



SMALL ARMS MONITOR

Civil society perspectives on the Biennial Meeting of States on
the UN Programme of Action on small arms
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The views expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom or the Reaching Critical Will programme.

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ASSISTANCE FOR ARMS CONTROL OR ARMS PROLIFERATION?

Ray Acheson | *Reaching Critical Will* of WILPF

Wednesday's discussion focused on the provision of international cooperation and assistance for the implementation of the UN Programme of Action (UNPoA), International Tracing Instrument (ITI), and also the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). The transfer of funds and training to countries requiring assistance implementing their commitments is crucial to the effective realisation of the objectives of these instruments. However, the assistance provided is at risk of being undermined by arms transfer practices—including by assistance-providing states—that violate international and national laws.

While many donor countries are providing cooperation and assistance to states through domestic, regional, or international mechanisms, they can also often be found transferring weapons to the same countries they are assisting or to other countries in their regions. In many cases, the violence and instability facilitated by the weapons pouring into conflict-affected regions directly undermines attempts to reduce the circulation of small arms and light weapons, safely manage stockpiles, or prevent human rights violations.

One does not need to dig deeply to see examples of this.

In its statement on this international assistance, the United Kingdom said it is "committed to providing assistance to reduce the drivers of instability in conflict-affected countries," including through the provision of over £1 billion to this effort. Yet the UK is actually exacerbating the drivers of instability through the provision of weapons and other military equipment to conflict-affected countries. "More than £3 billion of British-made weaponry was licensed for export last year to 21 of the Foreign Office's 30 'human rights priority countries'—those identified by the government as being where 'the worst, or greatest number of,

human rights violations take place'," reports *The Guardian*.¹ Such countries include Saudi Arabia, to which it has issued 122 licences worth £2.8 billion in military exports since it began bombing Yemen in March 2015.² The UK in its statement spoke about its commitment to the implementation of the ATT, yet is facing legal action in the High Court for its transfers to Saudi Arabia.³ It has already been found to be breaking national, EU, and international law and policy by supplying weapons to Saudi Arabia.⁴

On Tuesday, Canada reiterated its intention to ratify the ATT. Yet at the same time that it pursues accession to a treaty meant to prevent arms transfers to those engaged in human rights violations, the Canadian government has also authorised export permits for a \$15 billion deal with Saudi Arabia for weaponised armoured vehicles.⁵ Under existing national export control policy, Canada must determine that "there is no reasonable risk" that Canadian-made goods might be used against civilians before an export permit can be issued. The government has not explained if or how it has concluded there is no reasonable risk that weapons transferred to Saudi Arabia would be used against civilians, despite mounting civilian casualties in Yemen.⁶ The foreign minister has even defended the arms deal by arguing that if Canada didn't sell them the weapons, someone else would.⁷

The list of examples could go on, but these two provide a snapshot of the key challenge to the UNPoA, ATT, or other agreements to regulate the flow of conventional weapons. What is written on paper, in international agreements or domestic legislation, seems to be frequently superseded by economic interests or foreign policy objectives. Even governments that pride themselves on protecting human rights are engaged in weapon sales to countries with well-documented human rights abusers.

continued on next page

Editorial, continued

In reviews of the UNPoA and ATT and other arms control agreements, it is crucial to pay attention to how the rhetoric in the conference room matches up to the reality outside. It is also important to follow the money. If donor countries supporting projects to implement arms control agreements are also contributing to flooding conflict-ridden regions with arms, it directly undermines the critical work being done here at the UN and at national and regional levels to prevent armed violence and conflict. •

Notes

1. Jamie Doward, "UK weapons sales to oppressive regimes top £3bn a year," *The Guardian*, 28 May 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/may/28/uk-weapons-sold-countries-poor-human-rights-saudi-arabia>.
2. Patrick Wintour, "UK licences £2.8bn of arms sales to Saudis since kingdom entered Yemen war," *The Guardian*, 19 April 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/apr/19/uk-issues-28bn-export-licences-arms-saudi-arabia>.
3. "Formal legal proceedings begin against UK government over arms exports to Saudi Arabia," Campaign Against Arms Trade, 11 March 2016, <https://www.caat.org.uk/media/press-releases/2016-03-11>.

4. "UK Government breaking the law supplying arms to Saudi Arabia, say leading lawyers," Amnesty International, 17 Dec 2015, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2015/12/uk-government-breaking-the-law-supplying-arms-to-saudi-arabia/>.

5. Steven Chase, "Dion quietly approved arms sale to Saudi Arabia in April: documents," *The Globe and Mail*, 12 April 2016, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/liberals-quietly-approved-arms-sale-to-saudis-in-april-documents/article29612233/>.

6. Cesar Jaramillo, "Why Ottawa's justification of the Saudi deal is not enough," *OpenCanada.org*, 17 February 2016, <https://www.opencanada.org/features/why-canadian-governments-justification-saudi-arms-deal-not-enough/>; Cesar Jaramillo, "Here's An Entirely Legitimate Exit Strategy On The Saudi Arms Deal," *The Huffington Post*, 7 March 2016, http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/cesar-jaramillo/canada-saudi-arms-deal_b_9375302.html.

7. Steven Chase, "Liberals distance themselves from Saudi arms deal but won't block it," *The Globe and Mail*, 18 February 2016, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/liberals-dont-approve-of-saudi-arms-sale-but-will-let-it-stand-dion/article28802991/>.



NEWS IN BRIEF

Mia Gandenberger | *Reaching Critical Will of WILPF*

The News in Brief is not a comprehensive summary of all statements. It highlights positions on few critical issues covered during plenary discussions.

International cooperation and assistance

- Mr. Daniel Prins, UNODA Conventional Arms Branch Chief, presented section C of the UNSG report on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects.
- Most states highlighted the importance of adequate, sustainable international cooperation and assistance.
- Others including the EU and US also highlighted the need for improved donor coordination.
- Nicaragua highlighted its need for assistance with national legislation.
- Jamaica highlighted challenges with the maintenance of marking equipment and highlighted that training for after sales repairs along with the funded equipment could address such issues.
- Sweden explained that maintenance should ensure that national maintenance capacity is built, which was not the same as a donor assuming long-term responsibility over such maintenance. Therefore in the outcome document maintenance could be developed to refer to the strengthening of national maintenance capabilities.
- Togo underlined the importance of funding projects in countries both in conflict and in relative peace.

UNSCAR

- Australia speaking on behalf of UNSCAR donor countries introduced the fund and highlighted some of the

work it has supported in the past and outlined the current call for proposals.

- Venezuela asked why there has been no comprehensive review of international assistance in the context of the UNPoA since 2006 and how the fragmentation of assistance provided could be overcome. Further it worried that the UNSCAR fund went mostly towards the ATT-related work.
- Egypt wondered if there could be more clarifications and briefings about the UNSCAR fund and suggested that the reference to UNSCAR in the draft outcome document might not be correctly placed as long it only focuses on the ATT.
- Australia highlighted that past projects funded by UNSCAR were fairly balanced between focusing on the ATT and UNPoA.
- Mr. Prins stressed the high degree of disaggregation of funding stretching to other thematic issues, such as health, that would make a comprehensive overview more or less impossible. With regard to fragmentation, overcoming it might not be necessary, however coordination should be improved.
- Further, in connection to the UNSCAR fund, Mr. Prins highlighted that in practice both UNPoA or ATT programmes are all about the same issues such as improving legislation and preventing diversion.
- Pakistan wondered how the ATT Trust Fund to be established would work with the UNSCAR fund.
- Sweden and Germany thought that once the ATT Trust Fund was fully functioning, UNSCAR might return to funding more UNPoA work. •

When	What	Where
10:00-11:00	Statements by international organisations, regional organisations, and non-governmental organisations	CR 4
13:15-14:30	Actionable tools to support the implementation of small arms control measures (Germany in cooperation with UNIDIR, Bonn International Centre for Conversion, and Conflict Armament Research)	CR C
13:15-14:30	Streamlining SALW reporting tools (OSCE and UNODA)	CR 4
15:00-18:00	Other issues of relevance	CR 4



REFLECTIONS ON RESOLUTION 1325, DISARMAMENT, AND COLOMBIAN WOMEN

Marta Bautista | PeaceWomen programme of WILPF with Katherine Ronderos | WILPF Colombia

“In the final steps of the peace negotiations taking place in Havana, it is not only important to use a gender perspective when addressing the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) process, but also the high level of arms trade in the country inside and outside the armed conflict. Disarmament is not only DDR; many feminicide in Colombia are committed with small arms and light weapons. We look beyond the peace agreement being negotiated in Havana to the post-agreement scenario in order to highlight the harm that the uncontrolled traffic of arms has on society in general and particularly in women’s lives.” - Katherine Ronderos, Director, WILPF Colombia

The just-launched report titled *Disarming life: reflections on resolution 1325, disarmament, and Colombian women* by WILPF Colombia (LIMPAL in Spanish) aims at integrating the theoretical framework based on international law instruments—mainly the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda—and its link to disarmament, demilitarization, and small arms trade in the possible post-conflict scenario in Colombia. This approach is based on the view of women’s organizations that have been working for years to point out the specific need to add a gender and a women’s rights perspective in peace-building efforts.

The report addresses disarmament in Colombia on two levels. Firstly, at the national level, disarmament is viewed as the laying down of arms by the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-People’s Army (FARC-EP) following the disarmament process set at the peace talks in Havana. The monitoring process of disarmament will be tripartite, involving the United Nations, the Colombian Government, and FARC-EP. Secondly, at the international level, disarmament and arms control must be addressed through the UN Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) framework, which the Colombian government has already signed but still needs to be ratified by its Congress.

The report follows the international women, peace and security agenda, presenting UN Security Council resolution 1325, its related resolutions, and the recommendations of the CEDAW Committee to Colombia, and presents disarmament from a gendered perspective. Secondly, the report shows national and international women’s perspectives and experiences around disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) processes and brings important recommendations to take into account the current design of the DDR process in Colombia. Finally, an analysis of disarmament in the future post-conflict scenario in Colombia is presented. The analysis is based on women’s perspectives on

women’s relationship with arms, bringing into the debate the importance of the ATT as a key international tool to regulate the arms trade in Colombia. Statistics included in the report reflect the large amount of government expenditure in arms and the little regulation for permits to possess and carry weapons. WILPF Colombia hopes that the large amount of arms in circulation will be reduced once the ATT is ratified and has entered into force in Colombia.

Final recommendations, from various women’s organizations and human rights institutions consulted in the research process include:

- **Respect and uphold the international treaties in order to guarantee a successful post-conflict scenario.** This includes the ratification of the ATT, of which full and effective implementation can contribute to the reduction of armed violence and to achieve human security.
- **Women should be included in all levels of decision-making in the peace process from the beginning.** This includes the DDR process of women and men who fought during the armed conflict, which is challenging. Furthermore, the DDR process must include a gender perspective.
- **Updating the requirements for permits to possess and carry arms,** which includes checking the background of weapon purchasers for violence against women and domestic violence.

All in all, the report aims at presenting ideal disarmament scenarios in Colombia based on women’s recommendations and women’s needs in the context of the ongoing peace process as well as in the international framework set by UNSCR 1325, in order to achieve a sustainable peace scenario in the country.

The report can be downloaded at <http://www.limpal-colombia.org>. •

