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General and complete disarmament

Assistance to States for curbing the illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons and collecting them and the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted in response to two requests of the General Assembly, contained in resolution [75/56](#) on assistance to States for curbing the illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons and collecting them and resolution [75/241](#) on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects.

Recent developments in the illicit trade and efforts deployed by States and other partners in curbing the multifaceted aspects of the small arms problem are examined in the report. The main outcomes of the Seventh Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and information on the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons are also contained in the report.

Activities carried out by the United Nations to implement the resolutions are also set out in the report. They include the work of the Coordinating Action on Small Arms mechanism, notably the further development of modules of the Modular Small-arms-control Implementation Compendium, the implementation of the 2020 Executive Committee decision on small arms, the implementation of the Secretary-General's agenda for disarmament launched by the Secretary-General and follow-up action on other initiatives, such as the support of the United Nations for the Silencing the Guns by 2030 initiative, gender-responsive arms control policies, programmes and initiatives, and updates on major small arms and light weapons programmes undertaken by other United Nations bodies.

* [A/76/150](#).



I. Introduction

1. In its resolution [75/56](#) on assistance to States for curbing the illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons and collecting them, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to continue to consider the matter and to report to the Assembly at its seventy-sixth session on the implementation of that resolution.
2. In its resolution [75/241](#) on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to the Assembly at its seventy-sixth session on the implementation of that resolution.
3. With a view to ensuring a coherent and consistent approach to overlapping and mutually reinforcing issues, and in keeping with previous practice, the above-mentioned requests are addressed in the present consolidated report.

II. Recent developments

A. Seventh Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects

4. In 2020, the General Assembly, in its decision 74/552, noted with concern the situation concerning the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and decided to postpone the Seventh Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, scheduled for 15 to 19 June 2020. In its resolution [75/241](#), the Assembly decided that the Seventh Biennial Meeting would be convened from 26 to 30 July 2021.
5. The year 2021 also marked the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. Together with the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons, the Programme of Action remains the only universal policy framework that addresses the scourge of illicit flows of small arms and light weapons. The full and effective implementation of both instruments remains a priority for the international community.
6. The Seventh Biennial Meeting was held in New York from 26 to 30 July 2021, chaired by the Permanent Representative of Kenya to the United Nations, Martin Kimani. The participants considered key challenges and opportunities relating to the full and effective implementation of the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument at the national, regional and global levels for the purposes of preventing and combating the diversion and illicit international transfer of small arms and light weapons to unauthorized recipients. They also discussed two additional substantive items: the issue of recent developments in weapons technology, manufacture and design; and international cooperation and assistance, including proposals for the future establishment of a training fellowship programme and the setting of national and regional targets to enhance measurability in the implementation of the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument. The Seventh Biennial Meeting concluded with the unanimous adoption of a substantive outcome document ([A/CONF.192/BMS/2021/1](#)).
7. States highlighted the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Programme of Action and recognized the important contribution made to the dialogue and

concerted action of States to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects.

8. States reaffirmed their respect for and commitment to the principles and provisions set out in the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument and reiterated the need for their full and effective implementation. States acknowledged the significant progress in implementation, while noting that it was uneven and that much still needed to be done to have a significant and sustainable impact.

9. On the subject of preventing and combating the diversion and illicit international transfer of small arms and light weapons to unauthorized recipients, States reconfirmed their commitment to enforcing and applying the provisions of the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument to the entire life cycle of small arms and light weapons to minimize such risks. Most notably, agreement was reached on ensuring that international humanitarian law and international human rights law would be taken into consideration in national small arms and light weapons transfer decisions; that States would undertake export risk assessments and include authenticated end user and/or end-use certification and effective legal and enforcement measures, including post-shipment verifications in their practices; and that States would stipulate in bilateral export agreements specific terms with regard to re-exports. On the issue of ammunition, which was discussed in terms of preventing and combating diversion, States took note of the work of the group of governmental experts that had been established under General Assembly resolution 72/55 to address problems arising from the accumulation of conventional ammunition stockpiles in surplus. They also acknowledged that those States that applied the provisions of the Programme of Action to ammunition for small arms and light weapons could integrate applicable policies and practices into their small arms and light weapons control efforts with a view to strengthening the implementation of the Programme of Action. Unlike at the third United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, in 2018, where the mentioning of those aspects of work on ammunition resulted in a vote, at the Seventh Biennial Meeting those discussions were successfully concluded by consensus.

10. On the subject of opportunities and challenges related to recent developments in manufacturing, technology and design, States recalled the provisions of paragraph 38 of the International Tracing Instrument and took note of the dedicated, informal consultations that had taken place in preparation for the Seventh Biennial Meeting.¹ States have discussed the issue of new technologies since the first Open-ended Meeting of Governmental Experts on the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, held in 2011. Upon the request of States, the Secretary-General issued two reports on the issue, in 2014 (A/CONF.192/BMS/2014/1) and 2019 (A/74/187). At the Seventh Biennial Meeting, States expressed divergent views on how to pursue the issue further. Nevertheless, they agreed to continue to exchange views on it, in particular with regard to polymer and modular weapons and ways of addressing them. They also agreed to consider, at the Eighth Biennial Meeting, the proposal for an open-ended technical expert group that could develop action-oriented next steps that could address the challenges and opportunities of such technologies in relation to the marking, tracing and keeping of records with regard to such weapons (see A/CONF.192/BMS/2021/1, annex, para. 92). States also requested the Secretariat

¹ The facilitator's summary of the informal consultations held on 25 June 2021, a presentation by UNIDIR and an annex containing relevant documents have been made available at https://meetings.unoda.org/section/poa-bms7-2021_informal-consultations/.

to develop a good practice document on marking practices for modular and polymer weapons, taking into account the views of all Member States and the role of manufacturers.

11. With regard to international cooperation and assistance, States agreed to consider the establishment of voluntary national and regional targets to strengthen the implementation of the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument. That agreement is expected to lead to the introduction of a measurability approach based on national and regional implementation priorities. National and regional action plans, including regional road maps, which are also reflected in the outcome document, could become suitable vehicles to that end. Such a development would also enable States to implement the commitment made at the Seventh Biennial Meeting to ensure that national and regional ownership and priorities underpin resource mobilization, assistance requests and assistance programmes.

12. With regard to international assistance, States discussed the establishment of a fellowship training programme for small arms practitioners in order to strengthen technical knowledge and expertise in areas related to the implementation of the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument, particularly in developing countries, and requested the Secretariat to submit options for the funding and administrative arrangements of such a programme for discussion at the Eighth Biennial Meeting, with a view to considering its expedient establishment.

13. Building on the significant progress made in 2016 and 2018, the outcome document of the Seventh Biennial Meeting contained strong language on the highly gendered nature of small arms and light weapons and a call for the equal, full and effective participation of women in all processes related to the Programme of Action. States reaffirmed the importance of accounting for the differing impacts of the illicit trade on women, men, girls and boys and encouraged the collection of data disaggregated by sex, age and disability for evidence-based policymaking. States were also encouraged to harmonize national policies and action on small arms control with those on the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda, considering the relevance of small arms control to all four pillars of the agenda – prevention, protection, participation and relief and recovery. States also called for an increase in funding for relevant policies and programmes, advocacy, education, training and research on the issue and for consideration to be given to including gender-relevant information in national reports. States also recognized that eradicating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons was a key part of combating gender-based violence and sexual violence in conflict. During the Seventh Biennial Meeting, Costa Rica delivered a statement on gender on behalf of some 64 Member States, calling upon all States to not go backwards on the issue and underlining the need to work towards further enhancing gender mainstreaming and ensuring the equal, full and effective participation of women in arms control and peace and security initiatives.

14. States continued to stress the importance of the full and effective implementation of the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument to the realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. They agreed to ensure that the national, regional and global implementation of the Programme of Action was integrated into the implementation of all relevant Goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda and efforts undertaken as part of the decade of action for the Goals. States also highlighted the continued need to make progress, notably under indicator 16.4.2 of the Goals, and to use the national reports submitted under the Programme of Action to report such progress.

15. States reaffirmed their decision to convene, in 2022, the Eighth Biennial Meeting, which they agreed would be focused on means of enhancing modalities and

procedures for international cooperation and assistance in the implementation of the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument.

B. Implementation trends, opportunities and challenges

16. At the Seventh Biennial Meeting, the Secretariat delivered a presentation² on the implementation trends, challenges and opportunities relating to the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument, including needs for cooperation and assistance, based on information submitted by States and in line with the request made at the third Review Conference (see [A/CONF.192/2018/RC/3](#)).

17. National reports remain a valuable tool for understanding and analysing such trends, opportunities and challenges. However, only 90 States submitted national reports covering the period 2018–2019, compared with 120 for the preceding reporting period.

18. Based on the information submitted since 2018, a total of 79 national coordination mechanisms have been established and 126 national points of contacts updated. During the presentation, the Secretariat also indicated the establishment of 21 national action plans on small arms and light weapons control since 2018.³

19. It was noted that many States did not collect or report data on the diversion of small arms and light weapons to the illicit market, including diversions from national stockpiles, or on international transfers to unauthorized recipients. Only 32 States reported having destroyed small arms and light weapons in 2018 and 2019, with 26 of them providing exact figures totalling 463,747 small arms and light weapons destroyed.

20. Over 360,000 weapons were reported to have been collected during 2018 and 2019 in 61 Member States, with over 50 per cent of them having been recorded and/or destroyed. Reporting on collected weapons contributes to data-collection efforts under indicator 16.4.2 of the Goals, by which States are requested to report on the proportion of seized, found or surrendered arms whose illicit origin or context has been traced or established by a competent authority in line with international instruments. However, only 35 States provided data to that end through their national reports.

21. On a positive note, a growing number of States (77) are reporting that they have marked all State-owned weapons, with 62 States indicating that they have national tracing procedures in place.

22. On the issue of recent developments in weapons technology, design and manufacture, within the Programme of Action framework, according to the reports submitted only 24 States consider those developments in their marking practices, with 19 indicating specifically that they do not. The remaining States provided no data in that regard.

23. According to the national reports, the States requiring international assistance exceeded 52 per cent of all reporting States, a number that has increased steadily over the years. Tracing-related assistance needs are reportedly the highest priority for many States, followed by requests for assistance with record-keeping, stockpile management, transfer controls and the destruction of weapons.⁴ At the same time, according to the national reports, the level of international assistance to support the implementation of the Programme of Action has barely changed, with 24 per cent of

² Available at https://meetings.unoda.org/section/poa-bms7-2021_documents.

³ See also <https://smallarms.un-arm.org/statistics>.

⁴ See <https://smallarms.un-arm.org/international-assistance>.

States willing to provide such assistance, a slight uptick from the 23 per cent in 2018, but significantly lower than the 34 per cent in 2016. States in a position to provide assistance are encouraged to continue to do so, taking into account the reported assistance needs, in order to enhance national ownership and to strengthen the impact and sustainability of international assistance outputs.

24. An increasing number of States are reporting gender-related information in their national reports, a new section introduced in national reporting templates in 2017. While in 2018 40 per cent of all reporting States said that they took gender considerations into account in their implementation efforts, that number increased to 63 per cent in 2020. More States are also collecting sex-disaggregated data, with the number rising from 16 to 24 per cent over the past two years.

C. Decision of the Executive Committee

25. In April 2020, the Executive Committee established by the Secretary-General adopted a decision on small arms, light weapons and their control in which a call was made for the establishment of United Nations system-wide country-level approaches to predictably and consistently integrate national small arms control considerations into common country analyses and national development frameworks. In response to a growing need to create strong national programmes, “national ownership” was set in the decision as a guiding principle for its implementation.

26. In that vein, the Development Coordination Office and the Office for Disarmament Affairs and other members of the Coordinating Action on Small Arms mechanism are working together to deliver appropriate support to United Nations country teams. That includes the development of a guidance tool for country-level approaches to be published as a module of the Modular Small-arms-control Implementation Compendium.⁵

D. 2030 Agenda and decade of action

27. The 2030 Agenda and the Goals, in particular targets 16.1 and 16.4, offer a sound policy and programmatic basis to translate the linkages between disarmament, arms control, criminal justice responses and development into specific action at all levels. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the Office for Disarmament Affairs serve as the custodian agencies for indicator 16.4.2, which is used to measure progress in significantly reducing illicit arms flows. Both offices have been leading the collection and analysis of data from Member States (provided through an illicit arms flows questionnaire in support of the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition (Firearms Protocol),⁶ supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, and the national reports under the Programme of Action framework)⁷ and regularly submit coordinated data on weapons seized, traced or found to the Statistics Division for inclusion in the annual Sustainable Development Goals report.

28. States have agreed, in the framework of both the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the

⁵ The Compendium is a set of voluntary, practical guidance notes providing the best small arms expertise in the form of succinct, operational advice. See www.un.org/disarmament/convarms/mosaic/.

⁶ Based on this initiative, in 2020 UNODC published the first *Global Study on Firearms Trafficking* to enhance understanding of illicit arms flows as a prerequisite for evidence-based policies.

⁷ See <https://smallarms.un-arm.org/sustainable-development-goals>.

Programme of Action, to collect data on illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons with a view to enabling the global monitoring of progress using indicator 16.4.2. To that end, States should continue to engage in upcoming data-collection efforts under both instruments.

29. Further efforts have to be made to reach the envisaged timeline for the achievement of the Goals. In September 2019, the Secretary-General called upon all sectors of society to mobilize for a decade of action on three levels: global action to secure greater leadership, more resources and smarter solutions for the Goals; local action embedding the needed transitions in the policies, budgets, institutions and regulatory frameworks of Governments, cities and local authorities; and action by the people, including youth, civil society, the media, the private sector, unions, academia and other stakeholders, to generate an unstoppable movement pushing for the required transformations. Addressing the scourge of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons will be essential to the achievement of the Goals.

E. Activities of other bodies with regard to small arms and light weapons

Security Council

30. The Security Council has remained actively seized of threats posed by illicit flows of small arms and light weapons, in particular regarding situations of conflict. In March 2020, the Council took up the issue of peace and security in Africa, issuing a statement by the President of the Council in which it recognized the impact of and challenges posed by the illicit trade in and diversion of small arms and light weapons on the continent, a situation that enabled terrorist groups to considerably increase their armed capabilities ([S/PRST/2020/5](#)).

31. Arms-related provisions, including those specific to small arms and light weapons, continued to be implemented in the context of United Nations peace operations in Abyei, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti, Libya, South Sudan and the Sudan. The growing number of provisions is indicative of the role of United Nations support operations in relation to conventional weapons control in the context of building and sustaining peace, including through weapons and ammunition management, small arms and light weapons control measures, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration activities, weapons confiscation and destruction and mine action.

32. The Security Council has integrated explicit weapons-related language into country-specific resolutions, underscoring the negative impact of illicit arms flows on peace, security and stability. With regard to the Central African Republic, in its resolution [2536 \(2020\)](#) the Council stressed the need for control, traceability and accountability with regard to weapons, ammunition and military equipment. Similarly, following its adoption of resolution [2117 \(2013\)](#), the Council has expressed concern over the threat to peace and security arising from the illicit transfer, accumulation and misuse of small arms and light weapons in Mali (resolution [2584 \(2021\)](#)), Somalia (resolution [2520 \(2020\)](#)), South Sudan (resolution [2514 \(2020\)](#)) and Yemen (resolution [2511 \(2020\)](#)).

33. Mandates of recently established United Nations operations, including the United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti (resolution [2476 \(2019\)](#)) and the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in the Sudan (resolution [2524 \(2020\)](#)), contain integrated weapons and ammunition management as a key pillar to support peace processes, good governance and the reduction of violence. For established missions, such as the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated

Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (resolution [2552 \(2020\)](#)) and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (resolution [2584 \(2021\)](#)), the Council has enhanced the language of mandates by incorporating new sections entitled “weapons and ammunition management”.

Firearms Protocol

34. In its resolution 10/2, the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime noted the common themes, nature and complementary character of relevant regional and international legal and political instruments and requested continued efforts to promote cooperation and coordination among the secretariats and pertinent bodies of related international and regional instruments and mechanisms.

35. Furthermore, the Conference of the Parties acknowledged that the full and effective implementation of the Convention and the Firearms Protocol provided a meaningful basis to put in place a regulatory regime that helped States to address threats related to technological developments and changing *modi operandi* with regard to the illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms, their parts and components and ammunition and to investigate and prosecute those crimes (see CTOC/COP/2020/10).

36. In December 2020, the first phase of the Mechanism for the Review of Implementation of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocols thereto, including the Firearms Protocol, was launched. A total of 120 States, both parties and observers, will participate in the review. The Mechanism is a peer review process that will support States parties in effective implementation and in identifying, highlighting and addressing normative challenges and good practices to curb the illicit trade in small arms.

Human Rights Council

37. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights submitted a report to the Human Rights Council during its forty-fourth session ([A/HRC/44/29](#)) in which she clarified the scope of goods to be considered when discussing the diversion of arms and unregulated or illicit arms transfers and highlighted how those practices had a gendered impact on the human rights of women and girls. She noted that the ownership and use of arms were related closely to specific expressions of masculinity, power and control that furthered gender-based discrimination against women and girls and highlighted that it was essential to address gendered root causes of violence.

38. During its forty-fifth session, the Council adopted resolution [45/13](#) by consensus, by which it requested the High Commissioner to prepare a report on the human rights impact of the civilian acquisition, possession and use of firearms by children and youth, with a view to contributing to the strengthening or development of comprehensive public policies based on socioeconomic interventions and services that addressed the factors driving firearms-related violence. The High Commissioner will submit the report at the forty-ninth session.

39. The Council adopted resolution [47/17](#) without a vote during its forty-seventh session. It requested the High Commissioner to prepare an analytical report, in consultation with States, United Nations agencies and other relevant stakeholders, on good practices, lessons learned and challenges faced by States in preventing, mitigating and addressing the diversion of arms and unregulated or illicit arms transfers that had a particular impact on the enjoyment of human rights by children and youth, and the role of national control systems as effective mechanisms in that regard. The High Commissioner will submit the report at the fifty-first session.

Arms Trade Treaty

40. The Arms Trade Treaty is the first legally binding instrument to establish common standards for the international transfer of conventional weapons and, consequently, is a key tool for combating the diversion and unauthorized end use of small arms and light weapons. It currently has 110 States parties and 31 signatories. The universalization of the Treaty and its effective implementation are important elements in support of the efforts of the international community to address the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects.

41. At the Sixth Conference of States Parties to the Treaty, in 2020, discussions were focused on transparency and exchange of information to prevent the diversion of arms to the illicit market. The restrictions associated with the COVID-19 pandemic notwithstanding, the Conference agreed to establish the Diversion Information Exchange Forum, a sui generis body for informal voluntary exchanges between States parties and signatory States to the Treaty concerning specific cases of detected or suspected diversion and for sharing specific, operational diversion-related information.

42. Supporting efforts to address the risk of diversion in international arms transfers, the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) and partners are conducting research:

- (a) To identify the key elements of a general description of diversion to support the effective implementation of the Treaty and other relevant instruments;
- (b) To provide guidance on the systemic and practical measures that can be taken to prevent diversion at every stage in the transfer chain;
- (c) To enhance a shared understanding of diversion among States;
- (d) To provide tools that can determine the direct and indirect impact of applying systemic and practical measures to address diversion and realize the object and purpose of the Treaty.

III. Activities carried out by the United Nations for the implementation of resolutions [75/56](#) and [75/241](#)

A. Coordinating Action on Small Arms mechanism

43. Under the Coordinating Action on Small Arms mechanism, 24 United Nations entities⁸ continued to provide coherent and high-quality assistance to States. United Nations system-wide responses ensure that the multifaceted nature of small arms issues is addressed from such perspectives as arms regulation, human rights, counter-terrorism, peacekeeping, peacebuilding and humanitarian aid, aviation safety,

⁸ Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Department of Global Communications, Department of Peace Operations, Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, International Civil Aviation Organization, Mine Action Service, Office for Disarmament Affairs, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Office of Counter-Terrorism, Office of the Special Adviser on Africa, Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide, Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, United Nations Children's Fund, United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), United Nations Environment Programme, United Nations Human Settlements Programme, United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, UNODC, World Health Organization.

economic development, refugees, organized crime and crime prevention, gender equality, women's rights and children's rights.

44. In the aforementioned decision of the Executive Committee, the mechanism was identified as having a critical role to play as the common platform for United Nations efforts on small arms and light weapons, a key component of the prevention agenda launched by the Secretary-General. To that end, the mechanism renewed its terms of reference, focusing on the implementation of the decision to support country-level approaches to integrating national arms control into national development frameworks. A mapping exercise was launched with an eye to reviewing each entity's relevant expertise and regional scope, as well as key activities.

45. The mechanism continues to function as the forum that oversees the development of the Modular Small-arms-control Implementation Compendium, consults the operations of the United Nations Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation and serves as a platform for information exchange in relation to the Saving Lives Entity fund, as well as being involved in initiatives related to small arms and light weapons under the auspices of the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Human Rights Council.

46. The mechanism has contributed to enhanced action by the United Nations system in areas such as weapons and ammunition management, including baseline assessments,⁹ enhanced small arms and light weapons control management in peace operations,¹⁰ the SaferGuard programme on ammunition safety, addressing small arms and light weapons in the context of terrorism and crime¹¹ and the promotion of gender-responsive programming, and policymaking on small arms and light weapons. The Coordinating Action partners also provide support for the implementation of regional initiatives, including the small arms and light weapons road map in the Western Balkans¹² and similar approaches in the Caribbean¹³ and West Africa.

47. The mechanism delivered a statement at the Seventh Biennial Meeting.

B. Modular Small-arms-control Implementation Compendium

48. The Modular Small-arms-control Implementation Compendium has provided guidance, on a voluntary basis, to national authorities regarding small arms control measures. The 21 modules, representing coordinated work within the United Nations system, cover issues ranging from designing a national action plan to stockpile management to the gendered nature of small arms and light weapons. The modules are based on good practices and standard operating procedures.

49. During 2020, three new modules were finalized, providing guidance on small arms and light weapons in the context of security sector reform; in the context of

⁹ In that regard, a publication, *A Reference Methodology for National Weapons and Ammunition Management Baseline Assessments*, was released in July 2021 to enable Member States, United Nations entities, regional organizations and specialized non-governmental organizations to work together to undertake such assessments.

¹⁰ The second edition of the *Effective Weapons and Ammunition Management in a Changing Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Context* handbook was published in April 2021.

¹¹ Co-implemented by the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre and UNIDIR, in close cooperation and collaboration with member entities of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact Working Group on Border Management and Law Enforcement relating to Counter-Terrorism.

¹² See www.seesac.org/f/docs/publications-salw-control-roadmap/Regional-Roadmap-for-a-sustainable-solution-to-the.pdf.

¹³ See <http://unlirec.screativa.com/en/publicaciones/caribbean-firearms-roadmap>.

disarmament, demobilization and reintegration; and on monitoring, evaluation and reporting.

50. Increasingly, emphasis is being placed on ensuring the translation of modules into more languages in order to increase their accessibility to Member States that choose to make use of the guidance. The United Nations will continue to ensure the availability of the Compendium, including through the development of additional modules and the translation of existing modules.

C. Agenda for disarmament

51. The Secretary-General launched his agenda for disarmament, *Securing Our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament*, in May 2018. It has three main priorities: disarmament to save humanity, disarmament that saves lives and disarmament for future generations. It creates a clear and credible vision for sustainable security that serves humanity, and the United Nations and partners continue to work on its implementation, supported and championed by Member States. Actions related to small arms and light weapons are included under the “saving lives” pillar of the agenda.

Saving Lives Entity fund

52. The United Nations Development Programme and the Office for Disarmament Affairs have continued their partnership in the context of the Saving Lives Entity fund, a trust facility established within the Peacebuilding Fund. As envisaged under action 20 of the agenda for disarmament, the fund has begun its pilot work in two Member States. Two scoping missions have been carried out with the aim of assessing the status quo, ongoing work and gaps in the context of efforts to control small arms and light weapons. Innovative, multidimensional proposals for on-the-ground work are being finalized. Activities in additional countries are foreseen as part of an overall approach that emphasizes coordination within the United Nations at the field level and prioritizes the imperative of national ownership.

Conflict prevention and management

53. As part of action 21 of the agenda for disarmament, UNIDIR convened workshops for practitioners in 2020 to identify lessons learned, good practices and practical ways of utilizing conventional arms control measures in support of United Nations conflict prevention and management activities.¹⁴

54. In 2021, UNIDIR initiated the production of a toolkit for strengthening the integration of arms-related risks into United Nations conflict analysis frameworks. It will provide guidance to practitioners on how to gather and interpret arms-related information for conflict prevention.

Securing excessive and poorly maintained stockpiles

55. In his agenda for disarmament, specifically action 22, the Secretary-General committed the United Nations to supporting more effective State and regional action on excessive and inadequately managed stockpiles.

56. Support in the destruction of materiel and management of stockpiles was provided in various contexts. The Mine Action Service continued to provide technical and policy support to the national authorities in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mali, Somalia and South Sudan through activities

¹⁴ See <https://unidir.org/projects/conventional-arms-control-prevention-and-peacemaking>.

such as specialized training, including in the management, marking and recording of weapons, the installation and upgrading of weapons and ammunition storage and the safekeeping of assets, as well as infrastructure, the disposal of unserviceable ammunition, assessments of ammunition storage areas and the development of mitigation measures to reduce risk to populations and key infrastructure.

57. Efforts to develop and further operationalize guidance on weapons and ammunition management for peace operation contexts continued. Since 2018, new policies and resources have been developed to support enhanced practice in field missions, including a weapons and ammunition management policy, the *United Nations Manual on Ammunition Management* and standard operating procedures on loss of weapons and ammunition.

58. The United Nations continued to implement a joint initiative on effective weapons and ammunition management in a changing disarmament, demobilization and reintegration context, intended to provide expert resources and guidance, as well as training and technical assistance to practitioners in the design and implementation of tailored weapons and ammunition management activities as part of integrated disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes. In that framework, the Department of Peace Operations and the Office for Disarmament Affairs developed a practical handbook for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration practitioners on effective weapons and ammunition management and have implemented a related annual training course for practitioners working in mission and non-mission settings.¹⁵ To support the operationalization of resources and training materials, a standing technical assistance mechanism was established in 2019. Through it, the United Nations continued to assist the authorities in Haiti in establishing a comprehensive arms control framework. The mechanism also facilitated a study on transitional weapons and ammunition management in the Sudan to support the start-up of the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in the Sudan in 2020.

59. A national weapons and ammunition management baseline assessment was conducted in 11 States between 2015 and 2020, with a view to assisting States in their efforts to comprehensively and systematically assess national institutions, policies, processes, capacities and responsibilities in the weapons and ammunition management life cycle, in line with international, regional and subregional obligations and commitments, as well as relevant international standards and technical guidelines. In July 2021, UNIDIR released *A Reference Methodology for National Weapons and Ammunition Management Baseline Assessments*.

60. Efforts have been undertaken to further strengthen the SaferGuard Programme, which oversees the development and implementation of the International Ammunition Technical Guidelines. The third version of the Guidelines, launched in July 2021, constitutes the most comprehensive and authoritative set of guidelines for the safety and security of ammunition stockpiles.¹⁶ In addition to efforts to support the application of the Guidelines, the SaferGuard Programme operates a quick-response mechanism that provides technical support to interested States. A quick-response mechanism mission was deployed in the aftermath of explosions at a military camp in Equatorial Guinea in March 2021. The mission visited the site and assisted the Government in assessing the cause, as well as identifying and reducing the risks of further explosions and potential environmental impact. The mission also provided immediate technical advice on ammunition management and explosives safety and security risks based on the internationally accepted good practice contained in the Guidelines.

¹⁵ See www.un.org/disarmament/ddr-handbook-2ed/.

¹⁶ See <https://unsafeguard.org/un-safeguard/guide-lines>.

D. United Nations Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation

61. The United Nations Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation was established in 2013 in response to calls from Member States for a sustainable funding mechanism that would match assistance needs with available resources related to small arms and light weapons control (see [A/CONF.192/BMS/2016/2](#)). Since its inception, the Trust Facility has received contributions from 14 donor countries¹⁷ and funded 94 projects, in all regions, in a total amount of \$12.5 million, benefiting 144 Member States. In partnership with civil society organizations, the Trust Facility supported focused, quick-impact small arms control measures, including stockpile management, marking and record-keeping, craft production, legislative assistance and gender considerations.

62. During the 2020 call for proposals, the Trust Facility received 31 applications, of which 12 proposals were selected for funding in 2021. Ten projects were being implemented from 2020. During the reporting period, two projects were implemented in Central Africa to build national capacity for data collection with regard to target 16.4 of the Goals and to facilitate the submission of national reports on the implementation of the Programme of Action.

63. The Trust Facility continued to exchange information with the Arms Trade Treaty voluntary trust fund with a view to avoiding duplication in funding and seeking synergies of impact in terms of funded activities.

E. United Nations support for Africa Amnesty Month

64. Within the framework of Security Council resolution [2457 \(2019\)](#) in support of the flagship initiative of the African Union, Silencing the Guns by 2030, the Office for Disarmament Affairs, in collaboration with the African Union Commission, launched a project in 2020 to help to implement Africa Amnesty Month, one of the important aspects of the flagship initiative. The Month was adopted in 2017 through decision 645 (XXIX) of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union, in which it declared the month of September Africa Amnesty Month for the surrender and collection of illicit arms and light weapons and called for the voluntary surrender of firearms owned illegally by citizens. The United Nations-African Union project was aimed at raising awareness of the dangers and risks of illegal gun ownership and illicit flows of small arms and light weapons; the collection and destruction of such weapons; and building the capacity of States on stockpile management and community-based policing.

65. In 2020, with financial contributions from Germany and Japan and technical support from the Nairobi-based Regional Centre on Small Arms in the Great Lakes Region, the Horn of Africa and Bordering States, the project benefited Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia and Kenya. Weapons collected as part of the project were publicly destroyed. The 2021 edition of the project will cover four additional countries.

¹⁷ In the current cycle, contributions were provided by Australia, Czechia, Finland, Germany and Slovakia.

F. Supporting gender-responsive arms control policies, programmes and actions

66. The Office for Disarmament Affairs, with financial contributions from the European Union, continued to implement a multi-year project launched in 2019 to mainstream gender policies, programmes and action into combating trafficking in and the misuse of small arms, in line with the women and peace and security agenda. During the reporting period, the project supported States in Africa, Latin America and Asia through workshops, webinars and research in their implementation of their global commitment to including a gender dimension in their efforts. Training was provided through a webinar series to regional and subregional organizations to further strengthen gender-responsive regional initiatives. In partnership with the International Action Network on Small Arms, capacities among civil society organizations were further strengthened, ensuring the engagement of actors at the local level as well.¹⁸

67. In September 2020, the Office for Disarmament Affairs initiated the establishment of an informal coordination mechanism on gender and arms control to strengthen cooperation and collaboration among implementers of related initiatives through a platform that offers the opportunity to exchange and learn with one another.

G. Crime prevention and criminal justice

68. By assisting States in implementing the Firearms Protocol and other small arms and light weapons instruments, UNODC helps to enforce preventive measures to curb the illicit trade in small arms, in particular through the strengthening of criminal justice responses. In that regard, UNODC provided support to States in Africa and Latin America to update legislation related to trafficking in firearms and provided capacity-building to promote the tracing of illicit firearms, as well as offering mentoring to ensure the investigation, prosecution and adjudication of crimes related to trafficking in firearms. In both regions, UNODC, in cooperation with the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), conducted law enforcement operations dismantling trafficking networks, which included the seizure of more than 200,000 illicit firearms and the arrest of 4,000 suspects.

69. UNODC and the Office of Counter-Terrorism, in cooperation with the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate and the Office for Disarmament Affairs, are implementing a joint project on the terrorism-arms-crime nexus in Central Asia. It is aimed at enhancing national capacity to prevent and combat illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons and their illicit supply to terrorists.

IV. Recommendations

70. **The General Assembly is invited to take note of the present report.**

¹⁸ See www.un.org/disarmament/gender-and-small-arms-control and www.un.org/disarmament/gender-salw-project.