



SMALL ARMS MONITOR

*Civil society perspectives on the Third Review Conference of the
UN Programme of Action on small arms
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Reaching Critical Will

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EDITORIAL: WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO MAKE THE DIFFERENCE?

Allison Pytlak | Reaching Critical Will of WILPF

In its statement to the general debate of the Third Review Conference of the UN Programme of Action on small arms and light weapons (UNPoA), the delegation of South Africa noted that this meeting takes place during the centenary of the birth of Nelson Mandela. The theme of the centenary is "Be the legacy" and in many places that are advertising this milestone his well-known words, "It is in your hands to make a difference" can be found.

Throughout the general debate we've heard numerous member states urging one another to have ambition, courage, or similar sentiments—all in the hope of making a difference. We've also heard startling and yet somehow all too familiar statistics about the impact of small arms and light weapons (SALW) and their ammunition on lives and livelihoods. Jamaica, for instance, shared that it witnesses a 23 per cent increase annually in homicide rates, the majority of which are committed through the use of a firearm. Mexico noted that nearly 500 people die daily from homicides with firearms and thousands more suffer indirect effects, most of which occurs in non-conflict zones. India stated that the illicit trade in SALW plays a "pernicious role" in adversely impacting national security.

So what does it take to make good on

these nice words about making differences? What is the difference that needs to happen?

Over last 17 years the UNPoA has facilitated a good deal of action and activity ranging from the establishment of policy, to destruction of surplus stockpiles, to developing marking and tracing programmes and the International Tracing Instrument (ITI). None of that should be detracted from. States such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, Togo, Sudan, Cambodia, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic, among others, cited the positive impacts that the instrument has led to in a national context: helping to keep the issue on the radar of policymakers at a high level; enabling training, information exchange, or technology transfers; prompting destruction or collection programmes; securing stockpiles.

Yet it has its shortcomings, and the challenge for the review conference is to close the gaps PoA implementation, and give this instrument viability in the present and the future

One shortcoming of the UNPoA is that it is politically and not legally binding. Other treaties and agreements have come about with the specific purpose of legally complementing the UNPoA at global and regional levels. The Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) is

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Editorial, continued

the most recent to do so, as New Zealand noted, yet hostility to the ATT on the part of those who do not endorse it has to date prevented those three words from appearing anywhere in a UNPoA document. This is a hostility rooted purely in the political, although it's not entirely impossible to see this from the perspective of Treaty opponents, given the hypocrisy of some ATT states parties. There are however some practical objectives to formalising the "synergy" between these two instruments; harmonising reporting practices and easing reporting burdens is often cited; and also the potential of the ATT to prevent diversion from legal to illicit markets.

Mandatory reporting, or some review and interaction between states on their reports, could also rejuvenate the UNPoA and promote accountability and implementation. The Small Arms Survey has just published a comprehensive review of national reports submitted under the UNPoA and the ITI between 2012 and 2017. It reports a general decline in reporting practices from UN member states; the majority of reports are submitted by developed nations and the possibility to match requests for assistance with resources has been underexplored. The call from developing states to improve methods of international cooperation and assistance throughout the general debate has been constant and represents a real area in which improvement could benefit overall UNPoA implementation.

What would also make a difference is for states to not pay lip service to the notion of women's participation and gendered approaches in disarmament and arms control but to begin acting on these concepts. The Reaching Critical Will website tracks the sex of each person delivering a conference statement and even a quick look demonstrates the extreme gender inequality of this fora, which has worsened since the Pre-

paratory Committee meeting in March. There is a growing number of states that support including language on gender in conference outcome document but so far only a small group of countries have shared examples from their national experience in acting on the language of their statements. The benefits of correcting gender imbalance in decision-making bodies will influence the policy discourse on small arms. The recognition and participation of women as key stakeholders and experts in political processes related to small arms control, both at the international and national levels, would lead to the adoption of perspectives and policy outcomes that more accurately reflect the highly-gendered dynamics and effects of small arms.

As outlined in our earlier editorial, the draft outcome document is promising in its attempts to fill gaps and adapt to new challenges by establishing new mechanisms or outlining new commitments. Whether or not it remains that way remains to be seen, particularly as states now move into consultations on the draft outcome document and away from the generalities of the preceding days. Many have already shared views on some of the more traditionally controversial topics, such as ammunition, which give a glimpse into the scope and scale of support for and against maintaining such provisions. Some states have also expressed reservations about any kind of an "update" for the UNPoA and urge what might be described as a minimalist approach to this conference.

For those who want to see this conference make a difference, it will require determination, boldness, and not accepting half-measures or watered down solutions. We look forward to seeing what the coming days bring. •



ACTIVIST SPOTLIGHT INTERVIEW: IVAN MARQUES

Rose Welsch | International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA)

Throughout the Review Conference, IANSA will be contributing interviews from its activists and experts from around the world.

1. What made you begin your work on small arms issues?

I was a university student in 2005 when I became aware of the harm that small arms have on Brazilian society. The country was holding a referendum to decide whether or not to ban firearms and ammunition sales (with some exceptions) in the entire national territory. Back then, I did not know that the organisation Sou da Paz was behind the national campaign promoting national gun regulation and was also working at the forefront to end the firearms trade in Brazil. The referendum did not pass, but the awareness that small arms are a catalyst for violence and death never left my mind. Years later, after dedicating my professional life to public service and to the challenge of connecting the world of human rights to citizen security, I had the honour of being chosen to direct Sou da Paz and lead gun control efforts for civil society in Brazil. Firearms in my country kill approximately 45,000 people every year. We cannot rest until this situation changes.

2. Please tell me more about your organisation, and the work that you do.

We work to improve public security policies based on their efficacy of reducing crime and protecting human rights. Our projects promote the following objectives: (1) fewer firearms and ammunition in circulation in Brazil; (2) better policing and investigative practices; (3) juvenile justice and (4) bringing democratic values and promoting a results-based management system to public security agencies.

Sou da Paz projects always combine diagnostic research, social mobilisation and advocacy,



Photo provided by IANSA

and practical implementation. We do this in partnership with the public sector as much as possible.

Our work on firearms and ammunition control is based on a systemic vision that considers all phases of these products' life-cycles - from manufacturing to destruction. We started participating in international forums in the early 2000s, and actively participated in the first draft discussion on the UN Programme of Action on small arms (UNPoA) and advocate for its final approval.

3. What are some of the biggest challenges and successes you have experienced in your civil society work?

One of Sou da Paz's greatest successes was the approval of the 2003 Brazilian Firearms Control Statute, a national law that regulates firearms and ammunition production, sale and legal possession in the country, and defines crimes that involve the unauthorised possession, carrying, and trade in all its forms.

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Interview, continued

We were also very successful in transforming voluntary surrender campaigns into a national and permanent public policy that has collected more than 600,000 firearms.

The challenges we face are similar to other civil society organisation in this field. It's appalling how people and governments can be indifferent to issues needing to be addressed, such as gun violence, criminal justice system dysfunction, and the lack of evidence-based policies to deter crime and violence. Recent political turmoil and instability in Brazil have also helped to arouse fear and anxiety in people that result in populist proposals and quick fixes to long term and structural problems. Because people are afraid of and untrusting of the police, they tend to resort to firearms - feeding a vicious cycle that only increases the problem of gun violence.

4. What are your goals for the Third Review Conference of the UNPoA?

We look forward to contributing to the continuous improvement and full implementation of the UNPoA. Civil society has to aim higher than states in order to raise the bar of achievements. It will be a pleasure and honour to share Sou da Paz's experiences and knowledge from almost 20 years of work.

As representatives of our individual organisations and of IANSA, it is our job to constantly remind UN member states of the ultimate goal of the PoA: to prevent and reduce the armed violence that undermines our world's development—especially that of demographic groups who suffer it most intensely.



Photo: Lin Evola, Peace Angels Project

NEWS IN BRIEF

Marina Kalliga | Reaching Critical Will of WILPF

The positions conveyed here are not comprehensive but intended as overview of state position on key issues discussed during the general exchange of views.

Marking and tracing

- The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and the African Group expressed the view that proposals regarding utilising new technologies in the context of the International Tracing Instrument (ITI) and the UNPoA require further consultation.
- The European Union (EU) said it is necessary for the Review Conference (RevCon) to agree on a process on the marking of modular small arms and light weapons (SALW).
- Finland supports the inclusion of items that improve marking processes, such as microchips and micro-marking, in the outcome document.
- Germany stated that the UNPoA needs to acknowledge the impact of new technologies including 3D-printing, polymer, and modular weapons and adapt relevant instruments accordingly.
- Australia and Belgium support the development of an annex to the ITI to address technological developments, in particular modular and polymer weapons. Portugal called for consideration of this proposal.
- Senegal expressed concern at recent developments in new technologies but is pleased to see a focus on addressing modular and polymer weapons.
- The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) commended the example provided by Jamaica in its working paper "Standards manual for the Firearm Marking Information Management System and marking operations oversight".
- Brazil explained that it goes beyond the scope of the marking requirements established by the ITI in its national practice, as all ammunition that is manufactured for use by armed forces or law enforcement is marked individually.
- The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is in the process of a massive marking programme with the goal of marking 100,000 weapons a year in order to prevent diversion and improve traceability.

- Egypt and India welcomed in principle technical initiatives to improve marking through new technologies, but urged taking into account the impact on developing countries.
- Liberia announced it has marked and recorded all state-owned firearms from 2016 to 2018.
- Ghana stressed the need to provide technical assistance to developing countries for the marking and tracing of SALW.

Assistance

- The vast majority of statements emphasised the importance of effective assistance measures toward ensuring capacity to implement the UNPoA, including from both developed and developing states.
- The African Group, South Africa, Namibia, Pakistan, Venezuela, Algeria, and Cuba, among others expressed support for the proposal from the NAM to establish a fellowship programme in order to build capacity on small arms issues among developing countries.
- Iran noted that the main challenge is inadequate international cooperation and assistance and insufficient resources. It feels that providing technical assistance to states is at the forefront of improving the capacity to trace weapons. The transfer of technology and equipment to developing countries should be non-discriminatory. Venezuela and Algeria also referenced unconditional or non-discriminatory assistance.
- Senegal stated that the greatest inefficiency of the UNPoA is the weak level of international cooperation and assistance, in financing, and sharing information between national committees. It hopes to see the adoption of specific measures to improve this at the RevCon. Haiti also spoke of this as a priority.
- Zambia referenced the need for funding options, along with adequate training and support programmes as well as providing technical assistance for law enforcement in order to acquire modern surveillance and other equipment.
- Malawi urged "continuous" capacity building for individuals working on the control and management of SALW in developing countries.

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News in Brief, continued

- China, Republic of Korea, Brazil, Mexico, Portugal, Bangladesh, and New Zealand, among others, support the suggestion made in the UN Secretary-General's new disarmament agenda to establish a trust facility for small arms control through the Peacebuilding Fund. New Zealand announced a contribution to that fund.

Gender

- CARICOM, MERCOSUR, EU, Switzerland, Canada, Nepal, Thailand, South Africa, Colombia, Chile, Uruguay, Philippines, Australia, Estonia, Jamaica, Mauritania, Portugal, among others, made references to gender.
- Canada spoke of its second National Action Plan on women, peace, and security and the relationship to its feminist foreign policy. It highlighted many actions that it is undertaking within the disarmament sector to advance a gender perspective.
- Ghana, Slovenia, Jamaica, and Ireland said it is critical to take gender dimensions of small arms control into consideration.
- Australia welcomed references to gender and deems them an essential element in any final outcome of the RevCon.
- Estonia mentioned the disproportionate impact of the illicit trade in SALW on women and girls, both domestically and in conflict settings and need to promote the participation of women in the UNPoA.
- Jamaica reminded the member states to be mindful of role women can play in addressing situations of armed violence and armed conflict.
- Mauritania said the UNPoA should include women and young people.
- Portugal mentioned the need for gender perspectives in UNPoA, as part of a bigger effort for women's participation.
- El Salvador welcomes the inclusion of women as "actors of change" in conflict resolution, the clear recognition of the SALW impact on gender-based violence (GBV), and the link between the UNPoA and UN Security Council Resolution 1325.
- El Salvador welcomes the inclusion of women as "actors of change" in conflict resolution, the clear recognition of the SALW impact on gender-based violence (GBV), and the link between the UNPoA and UN Security Council Resolution 1325.
- Trinidad and Tobago said the UNPoA must consider gender and small arms from the perspective of the impact of SALW on women, while also acknowledging women of agents of change, and is supportive of language on gender in the draft outcome document.
- Nigeria supports and advocates for the inclusion of women in peace and security, and has established a national action plan to implement UNSCR 1325.
- Ecuador supports including gender mainstreaming in discussions and the outcome document, and reminded the member states that 60 per cent of femicides are carried out by firearms but noted that women are also agents of change and not just victims.
- Viet Nam supports the inclusion of a gender perspective in the draft outcome document.
- Bangladesh stressed the importance of amplifying the voices of women and youth and referred to the disproportionate impact of SALW on these segments of society, which underscores the need for their participation in initiatives to address policy gaps.
- Sweden said that mainstreaming gender issues and fully integrating gender in all aspects of small arms control is of great importance. It called for the participation of women in the planning process (etc. as seen in document) on PoA, and said the use of SALW to perpetuate gender-based violence is of particular concern.
- Liechtenstein stated that women and girls are at a disproportionate risk of becoming victims of SALW and applauded the Secretary-General's commitment to addressing the gender dimension such as in his new disarmament agenda.
- Mali called for greater involvement of women and children in combatting the illicit trade of SALW because these sectors of society are the most affected.
- Lesotho stressed the importance of mainstreaming gender issues and hopes to see the meaningful participation of women in small arms policy planning processes.



News in Brief, continued

Synergies with other instruments

- CARICOM noted that the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) adds legally binding elements for the control of international transfers of SALW and other common types of conventional arms, and complements the UNPoA, as do other instruments such as the ITI and the International Firearms Protocol.
- Finland, Thailand, Hungary, Mexico, Argentina, Cambodia, Philippines, Chile, Ghana, Australia, Slovenia, Estonia, Japan, Spain, Portugal, Costa Rica, Trinidad and Tobago, Bangladesh, the Dominican Republic, and Liberia also made statements that support recognition of synergy between the UNPoA and the ATT.
- Canada noted that there has been “much talk” about synergies between the UNPoA and the ATT and announced its ATT legislation is under review in capital.
- The European Union said the outcome document should recognise that the implementation of the UNPoA is supported by synergies with international instruments with similar objectives such as the ATT and the UN Firearms Protocol, including on reporting obligations. Netherlands noted that identifying synergies in reporting through practical measures could improve reporting rates and lessen reporting burdens. Estonia and Jamaica also referred to the need for synergies between the UNPoA and the ATT in reporting obligations.
- Spain pointed out that most arms and ammunition in the illicit trade have a legal origin and have been diverted, and called for the promotion of the implementation and universalization of the ATT.
- Cameroon announced that on 18 June it had deposited its ratification of the ATT.
- Liberia, Kenya, and Nigeria referenced the African Union’s “Silencing the Guns” initiative.
- Mexico and Argentina referred to the 20th anniversary of the Inter-American Convention Against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials (CIFTA).
- The Arab Group noted the “standalone” nature of the UNPoA that must not overlap with other “non-consensus instruments”. Venezuela agreed that

establishing links between this and other treaties which are not fully universal should be avoided. Pakistan does not want to create links with the ATT because it does not want the UNPoA to be subjected to the deadlock witnessed in the larger arms control landscape.

- Kuwait called for preserving the scope and consensus nature of the UNPoA, and for a focus on implementation of the UNPoA rather than adding language from conventions that do not enjoy the universality of the UNPoA.

Ammunition

- The United States does not wish to see new items being added to the scope of the UNPoA, such as ammunition. It said it supports the General Assembly resolution process, but sees that as separate.
- Israel stated that this conference is not the right place to discuss or negotiate the subject of ammunition.
- Morocco does not support inclusion of ammunition in the UNPoA.
- CARICOM believes that there should be consideration of the relevance of safely and securely managing the life cycle of conventional ammunition and views it as critically important for the UNPoA to prevent the illicit trade of SALW ammunition.
- MERCOSUR favours inclusion of ammunition in outcome document and as a topic for discussion during the Biennial Meeting of the States of 2022. El Salvador also called for the inclusion of ammunition in the outcome document while Madagascar, Mauritania, Cote d’Ivoire, Uganda, Mali, Cameroon, Malawi, Senegal, Sweden, and Bangladesh spoke explicitly in support of including ammunition in the UNPoA.
- The EU, Finland, Hungary, and Estonia would like to add the prevention, combatting and eradication of the illicit trade in ammunition to the scope of the UNPoA. MERCOSUR would like to see the adoption of specific control measures for ammunition, and parts and components in the provisions of the UNPoA.
- Ireland, Portugal, and Costa Rica stated that inclusion of ammunition would enhance the effectiveness of the UNPoA.



News in Brief, continued

- Mexico hopes that this conference will grant states a mandate to discuss how to include ammunition, parts and components and technology relating to SALW, as well as explosives and improvised explosive devices.
- Trinidad and Tobago, and Ecuador said that there needs to be a discussion on ammunition within the UNPoA context.
- Germany is strongly in favour of identifying effective ways for the control of ammunition and the reduction of ammunition flows into areas of conflict as part of existing UN processes.
- Brazil noted the complexities involved in ammunition control but also that addressing ammunition is the desire of a majority of states and urged more specific and detailed discussion on this issue as part of follow-up to this Review Conference.
- Ghana stated that controlling ammunition can offer states an effective means of preventing gun crime, and referred to its close cooperation with Germany to deal with issue of ammunition within the proper context of the UNPoA.
- Bulgaria pointed out that controlling the supply and stockpiles of ammunition will lead to fewer cases of diversion.
- Ghana and the UK stated that the destruction of surpluses will help prevent diversion, and urged more focus on this issue. Senegal called on member states to pay greater attention to the destruction of surplus weapons. Slovenia, Guatemala, the Dominican Republic, Trinidad and Tobago, Uganda, and Libya described national destruction programmes. •

Other

- The vast majority of states referenced a positive relationship between the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the UNPoA, with particular attention to Target 16.4 and SDG 5 on gender equality.
- Germany wishes to better integrate SALW-control elements into the mandate of United Nations peacekeeping missions.
- China, Republic of Korea, Brazil, Mexico, Portugal, Bangladesh, and New Zealand, among others, support the suggestion made in the UN Secretary-General's new disarmament agenda to establish a trust facility for small arms control through the Peacebuilding Fund.
- The delegations of CARICOM, Madagascar, Nepal, Peru, Mexico, Thailand, and Republic of Korea acknowledged the relationship between SALW trafficking and crime and/or criminal networks.

