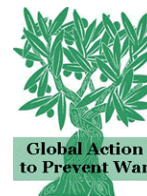


MGE Monitor
NGO reporting and analysis on the
Meeting of Government Experts on the
UN Programme of Action on small arms
9–13 May 2011



Second Edition, 10 May 2011

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Paper Trail

Robert Zuber | Global Action to Prevent War

One compelling issue for this MGE has to do with important reporting obligations. This represents one of the three ‘pillars’ of this MGE process.

The method of reporting under the ITI is largely left to states, though the suggested length of reporting time is established within the ITI. This makes sense at a certain level since it reinforces as much state responsibility as possible to create protocols that meet national needs while fulfilling international obligations. At the same time, it is obvious that report methods have a clear relationship to reporting time frames. States that are drowning in paper reporting or wrestling with obsolete digital data collection technologies are obviously less likely to maintain reporting than those with more refined digital systems of data entry and recall. And, given that the lifecycle of small arms and light weapons is quite long – weapons remain lethal long past the point that they are useful for legitimate state security purposes – we must provide the most reliable and effective assistance possible to ensure that our capacity to

maintain accurate records on weapons movements for as long as humanly possible.

Owing to the compelling theme of compatibility at this MGE and taking seriously Ambassador McLay’s wise admonition for us to focus on ‘today’s PoA’ rather than proposing new action plans, we strongly urge delegates to keep a focus on the inalienable links between the robustness of reporting technology and the lengths to which we can reasonably maintain reporting obligations. Diversion and/or illegal trafficking remain threats for years after weapons leave the factory and the initial enthusiasm for record keeping has waned. We can all help maintain this enthusiasm by providing assistance towards development of compatible, robust, user-friendly forms of data entry, retrieval and communication that can assist both transparency and state control. The suggestion of Sudan for a ‘special fund’ to facilitate effective marking and tracing technologies should be extended to record keeping as well. In order to bring all relevant resources to bear towards successfully addressing the illicit trade in small arms, we need accurate ‘cradle to grave’ records.

Moving Beyond Political Commitments

Katherine Prizeman | Global Action to Prevent War

The MGE Monitor is produced by Global Action to Prevent War, Reaching Critical Will of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, Oxfam International, and the International Action Network on Small Arms and Light Weapons. More reporting and analysis can be found on their joint blog at <http://attmonitor.posterous.com> and on Twitter at #armstreaty.

The Open-ended Meeting of Governmental Experts (MGE) on ‘preventing, combating, and eradicating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects’ opened Monday under the leadership of the Chair, Ambassador Jim McLay of New Zealand. The MGE will last through the week and will seek to address the serious gaps in implementation with reference to the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons (UNPoA). This week’s gathering was born of a UN General Assembly Resolution in 2008 that called for a meeting of national experts to share experiences and best practices. The MGE will seek to practically address with vigor the various implementation challenges as they relate specifically to the International Tracing Instrument (ITI) adopted in 2005.

Opening statements were offered from High Representative for Disarmament Sergio Duarte and Chairman McLay. Mr. Duarte underscored the importance of this experts’ meeting for eradicating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons (SALWs), destroying surplus weapons, and drying up stockpiles. High Representative Duarte also pointed out that the current framework within which small arms are monitored is characterized by Security Council embargoes and efforts to end diversion. Member states should, according to Mr. Duarte, become better informed about weapons tracing processes through more regular contact with INTERPOL as the existing standard of tracing. For his part, Ambassador McLay was keen to point out that this meeting must be qualitatively different than others, specifically in discussing how to implement existing plans related to ‘today’s PoA.’ There is no mandate to create new policy, offer new recommendations, or generate ‘new’ action. The Chairman stated that the effectiveness of the MGE will depend on the quality of the discussions between the experts at

the meeting, discussions that can have a direct impact on their relevant work back in their respective capitals as well as their decisions to support meetings of this type in the future.

The delegations of Switzerland, Egypt, and the United States also provided opening briefings. Switzerland spoke in its capacity as the Chair of the ITI negotiations in 2005, followed by Egypt and the US who were Chairs of the Marking, Record keeping, and Tracing sessions during the Biennial Meeting of States (BMS) in 2008 and 2010, respectively. These briefings summarized the importance of the three pillars of implementation for the UNPoA-- marking, record keeping, and cooperation in tracing. The Egyptian delegate recalled the importance of regional workshops for general implementation as well as more specific nominating of national points of contact to enhance cooperation in tracing. Likewise, the US delegation outlined the importance of the existing legal framework that already exists for the ITI. As such, the challenge that remains is the identification of needs and subsequently of adequate resources. Another briefing was offered by Sarah Parker of the Small Arms Survey who described national reporting on the ITI, which is required biennially to the Secretary-General. As of the last reporting term, 41 states failed to mention the ITI in its UNPoA reports.

Keeping to the mandate of the MGE, Ambassador McLay offered the floor to experts on the corresponding agenda items, beginning with marking. An expert from the Canadian Firearms Management Program explained methods of marking— from the ideal, such as laser marking, to the unacceptable, such as hand engraving. An important advantage of import marking, as outlined by the Canadian Program Manager Mr. Smith, is that firearms from non-participating states become traceable. Mr. Smith also noted, however, that it is preferable to mark

weapons at the latest possible stage of manufacture. A representative of the Brazilian Ministry of Defense described the Brazilian experience in marking, including its control systems, arms marking requirements, and firearm tracing through identification of type, brand, caliber, and serial number. Also important, although ammunition is not part of the UNPoA, the Brazilian representative noted Brazil's 'Personalized Identification of Ammunition System.' However, the US responded directly against the inclusion of ammunition in the discussions reminding the delegations that the conversation should be limited to the issues laid forth by the Chair's papers directly related to the ITI and UNPoA.

An important issue brought up by delegations in response to the expert presentations, notably Bolivia representing the Andean Community, was the importance of development of a National Action Plan through regional cooperation. The Chairman outlined the importance of regional cooperation in his issue papers distributed prior to this week's meeting. Part of this cooperation requires a combination of national legislation as well as international information and technical expertise sharing. Sudan noted that national efforts are not sufficient if not complemented by international assistance, both technical and financial. Support was expressed for a fund to be created for the explicit purpose of implementation of the UNPoA. The Cuban delegation also underscored the importance of international assistance. The

DRC noted that it has received 450,000 Euros from Germany to support its national programs in the eastern part of the country to combat the illicit trade in SALWs.

Another focus of the opening day's discussion on marking was national responsibility. The Cuban delegation noted that marking is primarily the responsibility of the national governments. However, there must also be a deep-rooted commitment to compliance to international standards. The DRC underscored the role of government in implementation programs regarding marking and tracing, the development of national programs of actions, and corresponding legislation. The delegate of DRC also explained that, with the support of UNDP, the DRC government has conducted 102 workshops and performed research in the eastern part of DRC on how to control SALWs as evidence of national progress towards better implementation of the UNPoA.

The ultimately goal for the week is clear—a free exchange of best practices and experiences among experts from member states will provide the basis for better implementation of the UNPoA. Day 1 provided a good foundation for what lies ahead, highlighting the experts who work on the technical aspects of marking, record keeping, and tracing. It is essential that delegations remains focused on these issues and forego abstract discussions that seek to challenge political commitments that already exist.

How and Why to Include Women in Efforts to Trace and Uncover Illicit Trade in SALWs

IANSA Women's Network | IANSA

As States gather in New York for the very first UN Programme of Action Open Ended Meeting of Governmental Experts (MGE), we see that women are yet again underrepresented in these

discussions, in both civil society and country delegations. This particular MGE's focus is on the marking and tracing of small arms and light weapons, in accordance with the [International Tracing Instrument](#) that was adopted by the UN

General Assembly in 2005. It is an important opportunity for experts on these subjects to focus on addressing practical implementation challenges, rather than policy debates, and to deepen dialogue and share experiences on efforts to implement the Programme of Action at national and regional levels. The Chair of the MGE, [Ambassador Jim McLay of New Zealand](#), has drafted [six discussion papers](#) on each of the key themes for the meeting: 1. Marking; 2. Record-keeping; 3. Cooperation in tracing; 4. National frameworks; 5. Regional cooperation; and 6. International assistance and capacity building.

Although these discussion papers are a good start and pose relevant questions, they fail to integrate a gender perspective. Why is it important, not only from an equality perspective but also from an efficiency perspective to take gender into account, when discussing the marking and tracing of small arms and light weapons? How can gender be taken into consideration in such technical discussions? The [Guidelines](#) for “Mainstreaming gender for the effective implementation of the UN PoA” provides essential answers to these questions, some of which are outlined in this article.

Themes 1, 2 and 3: Marking, record-keeping and cooperation in tracing

What is the importance of tracing SALW? According to the [2009 Small Arms Survey](#), marking, record-keeping and cooperation in tracing help identify the ownership history of SALW and thus, the point at which they were diverted into the illicit sphere. Tracing can uncover illicit supply channels, provide a starting point for disrupting such trade and basis for prosecuting those involved in it, and therefore is essential to efforts to detect and limit the illicit proliferation and misuse of small arms. Tracing is mainly used as a law enforcement tool in crime contexts, but it can also be important in conflict situations to identify which security forces leak weapons, as illicit arms transfers fuel conflict and open the way for men to return to war or to be drawn towards crime, including domestic violence, in post-conflict situations. ([Small Arms Survey, 2009](#), Chapter

3)

Both in crime and conflict situations, women can play a vital role in tracing efforts. They are not passive victims of armed conflict and crime, but also active participants in the fight against the illicit trade in SALW. Thus they should be trained in these very technical questions, so they too can identify weapons and actively participate in investigations and tracing efforts. The PoA calls upon States to “enhance cooperation, the exchange of experience and training among competent officials.” (PoA III:7) Without integrating the knowledge and experiences of diverse actors such as customs, police, intelligence organisations, civil society groups and women’s rights organisations, however, such cooperation is not possible.

Law enforcement officials often trace small arms when conducting criminal investigations. Women and girls are generally not seen as threats by border guards, and thus are often used as couriers to smuggle SALW across borders. In Bangladesh, it was reported that trafficking of women had increased with the increase in arms smuggling. In the Balkans, with the cessation of the violent conflict, some groups, which had been involved in arms trafficking, began to focus on trafficking in women. Women freed from trafficking rackets in Liberia were also able to verify that those involved in human trafficking were also dealing in SALW. States should therefore create appropriate training materials and resources for all government officials, containing gender-specific best practices on how to conduct and integrate the needs and experiences of women when conducting firearms investigations.

In conflict or post-conflict situations, tracing relies upon observing the types of arms used, both legal and illegal. “This provides a baseline of weapons in a given region, one that can become the basis for detecting influxes of new or more numerous weapons—which might provide the ‘seed’ evidence for a subsequent, more detailed investigation.” ([Small Arms Survey, 2009](#), Chapter 3)

In Liberia, the large number of distinctive M70 assault rifles served as evidence in uncovering illicit supply channels. In 2003, the United Nations Panel of Experts on Liberia noticed a significant number of Serbian manufactured Zastava M70 assault rifles in the hands of warring factions throughout Liberia. The Panel was able to identify the M70 assault rifles by their marks, and to trace their origins back to the manufacturer, the Serbian arms producer Zastava. Their date of manufacture suggested that they had been manufactured, and thus transferred, either after or immediately prior to the March 2001 UN arms embargo on Liberia. The Serbian authorities reported that the serial numbers matched those of a shipment to Nigeria that had been brokered by the Belgrade-based company Temex, yet earlier investigations had shown that the shipment to Nigeria had been done under a forged end-user certificate and that the arms had not been delivered to Nigeria, but instead to forces under the control of Charles Taylor, in violation of the UN arms embargo. In April 2003, Serbia revoked all licences granted to Temex for the trade in arms and military equipment and ordered all military manufacturers to cease cooperation with the company. The tracing of weapons enabled the disruption of illicit trade and the prosecution of those responsible.

Women should also be involved in these processes, as they too are observers in conflict situations. In Sierra Leone's civil war between 1991 and 2002, [64,000 women and girls](#) suffered war-related sexual violence. [Testimonies of women](#) explain how the assaults were endured at gunpoint. 'They put their guns to our throats and stomachs to make sure that we followed their orders,' one woman reported. The M70 assault rifles observed by the UN panel stood out against the many older Kalashnikov-pattern weapons in the region, which called for further investigation. Women can become active observers and participants in this process, if they are adequately trained, and should be consulted with at all stages.

Currently, in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), violence against women and girls, including widespread rape and sexual

violence, is aided by the use and traffic of small arms. Despite the 2003 UN Security Council embargo on weapons entering the eastern DRC, guns have come across the borders with surrounding countries - Angola, Burundi, Chad, Congo Brazzaville, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda - but also from America, Europe, South Africa and the former Soviet Union. The lack of effective tracing mechanisms, including marking, record-keeping and regional cooperation, is in part to blame. In setting up and improving these mechanisms, women should be included in training programmes on how to identify weapons, as well as tracing efforts, as they have vital information, experiences and insight to share, which can be used in the tracing of arms.

States should therefore incorporate gender-inclusive consultations in information sharing mechanisms, to source information from active civil society groups working toward eliminating the illicit trade in SALW.

Theme 4: National Frameworks

The PoA calls upon States to "Establish or designate, as appropriate, a national point of contact to act as a liaison between States on matters relating to the implementation of the Programme of Action" (PoA, II:5). National commissions require effective inter-agency and civil society communication on the implementation of the PoA. These national focal points provide a great opportunity for incorporating gender perspectives in all aspects of SALW control. In some states in Latin America, national commissions not only involve ministries of foreign affairs, defence and police agencies, but also include government agencies dealing with intelligence, the judiciary, public health, human rights, youth, children and women. In Paraguay, the working group, which serves as the focal point for the implementation of the PoA and national legislation, includes local women's empowerment organisations focusing on domestic violence. Ministries of women's affairs and non-governmental women's groups working on violence against women, including sexual and domestic violence, and human trafficking can have useful

experiences to share and should be included in training programmes on the tracing of SALW and in data collection mechanisms.

Theme 5: Regional Cooperation

On a regional level, States can also integrate gender in their efforts to limit illicit transfers of SALW. In November 2009, under Gabon's presidency, the eleven member States of the UN Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa (Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe) decided to include in the agendas of their semi-annual ministerial meetings a point on women, peace and security. In particular, they agreed to take the following four concrete measures:

1. Designate 1325 focal points in relevant Ministries (Foreign Affairs, Interior or Security, Defence, etc.);
2. Include women in national delegations attending international and regional disarmament conferences;
3. Include women in National Commissions on Small Arms;
4. Reaffirm their commitment to comply with and implement UNSC resolutions 1325 (2000), 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009) and 1889 (2009) and to comply with reporting requirements. (Report of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, A/64/638–S/2010/54)

Theme 6: International assistance and capacity building

In providing international assistance and capacity building, States should:

- Initiate a more systematic approach to the gathering of sex-disaggregated data, thus facilitating more effective actions for combating the illicit trade in SALW.
- Incorporate the knowledge and experience of different civil society groups, including women's organizations in exchanges and

training processes,

- Incorporate civil society groups, including women's organisations into training programmes and as a resource tool for training and awareness purposes to ensure that women's perspectives as users and victims of illicit SALW are reflected in all training programmes.
- Allocate financial and technical assistance to civil society groups, in particular women's networks, for peace and disarmament and community reintegration and sensitization.

Women can be active participants in the fight against the illicit trade in SALW. The IANSA Women's Network has started to build the capacity of its members including women's groups and individuals, but much more needs to be done so that women can effectively identify weapons and participate in the dismantling of illicit supply channels. Therefore, we call upon states to integrate a gender perspective in their tracing efforts and actively include women at all stages of the process including capacity building and cooperation initiatives.