



SMALL ARMS MONITOR

Civil society perspectives on the meeting of governmental
experts of the UN Programme of Action on small arms

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The *Small Arms Monitor* is produced by the Reaching Critical Will programme of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) during meetings related to the UN Programme of Action on small arms and light weapons.

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EDITORIAL: PRODUCTION, PROFIT, AND WAR

Ray Acheson | *Reaching Critical Will of WILPF*

Discussion on the challenges of new and emerging technologies related to small arms and light weapons (SALW) continued during the second day of MGE2. But a few delegations pointed out that the fundamental problems of SALW remain—lack of control over ammunition, the destabilising effects of arms flows especially in regions of conflict, and the death and destruction caused by the easy accessibility and use of these weapons.

Belgium, Iraq, and Jordan all noted problems of marking and tracing ammunition and highlighting the need to develop better regulatory systems for ammunition. The Chair agreed that ammunition poses significant problems, noting that this is also an issue for stockpile management.

Ammunition has long been recognised as a critical issue in the control of SALW and reduction of armed violence and armed conflict. It is generally excluded from international frameworks regulating SALW, though it has been added to the UN Register of Conventional Weapons and was included in the Arms Trade Treaty—the latter only after determined negotiating by CARICOM, the African Group, and others who faced forceful pushback by the United States and a few other delegations who did not want the Treaty to regulate the transfer of ammunition at all. Many civil society groups, including WILPF, have advocated for much more stringent international controls of ammunition from production to trade to destruction.

Production, above all else, remains a crucial issue for ammunition as it does for SALW more generally, as noted in yesterday's editorial. In 1915, its year of inception, WILPF argued that "the private profits accruing from the great armament factories" represents "a powerful hindrance to the

abolition of war." 100 years later we can see that as long as the production and sale of weapons is profitable, it will continue unabated. Which means the death and destruction resulting from their use will continue as well.

This is a serious point of concern even at a technical meeting like MGE2. As the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA) argued before First Committee last year, "All technical discussion and political will to control SALW should be checked against the purpose of reducing the impact of gun violence on people and communities. States should get rid of the narrow perspective of only controlling tools of violence per se and increase their understanding, action, and cooperation to address survivors needs and their input into this international processes, and the complementarity between SALW processes and the ongoing discussion to strengthen global commitments on sustainable development goals."

Human rights violations, undercutting of development efforts, and loss of life and livelihoods are the products of the manufacture, trade, and use of SALW inside and outside of armed conflict. These issues need to be addressed holistically. Many concerns related to development, human rights, and armed conflict could benefit from closer attention to small arms. As Instituto Sou da Paz has noted,

Procurement and holdings of small arms may be, more than a consequence, a facilitating or causal factor to the outbreak of war.... Though further conceptual development and analysis is needed, presumably small arms could reach greater thematic protagonism in attempts to prevent and mitigate the effects of war, as well as within the fields of peacebuilding and conflict prevention. What exactly

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WAR

GOOD
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BAD
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LATOFF
2006

Editorial, continued

was, and is, the role of small arms in the deflagration and sustainability of the gruesome conflict in Syria? How can closer attention to small arms become part of the debates on the protection of civilians in war, the “responsibility to protect” doctrine (or Brazil’s proposed “responsibility while protecting”)? Finally, what is (or will be) the relationship, if any, between armed violence and prospective crises threatening human security on a global level, such as severe water shortages, for example?

These are the questions that must provide the backdrop for addressing technical challenges in the regulation of SALW. More aggressive approaches are necessary—studying only how to regulate transfers, prevent diversion, or effectively mark and trace weapons is not enough. We need to be tackling the root of the problem, which is the production of and profit from weapons. •

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SIDE EVENT REPORT: NEW TECHNOLOGIES AND HUMAN SECURITY

Ghazal Rahmanpanah | PeaceWomen of WILPF

On 2 June, the Permanent Mission of Germany and the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA) hosted an event discussing new technologies in small arms and light weapons (SALW) and its impact on human security. The event featured Ivor Fung, UNODA; Tarmo Dix, Federal Foreign Office of Berlin Representative; Baffour Amoa, West African Action Network on Small Arms (WAANSA) and IANSA; Nic Jenzen-Jones, SAS Researcher; and Dr. Cathey Falvo, International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear Weapons.

The event began with an introduction from Mr. Fung, who highlighted how technology can be a positive tool when it comes to the controlling of the flow and influence of SALW. However, simultaneously, technology itself can create a major challenge to the various instruments and mechanisms impacted by the flow of small arms and light weapons.

Tarmo Dix spoke broadly on the influence technology may have on SALW and the need to increase data collection in order to gather information on the causal chain and impact of these weapons. Technology can be helpful and assist in efficiency. For example, with regards to illegal diversion of SALW, biometric controls could be helpful in mitigating the issue. There are also discussions on the use of RFID tags and GPS sensors and how they can be used to ensure the security of the point of origin and destination of these weapons.

Baffour Amoa highlighted a civil society consultation, hosted by IANSA, regarding the technologies that will be addressed during the Second Meeting of Governmental Experts (MGE2). The consultation included discussions on new technologies and their influence on marking, record-keeping, and tracing in order to assess potential future risks raised by the creation and use of such technologies.

The proper application of technology could lead to better management of different SALW control policies, such as tracing capabilities. It is too early, however, to assess the consequences of the new technologies. Pressure must be brought to bear on SALW producers to ensure all technologies are integrated into new models. Furthermore, there is a need to raise awareness on how new technologies can also potentially undermine instruments such as the UNPoA and the ITI. Implementation of the ITI, for example, can be strengthened if it takes into account issues such as automatic information, data collection and tracking mechanisms, laser marking, etc.

States must also address the potential impact of new technologies, such as 3D printing, in furthering armed

conflict and violence. IANSA calls on states to focus on technologies that could affect marking, record-keeping, and tracing of weapons. The development of new materials used to manufacture weapons must be assessed in order to address the durability of markings.

Nic Jenzen-Jones highlighted recent trends in small arms design, manufacturing, and control. Some of the trends include modular weapons, polymer firearms components, new control technologies, and 3D-printed firearms.

For 3D printed weapons, some stakeholder concerns include the production of untraceable firearms and illegal conversion/modification of firearms. Enforcement of firearms manufacturing regulations will become more difficult. Added manufacturing could be used to produce controlled accessories or components. Some legislators in different US states have called for controls on 3D printed firearms, but it is unclear how fair or effective these controls would be.

Polymer as a primary element for weapons' frames has come to the forefront recently. It is more difficult to mark polymer parts durably. The addition of contrast agents may help to increase visibility of certain polymers. The favoured solution currently remains the use of metal tags, stamped with the weapon's serial number, which can be embedded in the frame.

Modular weapons are typically split receiver architecture with a core fixed section. Reconfiguration of the rifle to meet different operational "needs," including exchange of parts from the same or related models, is one of the major risks associated with this type weapon. Some challenges include distinguishing the weapon from its major components following reconfiguration (i.e. conflicting serial numbers) and marking of additional information (e.g. calibre). Another key challenge is how to track the weapon throughout its life cycle irrespective of changes in its configuration.

New control and management technologies are also being discussed at MGE2, which notably are not strictly "new" technologies, but rather ones that are being widely used in other industries and are now trends seen in SALW proliferation. New marking technologies include 2D data matrix codes; micro stamping; and improvements in associated scanning technology. New stockpile management technologies have functions that include access control, inventory management, monitoring, and protection of weapons in transit. They are also utilising technologies such as biometric firearm storage, RFID tags and strips, and increased computing

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Side event report, continued

power and other IT advances. Barriers to implementation of these new control and management technologies include cost, questions about reliability; information may be in new formats; and there may be opposition from political and consumer groups.

Dr. Cathey Falvo spoke on the scientific method to preventing armed violence and protecting human security. Looking at armed violence holistically, SALW have a heavy-handed impact that goes beyond the violence. In fact, the flow of SALW has a major impact on public

health. One way of assessing their impact is by analysing the measurable costs associated with treatment of individuals victimised by armed violence. For example, the research looked at the medical costs associated with gunshot care worldwide. Falvo also highlighted some low-cost interventions that can be pursued in order to raise awareness locally regarding armed violence. This includes partner information sharing and trainings as well as distribution of brochures, posters, and contact cards at key locations. •

TOBACCO ROAD: THE COMPLICATIONS OF OUR SMALL ARMS ADDICTION

Dr. Robert Zuber | Global Action to Prevent War

On Tuesday Australia convened a side event in which technical experts in a mostly empty conference room 1 shared their experiences with ITI-related tasks in an increasingly complex security environment. As a former gun owner, I tend to appreciate these technical interventions, even the ones I don't agree with. Though considerably less skeptical about prospects of a weapons-reduced world than the all-male panelists, I also get the sense that, for many delegates to this MGE2, the challenges of marking, tracing and record keeping are a bit less daunting than they actually are.

They are daunting indeed. The panelists made clear that there are no straightforward pathways to marking modular weapons in ways that will eliminate prospects of multiple markings or, perhaps worse, fail to hold up in court when states seek to prosecute weapons-related abuses.

The logic of this MGE2, ably run by Moldova, is that there needs to be more concerted attention on the pitfalls of some of our cherished responses to the illicit trafficking in weapons. Experts see problems where non-experts sometimes see a "Yellow Brick Road." To challenge facile interpretations and recommendations in an area like SALW is the role of experts, and it is an important one that should be heeded more by NGOs and arms recipient states.

Behind the "rational" presentations lies skepticism of how the UN seeks to do its business on weapons; thus there is a bit of a predictable "clash of cultures" inside the MGE. The experts at this side event are paid well by manufacturers and even the military. Their interest is primarily in the market, giving clients what they want and what they seem to need consistent with their considerable expertise. The interests of the diplomats are certainly varied, but there is an undercurrent—especially among the non-weapons producing states and produc-

ers such as Belgium—that the grave difficulties posed by new weapons technologies in the hands of increasingly clever criminal elements cannot be solved without more attention to the supply of weapons and not only to their modification in the states of end use.

It's a bit like cigarettes, minus the alleged constitutional protections. You can put all of the labeling you want on cigarette packs, but unless the general addiction is brought under control, the volume of available smokes will continue to overwhelm any and all remedial efforts.

While understandably needing to avoid "policy" statements and cleave tightly to their advertised expertise, it is interesting that this elephant in the room was allowed to trample the plants without comment. The 'elephant' in this case is the massive supplies of small arms and light weapons produced by the major manufacturers which are then sold to states that the manufacturers know perfectly well cannot possibly trace or otherwise control their movements with any degree of success. The cautions of the technical experts are grim news for all states, but especially those many states for which the volume of licit and illicit arms already poses existential threats.

The logic of all these troubles leads to a place that will likely not see the light of day at this MGE—the volume of manufactured weapons that complicates any existing or proposed marking and tracing technologies, but also strains the available capacity of law enforcement to its very limits. We need to listen carefully to the technical experts as we plan our next iteration of SALW controls. But OUR job is also in part to keep that elephant from wandering into new gardens. Whether we can properly process it this week or not, it is worth a reminder that the number of markings on a weapon is ultimately less important than the number of weapons set loose in our societies. •