., lacking disaggregation by sex/gender, age and disability or details relevant for Indicator 16.4.2; see Table 2) or might be inconsistent. Additionally, existing data is frequently not efficiently utilized: different national authorities often already collect data that is relevant for SALW monitoring and evaluation indicators, yet it is not always accessible for SALW national focal points or national coordinating mechanisms. A contributing factor is that different ministries often do not, or are not allowed to, share data with each other. Nor is such data made available internationally. Limited availability and quality of data impedes evidence-based policymaking, for example, in the context of NAPs or national development processes.[53]

SDG Indicator 16.4.2 has brought specific challenges for many States. Seminar participants, for instance, criticized the convoluted phrasing of the indicator. Moreover, the expectation that most States are able to trace all seized, found or surrendered SALW has been regarded as unrealistic.[54] In addition, it is unclear how useful it is to know the proportion of illicit arms as a share of all collected arms since it might simply reflect the extent of arms trafficking in a State, rather than progress in law enforcement efforts.[55]

Recommendations

▶ States and other stakeholders should be encouraged to, as a minimum, collect and disaggregate data by sex and age.
▶ Governments should break down siloes to help address the challenge of compartmentalized data collection, including by:
  ▶ Strengthening the capacity of national coordinating mechanisms to generate, collect, analyse and share data on SALW control. States without a national coordinating mechanism should create such a mechanism as a matter of priority.
  ▶ Clearing national coordinating mechanisms to request and access relevant data from other ministries.
  ▶ Making the data they collect available, in particular to government offices responsible for planning, and feed such data into relevant processes, including national strategies and NAPs, SDG reporting, or PoA/ITI national reports.

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53 United Nations, Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on small arms and light weapons, S/2021/839, 30 September 2021, paragraph 34.
54 Stockholm Forum on Peace and Development 2019, "Measuring Illicit Arms Flows: Key Challenges for SDG Goal 16.4 and Indicator 16.4.2", SIPRI, 2019, https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/Session 25_SthlmForum 2019.pdf.
55 United Nations, Statistics Division, "SDG Indicator Metadata: SDG 16.4.2", 26 July 2018, https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/metadata/files/Metadata-16-04-02.pdf.

- Where feasible, States should collaborate with other relevant stakeholders such as civil society to collect data.
- States should analyse their current and future data infrastructure needs to ensure such infrastructure is suitable for effective data collection, sharing and analysis.
  - To enable data sharing, States should at the planning stage take into account the compatibility of their databases and collected data with data formats used within the government and by international partners.

- States and United Nations entities could draw lessons learned on how to improve, streamline and facilitate data collection on Target 16.4. These lessons learned could inform guidance for national authorities and for international cooperation and assistance projects. They could also inform discussions on an indicator to follow-on from Indicator 16.4.2 beyond 2030.
- To inform future deliberations on potential follow-ons to the SDGs beyond 2030, States could request a study on data indicators and data-collection methods on arms-related issues across existing SDGs and potential post-2030 goals.

Box 2: The WPS agenda and gender mainstreaming SALW control

In 2000, the United Nations Security Council passed resolution 1325. Together with subsequent Security Council resolutions,[56] it forms the WPS agenda, which "links women to the peace and security agenda and acknowledges that armed conflicts impact women and girls differently from men and boys".[57] The WPS agenda further underlines the important contributions that women make towards preventing conflict and building peace and commits States to ensuring that women can fully and effectively participate in peace and security processes.[58] The Security Council has encouraged States to develop national action plans to implement the WPS agenda at the national level.[59] At the time of writing, 107 States had reportedly developed a NAP on WPS.

There are strong thematic linkages between the WPS agenda and SALW control, including the role of arms control in preventing sexual and gender-based violence and enhancing women's participation in arms control decision-making. States have recognized these linkages and have committed to strengthening the synergies between the two processes. For instance, at its Fourth Capital-level Meeting in 2022, the WPS Focal Points Network called for more collaboration between experts on WPS and SALW to meaningfully "incorporate gender equality in [NAPs], policies and strategies on SALW" and gain "technical inputs from experts on SALW into NAPs on WPS".[60] Furthermore, in the outcome document of RevCon3 in 2018, States encouraged "the full participation and representation of women,

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56   United Nations, Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), S/RES/1325 (2000), 31 October 2000; resolution 1820 (2008), S/RES/1820 (2009), 19 June 2008; resolution 1888 (2009), S/RES/1888 (2009), 30 September 2009; resolution 1889 (2009), S/RES/1889 (2009), 5 October 2009; resolution 1960 (2010), S/RES/1960 (2010), 16 December 2010; resolution 2106 (2013), S/RES/2106 (2013), 24 June 2013; resolution 2122 (2013), S/RES/2122 (2013, 18 October 2013; resolution 2242 (2015), S/RES/2242 (2015), 13 October 2015; resolution 2467 (2019), S/RES/2467 (2019), 23 April 2019; resolution 2493 (2019), S/RES/2493 (2019), 29 October 2019.

57   United Nations Peacemaker, "Security Council Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security", n.d., **https://peacemaker. un.org/wps/normative-frameworks/un-security-council-resolutions**.

58   International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA), "Strengthening the Connection Between Small Arms and Light Weapons Controls and the Women, Peace and Security Agenda", IANSA Briefing Paper, 20 September 2021, **https://iansa. org/strengthening-the-connection-between-small-arms-and-light-weapons-controls-and-the-women-peace-and-security-agenda-september-2021/**.

59   United Nations, Security Council, Statement by the President of the Security Council, S/PRST/2004/40, 28 October 2004; United Nations Security Council resolution 1889 (2009).

60   WPS Focal Points Network, "4th Capital-Level Meeting Joint Communique", 18 May 2022, paragraph 4, **https:// wpsfocalpointsnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Joint-Communique_-WPS-Focal-Points-Network-Geneva-Meeting_May-2022-1.pdf**.

including in leadership roles and as agents of change, in policymaking, planning and implementation processes related to the [PoA], such as national small arms commissions and programmes relating to community safety, violence reduction, collection and destruction of small arms and light weapons and conflict prevention and resolution".[61]

Operationalizing the linkages between the WPS agenda and the PoA/ITI constitutes one example of how SALW control can be better integrated with development processes. Ensuring that SALW control policies at the national, regional and global levels are gender-responsive can contribute to achieving SDG 5, in particular Target 5.2 by reducing weapon-facilitated gender-based violence, and Target 5.5 by ensuring the equal participation of women and women's civil society organizations in decisions and implementation of arms control policies. For instance, including indicators on SALW in NAPs on WPS and indicators on gender mainstreaming and gender-based violence as part of a NAP on SALW can help States to make progress in achieving the goals of the WPS agenda and the PoA/ITI. Similarly, ensuring that SALW control processes are inclusive (see Chapter 4) and that women have access to these processes – and can meaningfully contribute to them – builds bridges across siloed communities, helps national authorities to gain a more complete picture on the SALW issue, and can secure important allies in advocating for and implementing SALW control measures.

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61   United Nations, General Assembly, Report of RevCon3, A/CONF.192/2018/RC/3, Annex, Section II, paragraph 74.

Bogotá, Colombia, 2017. © UN Photo / Renata Ruiz

4. Taking inclusive approaches to SALW control

The issues related to SALW, including armed violence, are complex and are linked with wider security and development problems. To identify and address these issues, it is crucial that all stakeholders are included in – and can meaningfully contribute to – the process. This chapter focuses on the role of civil society and the participation of women in the PoA/ITI process.

Civil society organizations and their members fulfil crucial functions in PoA/ITI implementation, as underscored by the outcome document of BMS8.[62] Armed violence and other issues related to SALW directly and strongly affect the population, making civil society a primary stakeholder in reducing armed violence. Civil society organizations are diverse and might be working on different aspects of SALW control, such as community violence or women's rights. They often raise the awareness of the government and population on the issues of illicit SALW proliferation and armed violence. In the process, they foster and sustain political will to strengthen SALW control. Civil society can also have important insights and data on the issues and gaps at the national and community levels; it can thereby contribute to baseline assessments and NAPs. Finally, it can also be an implementing partner to support the State.[63]

Similarly, the importance of gender mainstreaming in SALW control processes is increasingly understood and has been recognized by States in PoA/ITI outcome documents as well as the WPS agenda (see Box 2).[64] The impact of SALW and armed violence is inherently gendered, consequently requiring gender-responsive programming, that is, "taking gender dynamics into account at all stages of programming".[65] Key tools for gender-responsive programming include conducting gender analyses, collecting sex- and age-disaggregated data, and ensuring the meaningful participation of women and girls as well as women's organizations.[66] At the same time, gender-responsive small arms control also entails taking into account the role that men and masculinities play as the overwhelming majority of perpetrators and victims of armed violence.[67]

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62   United Nations, General Assembly, Report of BMS8, A/CONF.192/BMS/2022/1, Annex, paragraph 10.

63   For instance, in the Netherlands, the gender platform WO=MEN together with the MFA coordinates the Dutch NAP on WPS. WO=MEN, "What We Do: National Action Plan 1325", n.d., **https://www.wo-men.nl/en/what-we-do/national-action-plan-1325**.

64   United Nations, General Assembly, Report of BMS8, A/CONF.192/BMS/2022/1, Annex, paragraph 9; United Nations, General Assembly, Report of RevCon3, A/CONF.192/2018/RC/3, Annex, Section II, paragraph 76.

65   E. LeBrun (ed.), Gender-Responsive Small Arms Control Handbook: A Practical Guide, Small Arms Survey, 2019, p. 24, **https://www.smallarmssurvey.org/sites/default/files/resources/SAS-GLASS-Gender-HB.pdf**.

66   LeBrun (ed.), Gender-Responsive Small Arms Control Handbook, p. 25.

67   LeBrun (ed.), Gender-Responsive Small Arms Control Handbook.

Challenges

Civil society organizations report a range of hurdles to supporting the implementation of the PoA and the ITI. These challenges are often especially prevalent for youth, women and women's organizations. Civil society members face heightened challenges in gaining access to and participating in SALW control processes at the national level. Relevant civil society organizations might not be invited to processes such as national baseline assessments or developing NAPs. Even when invited, there might be no opportunity to meaningfully and effectively contribute to the outcomes of national processes.

In addition, civil society organizations might not be aware of SALW control processes due to limited capacity or difficulties with the technical language surrounding SALW control. Accessing funding from international donors and funding mechanisms is often difficult for local civil society organizations, frequently because they are not eligible for funding or due to the administrative burden of the application and reporting processes.

Recommendations

▶ National authorities need to ensure that civil society organizations, women's organizations, youth organizations and LGBTQI+ groups can participate in and meaningfully contribute to national SALW control processes including baseline assessments, developing and implementing NAPs, and identifying assistance needs and implementing assistance projects. This should include ensuring an enabling civic space for the participation of these organizations. [68]

▶ To achieve the objectives of the PoA and the ITI, it is critical to engage the different areas of expertise within civil society on PoA-relevant issues such as peacebuilding, armed violence-reduction initiatives, community safety, masculinities and women's rights. This is also an area where bridges to the development community could be more effectively built.

▶ Funding mechanisms, including trust funds, should ensure that civil society organizations are eligible to apply for funding to support PoA/ITI implementation and that administrative burdens are minimized. Funding mechanisms should consider whether their administrative procedures and practices (including the size of grants, application and reporting processes, and targeted information sharing and awareness raising on funding opportunities and application periods) make it feasible for civil society organizations to apply for and receive funding.

▶ The forthcoming UNODA fellowship training programme on SALW under the PoA/ITI could provide targeted opportunities for women to engage in SALW control (see Box 3). States should aim for gender parity when nominating candidates for the programme. In addition, UNODA could use gender as one selection criteria for the fellowship programme.

▶ Any sponsorship programme for RevCon4[69] that supports national actors' participation in the multilateral process should not only seek to ensure the participation of a wide range of States, but also facilitate the participation of civil society and women's organizations.

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68 Women's organizations are a subset of civil society organizations. However, because women and women's organizations have often been excluded from SALW control processes, they are explicitly highlighted in the recommendations.

69 A sponsorship programme aims to facilitate the in-person participation of key stakeholders that otherwise would lack the resources to attend, including expenses for airfare to and from New York and travel expenses. See, e.g., UNODA, Saving Lives Information Bulletin, no. 10, October 2023, **https://disarmament.unoda.org/2023/#sponsorshipprogramme**.

Box 3: The fellowship training programme on SALW

Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 77/71, UNODA was mandated to establish a "standing dedicated fellowship training programme on [SALW] in order to strengthen the technical and practical knowledge and expertise of government officials directly responsible for the implementation of the [PoA and ITI], particularly in developing countries". At the time of writing, UNODA anticipates that the programme will "consist of a self-paced online course and a four-week in-person training with the objective to familiarize trainees with the conceptional and practical framework of small arms control" and have capacity of 60 government officials per year in four regions, covering Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Europe and the Middle East.[70]

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70   UNODA, "Fellowship Training Programme on Small Arms and Light Weapons Control", n.d., **https://disarmament.unoda. org/salw-fellowship-training-programme/**; United Nations General Assembly resolution 77/71, "The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects", A/RES/77/71, 15 December 2022. See also United Nations, General Assembly, Report of BMS8, A/CONF.192/BMS/2022/1, Annex, paragraph 83.

A MINUSCA officer conducts a class on gender violence. Bangui, Central African Republic, 2017. © UN Photo / Eskinder Debebe

5. Addressing the implications of new technologies and innovation

Since the adoption of the PoA and the ITI, new technologies to manufacture and facilitate the illicit trade in SALW have emerged, such as additive manufacturing, polymers and modular SALW, and online trafficking. The control measures agreed upon in the PoA and the ITI are ill-equipped to address them.[71] Although the availability and usage of these developments differ across States and regions, we consistently see that they are far outpacing efforts to regulate them. Reflecting discussions at previous BMSs and RevCons, the BMS8 outcome document recognized "that recent developments in [SALW] manufacturing, technology and design . . . have implications for the full and effective implementation of the [PoA and ITI]".[72] It recommended that RevCon4 consider establishing an "open-ended technical expert group". [73]

At the same time, new technologies present additional tools that States can use to prevent, detect and counter the diversion and illicit trade in SALW. Thus, States at BMS8 also underlined the "opportunities presented by recent technologies" for the implementation of the PoA and the ITI. [74]

This chapter presents the seminars' findings on new technologies and innovation:

▶ Challenges and opportunities posed by new technologies and innovation to PoA/ITI implementation.
▶ Options for a potential open-ended technical expert group to update the ITI and ensure the continued applicability of both instruments.

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71 Modular and polymer SALW have been produced for several decades. However, there are long-standing issues and discussions on how they should be durably marked under the ITI.

72 United Nations, General Assembly, Report of BMS8, A/CONF.192/BMS/2022/1, Annex, paragraph 13.

73 United Nations, General Assembly, Report of BMS8, A/CONF.192/BMS/2022/1, Annex, paragraph 75.

74 United Nations, General Assembly, Report of BMS8, A/CONF.192/BMS/2022/1, Annex, paragraph 68.

5.1 Responding to implications of new and emerging technologies for the implementation of the PoA and the ITI

Technological innovation takes place continuously, usually one or two steps ahead of regulation efforts. Sometimes developments unintentionally outpace regulations, as in the case of legal manufacturing. However, they can also be driven by the intent to circumvent regulations. Issues also arise if existing technologies are used in ways that make regulatory or control approaches ineffective, for instance in the case of falsifying SALW markings. The slow response by national and multilateral actors to technological development is creating a gap that can be exploited, including for criminal purposes.

The discussion about technologies and their challenges for PoA/ITI implementation is not a new one. In particular, the uses of polymers, modular designs and additive manufacturing for the production of SALW have been included in outcome documents since BMS6 in 2016.[75] These cases represent a long-standing gap in control measures agreed upon in the PoA and the ITI. Table 3 summarizes not only the nature of the challenges posed for PoA/ITI implementation, but also possible options for overcoming such challenges.

At the same time, new and emerging technologies can also help States to effectively implement the PoA and the ITI, preventing diversion and the illicit trade of SALW. During BMS7 and BMS8, States agreed to strengthen cooperation with the private sector and industry in order to develop technologies to strengthen the identification and record-keeping of SALW.[76] Seminar participants underlined that technological solutions already play an important role in effective SALW controls, including databases for record-keeping, technologies to mark SALW and recover markings, and systems to enable national authorities to share relevant information such as validated arms export and transfer licenses (see Table 4 for a list of potential technological solutions).

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75   United Nations, General Assembly, Report of BMS8, A/CONF.192/BMS/2022/1, Annex, paragraphs 69–70.
76   United Nations, General Assembly, Report of BMS7, A/CONF.192/BMS/2021/1, Annex, paragraph 95; United Nations, General Assembly, Report of BMS8, A/CONF.192/BMS/2022/1, Annex, paragraph 68.

Table 3: Long-standing gaps in control measures under the PoA and the ITI – polymers, modular designs and additive manufacturing

Polymer components: Parts of SALW produced using techno-polymers pose challenges to durable and recoverable markings.

CHALLENGES OF POLYMER WEAPONS	POTENTIAL APPROACHES TO ADDRESS CHALLENGES
• Difficulty to mark polymer parts durably • Difficult to recover obliterated markings • Unclear how to deal with post-manufacture markings, e.g., secondary import markings • Easier to conceal in parcels/shipments	• Sufficiently deep and appropriately placed markings make marks more difficult to obliterate • Usage of visible and hidden markings • Usage of metal plates embedded in polymer to make marks more durable

Modular weapons: These SALW contain exchangeable core components.

CHALLENGES OF MODULAR WEAPONS	POTENTIAL APPROACHES TO ADDRESS CHALLENGES
• How to track modular weapons throughout lifecycle, especially if there were changes in configuration • Dealing with conflicting serial numbers in tracing requests • Defining how to mark modular weapons • Easier to conceal in parcels/shipments	• Define the content of marks to minimize the risk for misinterpretation and error • Account for possible changes in configuration, in particular by identifying the control component and other components for record-keeping • Improve the capacity of national authorities through training on identification and tracing

Additive manufacturing: Often called 3D-printing, additive manufacturing allows the production of a three-dimensional object from a computer model. Materials processed through additive manufacturing include polymers and metals, with the range of materials expanding as the technology develops further. Household 3D-printers currently only produce parts from polymer.

CHALLENGES DUE TO ADDITIVE MANUFACTURING	POTENTIAL APPROACHES TO ADDRESS CHALLENGES

• Allows for the production of "home-made" SALW with increasingly good performance
• Combination of 3D-printed with pressure-bearing metal parts:
  • Usage of metal parts not subject to controls on production or export
  • Computer numerical control (CNC) milling machines allow users to circumvent controlled factory-made pressure-bearing metal parts.
• Future advances in metal and other forms of additive manufacturing could bring users closer to producing industry-grade SALW
• Difficult to effectively control dissemination of build-files and knowledge of how to produce SALW using additive manufacturing through the internet, including the dark web
	Improving controls relevant for additive manufacturing, including:
	• Legal frameworks
	• Manufacturing controls
	• Measures to control the transfer of files
	• Measures related to marking, record-keeping and tracing
	• Forensic and investigation capacities
	• Monitoring and diagnosing the scope of the problem

Challenges posed by new and emerging technologies for regulating SALW

In addition to the long-standing issues presented in Table 3, participants identified new challenges posed by technologies and innovations, which are summarized here.

The lethality of craft-produced and additive manufactured (3D-printed) SALW is increasing due to new manufacturing and assembly techniques. In the case of traditional craft production, this has been achieved by using industrially produced components and airsoft gun[77] components. Similarly, experts have observed assembly techniques for 3D-printed SALW that combine printed polymer components with industrial components, CNC-machined parts and components from airsoft guns. In addition, the spread of online build-files and instructions increases the ease of using additive manufacturing to produce SALW.

Unreliable, obliterated and falsified markings constitute another trend that adds to long-standing marking issues such as those cause by polymers and modular components. Law enforcement agencies are increasingly encountering "ghost guns" without markings, SALW with markings altered by adding or replacing characters within a serial number, and SALW with presumably intentionally mismatched markings.

Online trafficking has also been highlighted as a challenge related to new and emerging technology or new uses of existing technology. The dark web and social media are used to sell illicit SALW and fraudulent licences and permits for SALW possession. They have been difficult for law enforcement agencies to police. Experts also raised concerns over criminals using fast parcel postal services to deliver such SALW.

Challenges regarding the use of new technologies to support PoA/ITI implementation

Although a range of mature technological solutions exist, they remain underused by States in support of their SALW control efforts. Contributing factors might be lack of awareness among national authorities as well as limited capacity, expertise and resources. Furthermore, technology is not a standalone solution to prevent the illicit trade of SALW: certain contextual preconditions need to be met in order for technological solutions to function and to be effective. Barriers to their implementation and use include:

▶ The costs to procure, maintain and operate a technology
▶ The infrastructure and resources needed
▶ The level of difficulty of using a technology and associated training needs
▶ Lack of interoperability of a solution (e.g., a new database) with solutions used by other national and international partners

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77 Airsoft guns are replica firearms "not powerful enough to cause serious injury or death but designed to resemble a real firearm with near precision." Airsoft guns "have a low muzzle velocity and muzzle energy and . . . usually discharge projectiles made out of a substance such as plastic or wax rather than metal." Royal Canadian Mounted Police, "Specific types of firearms", n.d., **https://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/en/firearms/specific-types-firearms**.

TECHNOLOGY CATEGORY	TECHNOLOGY	
Table 4 : Technological solutions that could support PoA/ITI implementation		
Methods*	Laser marking 2D codes (e.g., QR codes and data matrix codes)	DNA codes Chemical encoding Physical unclonable function
Document authentication	Holograms Ink-based marking	
Sensors	RFID Near Field Communication (NFC)	Electronic seals
Digital solutions**	GNSS tracking Mobile communications tracking Internet of Things***	Artificial intelligence*** Distributed Ledger Technology***

* Technologies employed to automate or improve non-digital methods of applying uniquely identifying information.

** Technologies that are predominantly digital and data-driven in nature.

*** These technologies include many different sub-types as well as areas of applications which, due to limited space, it is not possible to expand at length in this paper.

Adapted from:Sarah Grand-Clément and Diederik Cops, "Technologies to Counter the Diversion of Small Arms and Light Weapons, and Components of Conventional Weapons", UNIDIR and Flemish Peace Institute, 24 August 2023.

Recommendations

▶ States should regularly review, update and strengthen regulations in response to new technologies, innovations and design. There is a particular need to review regulations governing the private manufacture of SALW as well as online trafficking of SALW. States could also consider increasing penalties for violating these regulations.

▶ States should provide regular training to SALW control officers, including law enforcement officers and forensic experts, to equip them with the necessary skills and knowledge to respond to new challenges. The Secretariat can also facilitate training through its forthcoming fellowship training programme on SALW (see Box 3). Depending on the national context, law enforcement officers might benefit from additional training on identifying and tracing SALW with obliterated or falsified markings; policing online platforms used in the trafficking of SALW; or detecting SALW trafficked using fast parcel services.

▶ National authorities should engage with the private sector (e.g., manufacturers of 3D printers) to discuss challenges and raise awareness of the risks of industry products being misused for the illicit manufacture or trade of SALW.

- States should strengthen international cooperation programmes and projects, including knowledge-exchange mechanisms, international forums and regional centres of expertise, to efficiently identify new trends and effective control measures and to coordinate action where necessary. States could consider using PoA/ITI meetings to share experiences with other States.
- States should consider implementing technological solutions to complement their SALW control efforts. This applies, in particular, to technologies that are important for effective PoA/ITI implementation, including databases for record-keeping and marking technologies.
- PoA/ITI BMSs, RevCons and Meetings of Governmental Experts could serve as a platform where States and other stakeholders, in particular the private sector, exchange knowledge on effective and efficient technological solutions and barriers to using such solutions.
- Where technological solutions need to be interoperable between States (e.g., to allow effective communication between different national licensing authorities on arms transfers), States could utilize the PoA/ITI process to coordinate their approaches at the national, regional and global levels.

5.2 Ensuring the continued applicability of the ITI

States and experts have debated different options on how to respond to the challenges posed by developments in SALW manufacturing, technology and design to permit the effective implementation of the ITI. Following a request by States at RevCon3 in 2018,[78] the United Nations Secretary-General "invited States to discuss the possibility of a document supplementary to the [ITI][79] . . . which could reflect the implications of recent technical developments in marking, record-keeping and tracing and ensure the continued relevance of the [ITI]". The outcome document of BMS8 in 2022 further requested the Secretariat to prepare a proposal for discussion and tasked RevCon4 to consider establishing an "open-ended technical expert group" to ensure that the ITI is kept up to date. This section describes the challenges and options for such a group.

Challenges

New technologies are a continuously evolving issue that the PoA and the ITI have to deal with. However, States have had particular difficulties finding a consensus on how to ensure the continuing applicability of the ITI.[80] There are regional differences in the development, use of and response to technologies, meaning that regions do not face the same regulatory challenges, or not at the same time. This has led to divisions between States on whether specific technologies – especially polymer components and modular SALW designs – are a problem that is big enough to justify investing limited resources into the definition of global regulations or whether, instead, the focus should be on other PoA/ITI implementation issues.

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78 United Nations, General Assembly, Report of RevCon3, A/CONF.192/2018/RC/3, Annex, Section V, paragraph 3.

79 United Nations, Secretary-General, A/74/187, paragraph 69.

80 Long-standing issues such as how to mark polymer and modular components fall under the scope of the ITI. Therefore, discussions have focused on updating this instrument. However, the issue of new technologies also applies to the PoA (e.g., in the case of controlling 3D-printed SALW). This section therefore discusses options to update the ITI and, potentially, the PoA.

Another open question is how to keep both instruments up to date. Many States have advocated for an annex to the ITI as a means to resolve long-standing regulatory issues. However, this would not prevent the annex itself from becoming outdated and, in turn, also being challenged by future technologies. The slow pace of international processes compared to continuous technological innovation further compounds this problem.

Recommendations

▶ States should discuss, at RevCon4 and in its preparatory process, options on how the PoA/ITI process overall and modalities for how a technical expert group in particular can keep pace with innovations, including those aimed at circumventing control measures agreed upon within the PoA/ITI.

   ▶ States should mandate a technical expert group to ensure the continued relevance of the PoA/ITI in the face of past, present and future technological developments and innovations (see Box 4 for options).

   ▶ The technical expert group should provide opportunities for a multi-stakeholder dialogue, involving not only State representatives but also industry, technology companies and specialized organizations.

   ▶ The mandate of any technical expert group should take into account the different challenges experienced by different regions due to new technologies.
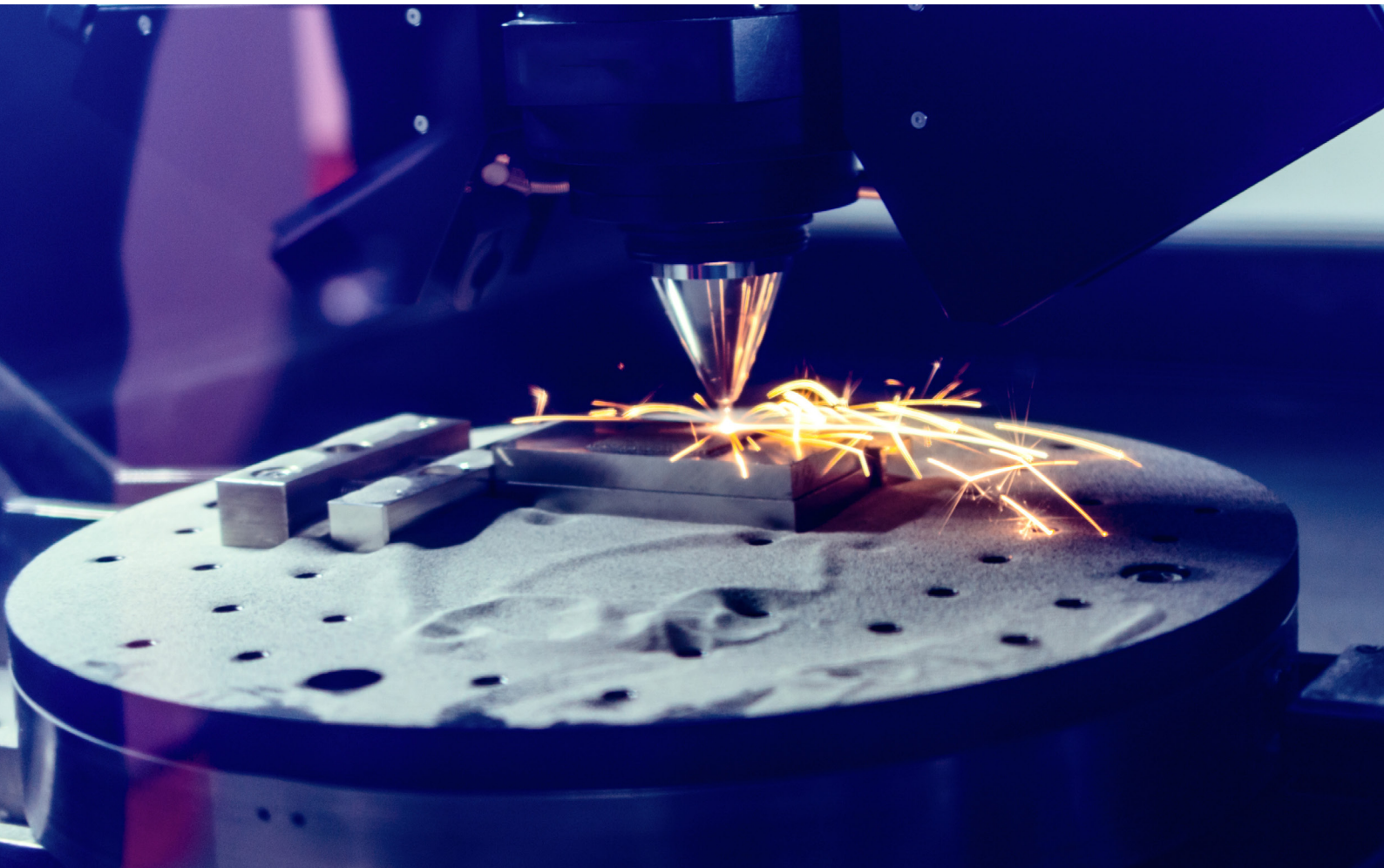
Box 4. Options for a technical expert group

During the seminar series, participants discussed two possible options for the form that a technical expert group could take. The purpose, scope and issues to be considered for each option are presented below. The two options are neither exhaustive nor mutually exclusive. Additionally, there are other options for ensuring continued implementation of the ITI without the need for an annex. Also, new technologies similarly affect implementation of the PoA.

1.   The first option is a one-time expert group – that is, an ad hoc open-ended working group (OEWG) – composed of experts or representatives from all States, with participation of relevant stakeholders, as appropriate, to accomplish a specific mandate within a limited time frame.

  ▶ Purpose: To negotiate an annex to the ITI to address existing or long-standing issues of SALW technologies that are currently outside the scope of the ITI
  ▶ Scope: To discuss the technologies and other issues included in the group's mandate within a defined time frame
  ▶ Possible items for consideration: (a) polymer components; (b) modular SALW; (c) additive manufacturing; (d) craft production; (e) opportunities for using existing technologies to strengthen SALW control; (f) in general, how the PoA/ITI can stay up to date in relation to new technologies in the future

2.   The alternative is a standing technical expert group to assist in assessing developments in science and technology and their implications for the implementation of the ITI (and the PoA). This proposal is comparable to the approach found in various arms control and disarmament conventions and treaties whose implementation is affected by rapid technological advancement.

  ▶ Purpose: Provide continuous knowledge and advice to inform the PoA/ITI process and support PoA/ITI implementation, including preparing States for BMSs and RevCons
  ▶ Scope: To discuss existing and emerging challenges and opportunities for PoA/ITI implementation in relation to new and emerging technologies and innovations
  ▶ Possible items for consideration: (a) ways in which the PoA and the ITI can address issues related to existing and emerging technologies; (b) recommendations for the PoA/ITI process on challenges and opportunities from existing and emerging technologies; (c) how to serve as a platform where States and other stakeholders, including industry, exchange information