

# Small Arms Monitor

Civil society reporting on the UN Programme of Action

## Highlighting and implementing security linkages

Katherine Prizeman | Global Action to Prevent War

Echoed by the newly-appointed High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Angela Kane, at the opening session of the UNPoA PrepCom, recognition of the multiple dimensions of illicit small arms proliferation is critical to the successful implementation of the UNPoA at national, regional, and international levels. Given the many security challenges related to the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons (SALW), it is essential that all substantive and institutional linkages are affirmed and strong coordination is undertaken for the most robust implementation of the UNPoA possible. Chairwoman of the PrepCom, Ambassador Joy Ogwu of Nigeria, opened the session by requesting that member states stay focused on discussing the specific elements of the UNPoA that should compose the agenda of the August Review Conference. Given that member states have asked for all elements of the UNPoA to be considered at this Prep Com, delegates were urged to demonstrate high levels of discipline and restraint. Ambassador Ogwu pledged to circulate draft elements for a PrepCom outcome document by Thursday morning. Any outcome document will have to be adopted by consensus.

Many delegations addressed the multiple goals of the PrepCom and Review Conference. The EU and Pakistani delegations reiterated that the goal of this PrepCom is to identify weaknesses in the implementation of the PoA and find ways through which the implementation can be improved, in addition to an assessment of progress, and also prepare for the upcoming August-September Review Conference. Switzerland's delegate called upon member states to adopt clear recommendations for the upcoming Review Conference. The Russian Federation's delegate noted that his delegation would use this week's PrepCom as an opportunity to share its national experiences in implementation of the UNPoA as a way to contribute to international discourse on the issue. Some delegations chose to focus exclusively on the upcoming Review Conference and what should be accomplished in August. New Zealand's delegation stated that the Review Conference must affirm state commitments to the UNPoA; consider other developments such as global implementation trends in SALW; determine the content to be considered in the subsequent six-year review cycle; and consider new strategies to support implementation especially through matching needs and resources.

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The *Small Arms Monitor* features civil society reporting and analysis on meetings of the UN Programme of Action (UNPoA) on small arms and light weapons.

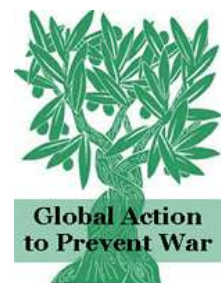
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## Reaching Critical Will

a project of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom



Others delegations expressed concern that an expansive agenda could become an impediment to success. According to the Chinese delegate, too comprehensive a scope at the Review Conference would contribute to lackluster substantive results. Therefore, the mandate should remain clear and unobstructed: to review state implementation of the UNPoA's provisions. The Arab Group, represented by the delegate of Mauritania, reminded member states that the UNPoA is a framework of political reference and was the outcome of well-developed negotiations. Therefore, such negotiations should not be reopened, but discussions should be focused only on implementation of the already-existing framework. The delegate of Argentina, representing MERCOSUR and associated states, recognized that although not all relevant issues could be covered by the Review Conference, it is imperative that states adopt agreements that specifically address this universal problem of illicit SALW.

In addition to the more procedural discussion around the goals of the PrepCom and Rev Con, suggestions on expanded criteria for assessing the UNPoA's success was brought to light. Although many delegations referenced the UNPoA as the primary, comprehensive framework for preventing, combating, and eradicating the illicit trade in SALW (including the delegations of India and the Philippines), the UNPoA should not be allowed to function in a political or negotiating vacuum. As such, the reference by New Zealand's delegation to other relevant policy debates was most welcome, especially in light of the current Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) negotiations. The EU and Australian delegates specifically underscored the synergies between the ATT process and UNPoA, including development of further mechanisms at the national, regional, and international levels to assess and minimize the risk of weapons diversion. The Spanish representative affirmed that the UNPoA should be complementary to the ATT, but not overlap with it. It is critical that the UNPoA be seen as a complement to any future ATT as the ATT will not have the ability to address weapons already in circulation or existing stockpiles. It is important to underscore, therefore, that many delegations have emphasized the need to

address stockpile management, including Australia, Japan, New Zealand, Germany, Belize, Switzerland, South Africa, and CARICOM. These delegations have rightfully noted that the UNPoA is the primary instrument for addressing the challenges, and hopefully facilitate the destruction, of excessive and illicit stockpiles. The Peruvian representative offered examples to the PrepCom of Peru's own weapons destructions, stating that thousands of weapons have been destroyed and the resulting metal materials used for social infrastructure projects. The US delegate called for states to ensure timely and safe disposal of obsolete and surplus weapons, although it is up to the state to determine 'surplus'.

Cross-cutting issues such as gender, peacekeeping operations, and development can successfully be tethered to the UNPoA framework insofar as they are affected by or can contribute to eradicating the illicit trade in SALW. The Nigerian delegate representing the African Group made the case that illicit SALW are one the primary variables of insecurity on the continent also undermining prospects for development and stability. In this mindset, other existing mechanisms that seek to highlight issue linkages should be further explored in the UNPoA context. These include effective implementation of the UN Firearms Protocol under the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, as noted by the EU and New Zealand delegations; frequent references to UN Security Council Resolution 1325 ensuring increased participation of women at all decision-making levels in security sector institutions; and effective incorporation of the relevant work of the World Customs Organization and INTERPOL, including the use of INTERPOL's illicit arms records and tracing management system (iARMS). The important role of women in contributing to the full implementation of the PoA and addressing the scourge of SALW was thankfully underscored by several delegations including the United States, Kazakhstan, Norway, the EU, the MERCOSUR bloc, Germany, and New Zealand. Undoubtedly, gender mainstreaming in the full range of arms control and disarmament processes is crucial to full and robust implementation of all relevant international instruments.

In moving forward, both during this week's PrepCom and in the transition towards August and beyond, delegations would be wise to recognize the high significance and impact of the UNPoA. As noted by the New Zealand delegate, the UNPoA framework is as relevant today as it was in 2001. Concerns over the

growing illicit trade in SALW and the dangers it poses will take much dedication and discipline to successfully address. This week's opportunity to provide a framework that can more effectively review progress on UNPoA implementation must not be wasted.

## **The importance of international cooperation and assistance to improve stockpile management in Africa**

Félix Kokou Aklavon | International Action Network on Small Arms

The manufacture, sale, stockpiling and illicit circulation of small arms and ammunition has always represented a major danger for civilians. The most recent proof is the explosion of an ammunition depot in the Congolese capital, killing more than 250 and causing the disappearance and displacement of thousands of others.

Unfortunately, Brazzaville isn't the first of these tragedies in Africa. The following cases, occurring both before and after the adoption of the UN Programme of Action, must also be remembered:

- The fire and explosion of an ammunition depot at the airport of N'djili in Kinshasa in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in April 2000, killing more than 104;
- The fire in an ammunition depot in Conakry, Guinea, in March 2001 (42 deaths);
- The explosion of an ammunition depot in the barracks of Ikeja in Lagos, Nigeria, in January 2002 (more than 1,000 deaths);
- The explosion of an ammunition depot near the airport of Maputo, Mozambique, in 2007 (more than 100 deaths);
- The explosion of an ammunition depot in the military camp of M'Bagala in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, in 2009 (28 deaths).

These repeated incidents pose the problem of stockpiling of small arms and ammunition in the world, and particularly in Africa. The

militarisation of cities, where hospitals are often under-equipped and sometimes non-existent, shows that the millions of dollars spent in the acquisition of ammunition should be spent instead to build and better equip hospitals and schools.

How do international assistance and cooperation relate to the management of arms flows and stockpiling?

Here and now is the opportunity to call on States to elaborate, adopt and implement national action plans on small arms and ammunition. As the African Group and the non-aligned movement have emphasised in their statements on Monday, international assistance is crucial to support the implementation of national actions plans in developing countries. In particular, funding from overseas development budgets should be allocated to support stockpile management, through measures such as regular inspections of stockpiles and the development and maintenance of inventories. As many stockpiles in Africa are situated in cities and towns, it is also necessary to consider their relocation away from densely populated areas.

Does the international community need to wait for yet another tragedy to react? How many deaths do we need to wait for before realising and changing the situation? Through the UN Programme of Action on small arms, the whole world can and must take appropriate decisions and steps, and send a strong signal of their commitment to millions of victims and survivors.

## **L'importance de la coopération et assistance internationales pour la gestion efficace des stocks en Afrique**

Félix Kokou Aklavon | International Action Network on Small Arms

La fabrication, la commercialisation, le stockage et la circulation illicite des armes légères et des munitions ont toujours représenté un danger pour les civils. La preuve la plus récente est l'explosion d'un dépôt de munitions dans la capitale congolaise faisant plus de 250 morts, des disparus et des milliers de sans abris.

Malheureusement, Brazzaville n'est pas le premier cas en Afrique.

Il faut rappeler les précédents cas suivants, qui ont eu lieu avant et après l'adoption du Programme d'Action:

- l'incendie et l'explosion d'un dépôt de munitions à l'aéroport de N'djili à Kinshasa en République Démocratique du Congo (RDC), en avril 2000, faisant plus de 104 morts ;
- l'incendie d'un dépôt de munitions à Conakry, Guinée, en mars 2001 (42 morts) ;
- l'explosion d'un dépôt de munitions dans la caserne d'Ikeja à Lagos au Nigéria, en janvier 2002 (plus de 1000 morts) ;
- l'explosion d'un dépôt de munitions près de l'aéroport de Maputo, Mozambique, en 2007 (plus de 100 morts) ;
- l'explosion d'un dépôt de munitions du camp militaire de M'Bagala à Dar-es-Salam, Tanzanie, en 2009 (28 morts)

Ces incidents répétés posent encore le problème du stockage des armes et des munitions dans le monde et particulièrement en Afrique. La militarisation à outrance des villes, là où même les hôpitaux sont sous-équipés et

parfois inexistantes montre que ces milliers de dollars utilisés dans l'acquisition des munitions devraient plutôt servir à construire et équiper des hôpitaux, des écoles et autres services nécessaires.

Comment se traduisent et s'opèrent l'assistance technique internationale et la coopération dans la gestion du flux des armements et de leurs stockage ?

C'est donc ici l'occasion d'interpeller les Etats à élaborer, adopter et mettre en œuvre des plans d'action nationaux en matière des armes et des munitions. Comme l'ont souligné le Groupe Africain et le mouvement des non-alignés, l'assistance internationale est cruciale pour mettre en œuvre ces plans d'action nationaux dans les pays en voie de développement. En particulier, les budgets de développement peuvent soutenir la gestion des stocks à travers des mesures comme la mise en place d'inspections régulières des entrepôts d'armes, et l'élaboration et la maintenance d'inventaires. Considérant qu'aujourd'hui, beaucoup de dépôts en Afrique se retrouvent au centre ville, il est nécessaire d'envisager la délocalisation de ceux-ci.

Est-ce que la communauté internationale devra attendre une tragédie de plus pour réagir ? Combien de morts voulons-nous atteindre avant de prendre conscience de la situation ? A travers le Programme d'Action des Nations Unies sur les armes légères, le monde entier peut et doit prendre des décisions idoines et ainsi envoyer un signal très fort de leur engagement aux milliers de victimes et survivants.

**You can follow the UNPoA meetings live on twitter on  
@theiansa or on the hashtag #PoAPrepCom**

**Summaries from the meetings and side events are available at [www.iansa.org](http://www.iansa.org)**

**Statements, documents, and PDFs of the *Small Arms Monitor* are at  
[www.reachingcriticalwill.org](http://www.reachingcriticalwill.org)**

## **Minding manners**

Dr. Robert Zuber | Global Action to Prevent War

In her opening remarks, Ambassador U. Joy Ogwu set the tone for the week, calling for a combination of sound policy objectives and the standards of diplomatic decorum needed to achieve them.

The Ambassador made clear her preferences—based on discussions with numerous delegations and groups of states prior to the start of the PrepCom—for a meaningful outcome document that can effectively pave the way for a robust Review Conference this coming summer. She also made clear the preference of delegations to cover all relevant topics rather than focus on a more narrow subset of UNPoA-related objectives.

Given the time constraints of this week, and with the hope that delegations have found time to digest the six ‘non-papers’ circulated by the Chair, the remainder of the Ambassador’s remarks focused on the preferred ‘character’ of the Prep Com, essentially the manner in which diplomats (and NGOs) are encouraged to conduct their business. Specifically, the Chair urged ‘restraint, discipline and focus’ as key values for the week. The concerns stemming from a failure of good diplomatic manners—including a disregard for time constraints—are well known, but the one articulated most clearly by the Chair was the need to avoid ‘being stampeded into decisions,’ which could easily complicate outcomes for the higher-profile Review Conference to come.

Fortunately, as is so often the case with First Committee/ATT/UNPoA delegates, the mood on this first day was largely positive and constructive. However, it was clear early on that the range of issues to be addressed this week—including important proposals that would intentionally engage parts of the UN system beyond disarmament affairs—might pose challenges to efforts to fulfill expectations for an outcome document that can effectively guide preparations for August.

One such proposal was offered early on by the EU—to “consider and suggest concrete measures to enable peacekeeping and peace

support operations to contribute effectively to the safe storage, disposal and tracing of illicit SALW.” Such a proposal has many potential benefits, including reinforcing within the UN system the dysfunctional and dangerous relationship between the proliferation of illicit small arms and international efforts to keep and restore the peace.

Moreover, we have been witness to several weapons destruction ceremonies, most recently in Ecuador, and find them valuable at multiple levels. Among other things, they are rich in symbolism that reinforces for the global public the determination of states to seize control of arms from criminal elements, terrorists and other non-state actors. That said, such events (not to mention efforts to monitor and collect the weapons in the first place) are quite labor intensive—and labor is a precious commodity in virtually every facet of UN and affiliated operations.

The EU statement serves as a sober reminder for all of us to weigh the capacity implications of our proposals, even the most hopeful ones. In this case, the high value of having another key component of the UN security system involved in issues of illicit small arms could ultimately be undermined by a general lack of resources to help peacekeepers fulfill their increasingly complex mandates.

Global Action will take up this helpful EU proposal again at a multi-issue event that we are co-organizing in Brussels in late April with the Madariaga—College of Europe Foundation and the Global Governance Institute. We urge other NGOs to invest energy in issues that have direct implications for UNPoA implementation but that also offer opportunities for seemingly disconnected parts of the UN system to push forward on illicit small arms in complementary, mutually-supportive ways. We also encourage ‘restrained, disciplined and focused’ discussions among diverse stakeholders to rethink capacity needs and blend institutional commitments as the next phases of UNPoA implementation take shape later this year.

To inform discussions at the PoA PrepCom this week, the Small Arms Survey has released an Issue Brief, *Precedent in the Making: The UN Meeting of Governmental Experts* (Issue Brief 5), taken from the forthcoming *Small Arms Survey 2012*. It presents details of the discussions at the Open-ended Meeting of Governmental Experts (MGE), with a view to identifying some of the key impediments to full International Tracing Instrument (ITI) implementation, as well as the various means of overcoming them. For details, see [www.smallarmssurvey.org](http://www.smallarmssurvey.org).



## Precedent in the Making

### The UN Meeting of Governmental Experts

#### Introduction

How to stop a criminal from removing the identifying marks on a polymer-frame handgun? This was the kind of question asked, and sometimes answered, at the Open-ended Meeting of Governmental Experts (MGE),<sup>1</sup> convened at UN headquarters in New York from 9 to 13 May 2011. For the first time at a UN small arms meeting, the discussions were expert-led and relatively interactive as delegations focused on the practical details of weapons marking, record-keeping, and tracing, specifically as dealt with in the International Tracing Instrument (ITI) (UNGA, 2005).

The MGE produced an official report (UNGA, 2011a) and a more substantive Chair's Summary (New Zealand, 2011c). Yet, as of early 2012, it had not produced much in the way of concrete follow-up. The ideas, proposals, and lessons learned that states shared at the meeting, although reflected in the Chair's Summary, face an uncertain future. Nor have UN member states decided to convene any future MGEs. Still, the potential impact of the 2011 meeting appears significant.

Drawing on the Chair's Summary and the author's own observations from the meeting, this *Issue Brief* presents details of the MGE discussions with a view to identifying some of the key impediments to full ITI implementation, as well as the various means of overcoming them. It does not reach any conclusions concerning progress UN member states have made in their implementation of the ITI. Its aim, rather, is to examine the 'challenges and opportunities' inherent in such

implementation, specifically as discussed at the MGE.

This *Issue Brief's* main findings include the following:

- A key recommendation emerging from the MGE was for the establishment of a Technical Committee that would draft recommendations for marking in light of new developments in weapons manufacture and design.
- Although the subject was broached at the MGE, differences between the marking of light weapons and that of small arms remain to be explored in the UN framework.
- MGE delegations highlighted a series of challenges associated with the conversion of paper-based record-keeping systems into electronic form, including a lack of qualified personnel and software problems.
- Meeting participants cited a lack of information in tracing requests, along with the inaccurate identification of weapons and weapons markings, as the leading causes of tracing failures. Weapons produced under licence in a second country were often misidentified because of the incorrect identification of the manufacturer or country of manufacture.
- The MGE discussions revealed that, when their national and international lines of communication



Weapons used in crimes are displayed at a crime lab in the Mexican border city of Ciudad Juárez, March 2005.  
Photo: Tomas Brune / Reuters

This *Issue Brief* is taken from the forthcoming *Small Arms Survey 2012*.