

Small Arms Monitor

Civil society reporting on the UN Programme of Action

Discussion on follow-up mechanisms continues

Ray Acheson | Reaching Critical Will of WILPF

On Wednesday morning, a few delegations continued the discussion on follow-up mechanisms for the next review cycle of the UN Programme of Action on small arms (UNPoA). Most of the discussion focused on the potential structure for the next review cycle, responding Japan's non-paper on the subject, though the Australian delegation also discussed other follow-up elements highlighted in the Chair's indicative non-paper.

Israel and Kenya welcomed Japan's non-paper on the subject of follow-up mechanisms. Jamaica's delegation issued its support for a series of biennial meetings of states (BMS) and meetings of government experts (MGE) over the next six years and called for international cooperation and assistance to remain an issue of focus throughout these meetings. Israel's delegation also issued its support for the MGE, saying it was very professional and contributed significantly to the UN small arms process. The Israeli delegation also said there would be merit in rethinking the balance between political meetings like the BMS and professional meetings like the MGE.

Australia and New Zealand's delegations gave their support for MGEs, though Australia also suggested that a group of governmental experts (GGE) might be useful in the context of UNPoA review. The Australian delegate noted that MGEs are useful because they involve all states and therefore have a higher chance of resulting in practical outcomes that address challenges facing all states, while GGEs are useful for technical matters and testing feasibility of an issue before they "go open-ended".

On the other hand, Iran's delegation argued that the current structure of holding two BMS and one Prep Com before the Review Conference is the "best possible option to review PoA implementation". The South African delegation indicated that it is flexible on the structure of the review cycle, though like Iran suggested that it would be most practical to retain the current structure for at least the next six years. It suggested that the decision to hold MGEs could be done on an ad hoc basis.

South Africa's delegation also noted that there is no need to decide at the Review Conference on specific themes for the upcoming review cycle, arguing that these could be decided upon during consultations over the next UN General Assembly omnibus resolution on

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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.

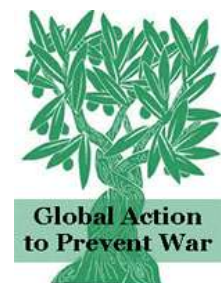
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small arms. The delegate explained that after the failure of the 2006 Review Conference, the 2007–2012 cycle of work on the UNPoA was decided in the omnibus resolution. Therefore, if the 2012 Review Conference fails to agree on the structure for the next review cycle, consultations and decisions can be taken up during the following First Committee.

The Australian delegation indicated support for some of the follow-up steps suggested in the Chair's non-paper on this

subject, such as early designation of the chair of meetings, early identification of issues to be discussed, and increased engagement of all actors, including through a voluntary sponsorship programme. Australia also said it likes the idea of an implementation plan for the next review cycle, noting that it would be ambitious but would assist states in breaking down a clear concrete approach to implementation.

Enhancing implementation of the ITI

Katherine Prizeman | Global Action to Prevent War

Enhancing implementation of the International Tracing Instrument (ITI), adopted separately from the PoA in 2005, was a point of discussion for much of Wednesday's session of the Prep Com. Member states agreed that the tracing of illicit small arms and light weapons (SALWs) is a key mechanism for preventing, combating, and eradicating such illegal trade and diversion. The primary components of the ITI— tracing, marking, recordkeeping, cooperation in tracing, implementation including international cooperation and assistance, and follow-up— were discussed in varied forms and from different perspectives. Most delegations underscored the importance of information exchange, especially technical and practical expertise, in improving implementation of the ITI and thus combating illicit trade in and diversion of SALWs. The delegate of the US called the ITI the most important and helpful tool that currently exists for combating the illicit trade in SALWs, although noting that much work still remains to be done. Likewise, the diversion of SALWs into the illegal market was highlighted as a central challenge of the PoA and, therefore, for the full implementation of the ITI. The Belgian delegation rightly noted that success in combating diversion of SALWs through the full implementation of the ITI would inevitably affect, in presumably a positive manner, the forthcoming Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) and its future implementation.

Although some delegations chose to focus their statements on their national practices and mechanisms for ITI

implementation, such as Israel, Kenya, Argentina, the Russian Federation, the Philippines, and Trinidad and Tobago, others spoke more generally on implementation challenges. It is also important to note the careful reference to state prerogative in methods of marking and tracing made by the Cuban delegate. As an instrument focusing on practical measures for tracing and marking weapons, many delegations addressed the legal and technical infrastructure of the ITI such as adoption of legislative mandates and the marking of weapons at the various stages of life including manufacture, import, and export. Other proposals for enhancement of the ITI were more far-reaching, such as those presented by the delegates of CARICOM and Norway, calling for a legally-binding ITI that would also include ammunition in addition to SALWs. CARICOM called for a broad, binding regime as opposed to voluntary bilateral agreements. The majority of the positions, however, focused on ways in which member states could improve implementation of the ITI in its existing form by improving international assistance and cooperation including information exchange on national procedures and methods of marking, tracing, and record keeping as well as convening open-ended sessions for this purpose.

Proposals for improving the marking and tracing of firearms were explored and the links between these two practices were made clear. The Chinese delegation stated that marking at the point of manufacture is

indispensable to effective tracing, while others, such as Mexico, highlighted the importance of marking throughout a weapon's lifecycle at point of manufacture, seizure, and storage. Many member states, including France, Nigeria, the Philippines, Algeria, and the EU, referenced the work of INTERPOL and called for indentifying ways to support the tools and technologies that already exist, such as electronic record systems, laser marking, and other reference tools. The representative from INTERPOL explained that next January the organization will launch a universal firearms tracing system to report lost, stolen, or smuggled firearms with an alert sent to those countries involved. Likewise, the iARMS system was also highlighted as an important complement to the ITI and helpful tool for ITI implementation. The Belgian delegate also suggested a published, online list of known diverters.

Tracing in conflict and post-conflict situations was a point of concern for many delegations. The Belgian delegation noted the role, when appropriate, of peacekeeping operation officials in tracing illicit and diverted SALWs and called for particular attention to be paid to tracing firearms in post-conflict situations as an important caveat of ITI implementation. This point was echoed by the Philippines representative. Furthermore, the representative of Australia pointed to the case of the Democratic Republic of Congo as an example of due diligence paid to a post-conflict situation. Similarly, the Israeli representative warned of the danger of post-conflict smuggling, while the US delegation noted that although tracing in conflict zones can add great value to preventing diversion, information gleaned in these investigations can be sensitive and often has to remain within law enforcement channels. The Mexican delegation noted that tracing is essential not only for the prevention of diversion, but also for identification of possible violations of Security Council embargoes. The delegate of New Zealand aptly pointed out the particular challenge of marking in regions with a prevalence of older weapons with long ownership chains and insufficient recordkeeping.

Many delegations referenced the May 2011 Open-ended Meeting of Governmental

Experts (MGE) as an example of a substantive follow-up mechanism for improving and enhancing ITI implementation and praised this practical exchange of views among national implementers of the ITI. The delegate of Switzerland called the MGE an opportunity for discussion of practical details of weapons marking and recordkeeping as well as vetting of challenges encountered and lessons learned in ITI implementation. In looking forward, the Australian delegation proposed weighing and comparing the 'pros' and 'cons' of the MGE and GGE (Group of Governmental Experts) formats in future PoA-related deliberations. Rather than setting a timetable of additional MGEs, the South African delegation supported the convening of ad hoc MGE sessions. Moreover, the representative of New Zealand noted that this MGE practice may also add value to the PoA process more broadly. The Swiss and New Zealand representatives both referred to the formation of a technical committee to assess and draft recommendations on marking in light of new developments in weapons design and manufacture.

In this context of forums for information exchange, many member states called for more robust mechanisms for international assistance and cooperation. The section on international assistance and cooperation in the ITI, as noted by the South African delegation, is short and considered, by some, as fairly weak. Although this section calls for member states with the necessary means to render technical, financial, and other forms of assistance, comprehensive and concrete measures to do so are not explicitly enumerated. There is a reference to examining and transferring technologies that would improve the tracing and detection of illicit SALWs, but further explanation is lacking given the unique needs of each member state. As such, there were widespread calls for higher levels of information-sharing on national marking practices as well as increased opportunities for the training of law enforcement officials, border and customs agents, and other technical training based on the individual needs of member states. Many delegations noted their own successes in expertise sharing. The representative of Morocco noted his country's offer of expertise on ballistics to neighboring

countries and Morocco's willingness to cooperate in this area. Given the regional nature of many ITI implementation challenges, it would be helpful to approach information-sharing on a regional level. The Permanent Observer of the African Union called for increased information-sharing and international assistance for combating the proliferation of SALWs in his region underscoring the challenges endemic to Africa related to SALWs. Likewise, the delegate of Algeria expressed support for a regional, legally-binding instrument to address trans-border movement of weapons in North Africa.

As proposed by the delegate of Australia, it would be wise to 'unpack' the ITI

and identify the aspects of the instrument that require greater exploration. It would seem that implementation of the primary components of the ITI—tracing, marking, and recordkeeping—requires practical, technical, and streamlined assistance, guidance, and information exchange that would be most useful for the national experts from capitals who are charged with directly implementing these measures. Therefore, it is essential that the discourse around ways to enhance the instrument continue among national experts with particular attention paid to the various challenges to implementation.

Fair way

Dr. Robert Zuber | Global Action to Prevent War

One of the most interesting and helpful proposals presented during Wednesday's Prep Com meeting was Argentina's description of their national coordination policies to implement PoA responsibilities and policies, which include an operative NGO Council to help establish and support implementation priorities.

Many states at this Prep Com have been complimentary of relevant NGO activities and engagements. In turn, a major concern of the persons who produce and contribute to this monitor is to reassure diplomats that we are paying attention to what you think, what you care about, and the obstacles you must overcome to arrive at a reasonable consensus on contentious issues. Many of the statements made at this Prep Com – and we assume the national actions consistent with those statements – have hopeful implications for our general, coordinated efforts to bring illicit small arms under effective national and international control. We are especially grateful for the efforts of diplomats who go a bit 'out on a limb,' thereby helping establish goals for the next phases of PoA implementation. At those times, the roles of diplomats and NGOs have considerable overlap.

But an NGO Council is quite an extraordinary step. We are not aware of other

efforts of this sort, even in states that have long championed civil society involvement in core security issues. We know of many excellent civil society groups in Argentina and have had exchanges with several of them. But a Council that vests civil society in a formal process to set and oversee policy on small arms and related issues seems particularly hopeful. We will make it a point to find out more from Argentinean colleagues regarding the functioning and effectiveness of this Council and will share what we learn. But the welcome existence of the Council also raises for us some discomfort around the nature and scope of civil society participation. For instance, none of the members of that Argentinean Council, to the best of our knowledge, were able to be here for this Prep Com. Indeed, for a variety of reasons, many extraordinary civil society organizations worldwide are neither directly represented at this meeting nor at most meetings where global delegations gather to set and assess policy. Here we are concerned less about a physical presence and more about values and policy content.

How are these disparate and growing civil society voices to find proper expression at meetings such as this? And if there are no effective mechanisms to make participation more likely, to what extent can any of us

presume to represent a sector about which most of us remain largely unfamiliar?

There are a lot of good policy advocates who gather around UN Headquarters either daily or episodically. That being said, the NGO sector is probably the least diverse segment of the UN community – by language, by culture, by social class, by religious background. Does this fact undermine the value of NGO participation or the validity of any particular policy recommendation? Of course not. But it is uncomfortable when we invoke 'civil society involvement' without delineating the limited bandwidth of civil society organizations with any meaningful place at the table, and without articulating firm commitments to keep 'representation' in full view as a critical, ongoing task as we build and maintain a UN system that keeps fairness at the center of its priorities. There are, of course, solutions that can alleviate some of the imbalances in civil society representation that are clearly evident in this and other parts of the UN system. More governments can follow Argentina's lead and establish NGO Councils. More governments can make funds available to ensure diverse national representation at key meetings as well as facilitate the presence of 'headquarters' NGOs at important gatherings in diverse capitals and regional settings. Governments can also insist that NGOs that they fund and otherwise support – in both national and international contexts –

make every commitment to increase general access to policy rather than merely their own.

NGOs must also step up in response to the growing demands of fairness in access. We can all do more to facilitate diverse policy perspectives, innovative policy ideas, and new leadership. If 'fairness' is a value to be pursued – and many NGOs involved with PoA issues rightly affirm that it is -- we can do more ourselves to ensure it -- even with limited budgets; even in regional and national settings where there are often parallel struggles of representation that must also be addressed.

As we remind ourselves often in our small office, our own access is as much a function of privilege as talent. We have won no elections. We do not have vast constituencies in all global regions who have endorsed our policy recommendations. We are not world renowned experts on any of the issues we write about and discuss with delegations. The struggle for fairness of access, especially involving an issue such as illicit small arms that impacts virtually every community and society on the planet, is an ongoing challenge. However, we are convinced that any inattentiveness to fairness issues will continue to present obstacles of trust, including for delegations looking around the conference room for evidence of region-based civil society impact on NGO policy recommendations and practice.

Public health approaches to the UNPoA

Cathey E. Falvo and Maria Valenti | IPPNW and the IANSA Public Health Network

In 1981, the World Health Assembly adopted resolution 34.38 that stated, "The role of physicians and other health workers in the preservation and promotion of peace is the most significant factor for attainment of health for all." Fifteen years later, the 49th World Health Assembly (The World Health Organization's [WHO] governing body) declared violence as a leading worldwide public health problem. Subsequently, the WHO developed the landmark document *Small Arms and Global Health* prepared for the first UN Conference on Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) in 2001. The WHO states that "Violence

is an important health problem – and one that is largely preventable. Public health approaches have much to contribute to solving it." International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW) responded to the call for health professionals to address violence by convening the major conference "Aiming for Prevention: International Medical Conference on Small Arms, Gun Violence, and Injury" in Helsinki, Finland 28-30 September 2001. This meeting was held shortly after the initial PoA meeting in New York and brought together for the first time hundreds of medical professionals, scientists, and public health

experts to address the humanitarian dimensions of small arms violence.

In his address at the Helsinki meeting, Dr. Etienne Krug, Director of the newly-formed Department for Injuries and Violence Prevention of the WHO in Geneva, addressed the importance of recognizing the tremendous influence on health of SALWs. "Small arms have an important impact on health. This impact is present in developing and a developed country....This aspect was very much marginalized in the UN conference..."

In the past ten years, this has not changed substantively. The focus of the PoA remains on the supply side of arms and barely considers the demand side – the root causes of armed violence and its health impact as well as public health prevention approaches. For example, the country reporting template asks nothing about programs or policies to help prevent violence at the country level, despite the fact that Part III paragraph 18 of the PoA (Implementation, International Cooperation and Assistance) states: "*States, regional and sub-regional and international organisations, research centres, **health and medical institutions**, the United Nations System, international financial institutions and civil society are urged as appropriate, to develop and support **action-oriented research** aimed at facilitating greater awareness and better understanding of the nature and scope of the problems associated with the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.*"

At the 2001 health conference on small arms, Dr. Krug went on to address deaths and injuries from SALW and the need for more rigorous evidence-based research and analysis. "I don't think we know how many deaths there really are. There are several hundreds of thousands, that's for sure," he stated. Over ten years later, not much has changed. Comprehensive and long-term investments in action-oriented research, including evaluations of intervention programs, called for in the PoA have not been made. Only a handful of countries in Africa have emergency-room injury surveillance initiatives, which is a key data source for injuries from gun violence.

So what *has* been accomplished in the past ten years to address the health consequences of gun violence? There is greater

awareness that firearm violence, as a subset of violence in general, is a serious health problem and that it is preventable. This is largely due to health organizations such as the WHO and the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. For example, WHO has established violence focal points at Health Ministries in over 100 countries and has encouraged countries to develop national policy documents and/or produce national reports on violence and health (Brown et al, WHO, 2007). In general, however, violence focal points are not interacting with National Commissions on Small Arms established by the PoA and thus missing an opportunity to enhance each other's efforts.

Prior to the 9th World Conference on Injury Prevention and Safety Promotion held in March 2008 in Merida, Mexico, a meeting of Ministers of Health of the Americas was held to discuss the occurrence of violence and injury and their implications in the region. This resulted in a *Ministerial Declaration on Violence and Injury Prevention in the Americas*. The Ministries of Health committed to [13 points of action](#) including development, implementation and evaluation of national, state and municipal plans for violence injury prevention, and strengthening the collection of epidemiological data including information on risk and protective factors, as well as on injury and death statistics and costs related to injuries and violence. Nonetheless, many areas in the Americas region remain rife with high levels of crime and violence (World Bank, 2011). It is second only to the African region in deaths from interpersonal violence (Zavala et al. Understanding violence-the role of injury surveillance systems in Africa, 2009).

The Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development has now been signed by over 100 countries and has helped broaden the dialogue on armed violence as a health issue. It has shined a spotlight on the huge costs of armed violence to development and has called for more donor investment in violence prevention. The PoA can and should dovetail more with the goals of the Geneva Declaration. The WHO companion report, *Preventing Violence and Reducing Its Impact: How Development Agencies and Governments Can Help*, details the health effects of violence and how it obstructs achievement of the Millennium

Development Goals. The report identifies data collection and research on violence prevention (especially evaluation) as a top priority and engagement with the health sector as one of 4 “best buys” for donor investment for reducing consequences of violence. However, major investments in this area are not yet evident.

The WHO Violence Prevention Alliance (VPA), of which IPPNW is an active member, has reported, every two years since 2004, on promising and successful violence prevention initiatives in different regions in five *Milestones of a Global Campaign for Violence Prevention*. Countries committed to realizing the full potential of the PoA should support these promising efforts and make long-term investments to enable useful evaluations and hopefully ensure ongoing success of programs. The VPA is now shepherding a new *Global Plan of Action for the Global Campaign for Violence Prevention 2012-2020*, which is a set of policy, legal and programme-delivery goals at the national level. Global violence prevention efforts should be directed towards these goals. The PoA can take advantage of these initiatives and national governments should work closely with the range of organizations in the VPA including NGOs.

Although little progress has been made on systematically integrating public health measures into preventing and reducing small

arms violence, we do, in fact, know how to do it. It will take political will, dedicated resources, and action-oriented research that should receive much more support from donor countries. At present, such research remains largely in the domain of small pilot studies by NGOs with some notable exceptions of more systemic programs in a few countries supported by the WHO and local health and UNDP partners. Hospital-based data on gun violence injuries in the global South are scarce. In a recent audit of a major hospital in Monrovia, Liberia, IPPNW research found that intentional injury data are not currently collected routinely or systematically in the emergency room. Records also indicated 46% of patients injured from assaults were female, while only 23% of the violence cases reported to the Liberian Armed Violence Observatory (LAVO) from other sources (such as police data, media reports) were female. From this small review, we see the potential for huge gaps in reported data and how these gaps may be impeding the development and implementation of tailored interventions to prevent gun violence.

In the 2012 UN PoA Review conference, countries need to redouble their commitments to not only prevent illegal transfer of small arms, but to address the root causes of conflict. Given the proper resources, the health community stands ready to assist in this effort.



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