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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 the requests of the General Assembly contained in its resolution [78/46](#) on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects and its resolution [78/54](#) on assistance to States for curbing the illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons and collecting them.

Recent developments in the illicit trade and circulation of small arms and light weapons as well as the efforts undertaken by States and other partners in curbing the multifaceted aspects of the problem are examined in the report. Such efforts include activities on the control of small arms and light weapons undertaken by United Nations bodies, including by the Security Council and the Human Rights Council, as well as activities relating to the Arms Trade Treaty. Furthermore, the report includes details of relevant new policy developments that can support State efforts in combating the trade in and circulation of illicit small arms and light weapons, as well as of trends, challenges and opportunities for consideration.

In addition, efforts undertaken by the United Nations to implement the aforementioned resolutions are set out in the report. Activities include the work of the Coordinating Action on Small Arms mechanism and other United Nations entities' programmes and initiatives. Work related to the Modular Small-arms-control Implementation Compendium and to strengthening linkages with other development and prevention frameworks and efforts to enhance gender-responsive small arms control policies is also detailed.

* [A/79/50](#).



I. Introduction

1. In its resolution [78/46](#) 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-ninth session on the implementation of the resolution.
2. In its resolution [78/54](#) 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-ninth session on the implementation of the resolution.
3. With a view to ensuring a coherent and consistent approach to intersecting and mutually reinforcing issues, and in keeping with previous General Assembly practice of rationalizing reporting, the above-mentioned requests are addressed in the present consolidated report.

II. Recent developments

A. Implementation trends, challenges and opportunities

4. Small arms and light weapons continue to be a serious threat to peace, security and sustainable development. The ebbs and flows of armed conflict, organized crime and armed violence are largely dependent on the intensity and magnitude of the illicit circulation and misuse of small arms and light weapons. As recognized in the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, it is a complex problem that no one State can solve alone.
5. Recognizing the significant impacts of illicit small arms and light weapons, States have begun reviewing implementation trends, challenges and opportunities as part of preparations for the fourth 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, which will also review the implementation of the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons, to be held in New York from 17 to 28 June 2024.
6. At the meeting of the Preparatory Committee held from 12 to 16 February 2024, the Permanent Representative of Costa Rica to the United Nations, Maritza Chan Valverde, was elected President-designate of the Conference and Chair of the Preparatory Committee. She also attended regional consultations organized by the Office for Disarmament Affairs, with financial support from the European Union, which were held in Asia and the Pacific (Nepal, 23–25 January 2024); West and Central Africa (Togo, 29 February and 1 March); East and Southern Africa (Kenya, 4 and 5 March); Latin America (virtual, 11–15 March); and the Caribbean (virtual, 18–22 March). There have also been several informal consultations with Member States, regional groups at United Nations Headquarters and other stakeholders since December 2023.
7. These meetings enabled Member States to identify issues for further discussion and decision at the fourth Review Conference, including: enhancing international cooperation and assistance frameworks; new developments in small arms and light weapons manufacturing, technology and design; integrating small arms control into development processes; target-setting in the implementation of the Programme of Action; the supply and diversion of small arms and light weapons; synergies with other instruments; and gender considerations.

8. Pursuant to the recommendation by the Eighth 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, States are expected to consider a structured procedure to process requests for assistance and to match needs with expertise and resources, taking into account, inter alia, proposals submitted by the Secretariat. The proposals reflect views raised by States, including: the enhancement and use of a digital platform; the development of a template for requests; the need for better data collection through technical assessments to inform project planning; and ways to make assistance more sustainable. For tangible outcomes on this subject at the fourth Review Conference, States will need to deepen reflection on the role of donors, requesting States, regional organizations, the Secretariat and other stakeholders, as well as on how to best make use of existing funding mechanisms.

9. In addition, States are expected to consider the establishment of an open-ended technical expert group to address new developments in small arms and light weapons manufacturing, technology and design in accordance with the outcome document of the Eighth Biennial Meeting of States ([A/CONF.192/BMS/2022/1](#), annex). The issue was raised during all consultations, as all regions are seeing an increase in the number of 3D-printed weapons seized and persistent challenges relating to the traceability of modular and polymer weapons. Furthermore, craft production of weapons continues to increase in sophistication. Nevertheless, technologies are also creating new opportunities to combat the illicit diversion of weapons; States are increasingly using new technologies such as marking with the use of lasers, QR codes or chemical taggants, and artificial intelligence, to assist in the identification and interdiction of illicit weapons.

10. An open-ended technical expert group could therefore study both the challenges and opportunities of these new developments and develop agreed recommendations for States to consider so as to ensure the full implementation of the International Tracing Instrument and the Programme of Action, in the light of these developments.

11. Another issue to be discussed is the increasing use of national targets as a useful tool for States to enhance national ownership, as well as measure and evaluate the implementation of the Programme of Action and International Tracing Instrument. Target-setting practices also facilitate national coordination, along with reporting on implementation efforts.

12. Furthermore, regional and subregional initiatives for the implementation of the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument have expanded in recent years. States are developing a Central American firearms road map with support from the Organization of American States, in collaboration with the regional centre of the Office for Disarmament Affairs, the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean and the secretariat of the Central American Integration System. Caribbean States are also committed to a Caribbean Firearms Road Map.

13. In August 2023, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) adopted a declaration on combating arms smuggling. South Asian and South-East Asian States officially launched a regional road map on arms regulation, led by the Office of the Special Envoy on Transnational Crime of the Philippines and the civil society organization Nonviolence International Southeast Asia.

14. Meanwhile, a comprehensive and independent midterm review of the implementation of the Western Balkans Small Arms and Light Weapons Control Road Map concluded. Following the recommendations of the midterm review and the agreement by Western Balkans authorities to continue the implementation of the Road Map beyond 2024, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) South Eastern

and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons initiated the development and discussion of the revision of the Road Map in 2023.

15. In Africa, efforts continued to be made for the implementation of action plans for the Economic Community of West African States Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and Other Related Materials, the Central African Convention for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and All Parts and Components That Can Be Used for Their Manufacture, Repair and Assembly, the Nairobi Protocol for the Prevention, Control and Reduction of Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa and the Protocol on the Control of Firearms, Ammunition and Other Related Materials in the Southern African Development Community Region. The African Union is also exploring a common position ahead of the fourth Review Conference.

16. Throughout the preparations for the Review Conference, Member States raised options for the further strengthening of the Programme of Action, the International Tracing Instrument and the associated political processes so as to ensure that they remain fully fit-for-purpose, including proposals to inject greater technical expertise into the political process.

B. A New Agenda for Peace

17. In July 2023, the Secretary-General issued a policy brief on A New Agenda for Peace following extensive consultations with States, international and regional organizations and civil society.¹ It contained a vision for Member States to put aside competition in favour of international cooperation, underpinned by three principles: trust, solidarity and universality and covering 12 action areas across five clusters: (a) addressing strategic risks and geopolitical divisions; (b) preventing conflict and violence, and sustaining peace; (c) strengthening peace operations; (d) novel approaches to peace and potential domains of conflict; and (e) strengthening international governance.

18. In the policy brief, the Secretary-General recognizes the particularly pernicious impact of illicit small arms and light weapons on armed conflict and violence, as well as the negative impact on sustainable development. The brief calls upon Member States to take action to reduce the human cost of weapons, including small arms and light weapons. Three recommendations were put forward: strengthening, developing and implementing regional, subregional and national instruments and road maps; setting national and regional targets and measuring progress towards the implementation of regulatory frameworks; and pursuing whole-of-government approaches that integrate small arms and light weapons into development and violence reduction initiatives.

19. The Summit of the Future, in September 2024, is an opportunity for Member States and other stakeholders to consider how to operationalize these recommendations, in line with their existing commitments under the Programme of Action.

C. Global Framework for Through-life Conventional Ammunition Management

20. In line with the recommendation of the open-ended working group on conventional ammunition, which concluded its work in June 2023, the General Assembly, in its resolution [78/47](#), adopted the Global Framework for Through-life

¹ [A/77/CRP.1/Add.8](#).

Conventional Ammunition ([A/78/111](#), annex) in December 2023, welcomed the final report of the open-ended working group and called upon all States to implement the Global Framework.

21. The Global Framework covers all types of conventional ammunition. States have committed to 15 objectives and identified 85 related measures covering a range of aspects to promote the safety, security and sustainability of through-life conventional ammunition management so as to address the risks associated with conventional ammunition at every stage of its life cycle. Through the Global Framework, States also advanced gender considerations in through-life conventional ammunition management.

22. Recognizing the central role of international cooperation and assistance, States commit to cooperate and coordinate with each other and to establish and strengthen partnerships and cooperation with relevant stakeholders including with international, regional and subregional organizations and with non-governmental organizations, academia, research institutions and the private sector, including the arms industry.

23. The Global Framework contains mandates for the Secretariat in relation to international cooperation and assistance. This includes the establishment, under the *SaferGuard* programme, of an efficient and agile global mechanism for requesting, offering and receiving assistance in ammunition management, the maintenance of a roster of ammunition management experts through the dedicated validation process, the continued review and further development of the International Ammunition Technical Guidelines, the collection of information on subregional, regional and global initiatives, and the establishment of a new standing fellowship training programme on through-life conventional ammunition management.

24. The Global Framework has solidified conventional ammunition as an issue that requires dedicated and sustained attention from the international community. Accordingly, it lays out a dedicated follow-up and review process, consisting of a preparatory meeting of States in 2025, the submission of voluntary initial overviews regarding implementation at the national level in 2026, followed later by voluntary national reports and updates, and a Meeting of States in 2027 to review the implementation of the Global Framework and to determine the convening of subsequent Meetings of States, as well as governmental technical experts meetings.

D. Activities under other frameworks and bodies with regard to small arms and light weapons

Security Council

25. The issue of small arms and light weapons continued to be addressed both as a stand-alone agenda item and integrated into relevant decisions and discussions on pertinent thematic areas and various country situations.

26. In November 2023, the Secretary-General issued his eighth biennial report on small arms and light weapons ([S/2023/823](#)) pursuant to Security Council resolution [2220 \(2015\)](#). Following the issuance of the report, the Security Council, under the presidency of Ecuador, held an open debate on 15 December 2023 on the theme “Addressing the threat posed by diversion, illicit trafficking and misuse of small arms and light weapons and their ammunition to peace and security”. During the discussion, Member States emphasized the need for collaborative, comprehensive and gender-responsive approaches to address the cross-cutting and multifaceted challenges posed by small arms and light weapons and ammunition.

27. The Security Council also continued to recognize the nexus between small arms and light weapons, organized crime, terrorism and armed violence, holding an open debate on 7 December 2023 on the theme “Threats to international peace and security:

transnational organized crime, growing challenges and new threats”. In a presidential statement (S/PRST/2023/6), the Security Council expressed serious concern over the trafficking of small arms and light weapons to organized criminal groups and terrorists that threaten peace and security, urging States to strengthen judicial, law enforcement, border control and investigation capacities. The Security Council also emphasized the importance of national, regional and international measures to prevent criminal and terrorist groups from acquiring weapons through diversion and illicit supply, stressing the importance of international cooperation in this regard.

28. In the context of Haiti, the Security Council, in its resolutions 2699 (2023) and 2700 (2023), called upon the Multinational Security Support Mission, which it had authorized to deploy, to support efforts by the Haitian National Police to combat illicit trafficking and diversion of arms and related materiel, as well as to implement weapons and ammunition management processes and oversight mechanisms for their own weapons and ammunition, and to report any diversion of weapons and ammunition to the Panel of Experts on Haiti. Pursuant to paragraph 9 of Security Council resolution 2692 (2023), in October 2023, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) initiated quarterly reports to the Security Council on sources and routes of illicit arms and financial flows to Haiti, as well as on relevant United Nations activities and recommendations.²

29. Weapons and ammunition considerations also continued to be integrated into the work and mandates of United Nations peacekeeping operations and special political missions, including in Afghanistan, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, South Sudan and Yemen, and in Abyei.

30. In its resolution 2626 (2022), the Security Council mandated the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) to support regional and international efforts to prevent and address the illicit trade in and destabilizing accumulation of small arms and light weapons and their diversion. In order to operationalize this mandate, UNAMA, with technical assistance from Conflict Armament Research, engaged in extensive consultations and developed a scoping study and a risk reduction framework to address the proliferation and diversion risks in Afghanistan and the region.

31. The Security Council also continued to review the national capacity of individual States to exert effective control over national arms and ammunition stockpiles, as part of its evaluation of arms embargoes. It continued its practice of easing and partially lifting arms embargoes, including in the Central African Republic (resolution 2693 (2023)). In Somalia, the Security Council lifted the arms embargo on the Federal Government of Somalia by adopting resolution 2714 (2023), recognizing the progress made against the weapons and ammunition management benchmarks. In the context of Haiti, the Security Council expanded the scope of the targeted arms embargo established in 2022 to a territorial arms embargo (resolutions 2699 (2023) and 2700 (2023)).

32. In order to support these reviews, progress towards benchmarks related to weapons and ammunition management continued to be assessed under various sanctions regimes. Benchmark assessments were conducted in the context of the Central African Republic (S/2024/391), Somalia (S/2023/676) and South Sudan (S/2024/309). In its resolution 2700 (2023), the Security Council mandated a benchmark assessment for Haiti to be conducted by 1 October 2024.

² See S/2023/780, S/2024/79 and S/2024/320.

Arms Trade Treaty

33. The Arms Trade Treaty is a critical tool for combating the diversion and unauthorized use of small arms and light weapons. In August 2023, at the Ninth Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty, States parties emphasized the role of industry in responsible international transfers of conventional arms as its priority theme. Several States emphasized the complementarity between the Treaty and the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. In its final report, the Conference welcomed the Guiding Principles and encouraged States parties to continue discussions as to how relevant human rights and humanitarian law instruments apply within the context of the Treaty.

34. The third meeting of the Diversion Information Exchange Forum was held during the Ninth Conference. The Forum provided an opportunity for States parties and signatory States to exchange information regarding concrete cases of detected or suspected diversion.

Human Rights Council

35. Pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution [50/12](#), the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights submitted a report on the impact of the civilian acquisition, possession and use of firearms ([A/HRC/53/49](#)) to Council at its fifty-third session. The High Commissioner examines the way in which business enterprises, in particular the firearms industry, contribute to driving the availability of firearms and urges such enterprises to adhere to the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

36. In the report, the High Commissioner explains that in order to tackle the devastating human rights consequences of the civilian acquisition, possession and use of firearms, States should increase their efforts to address the supply and demand factors affecting the availability of firearms, including through active cross-border cooperation and coordination among States.

37. According to the report, available information suggests that the firearms industry, including firearms industry associations, manufacturers and dealers have not taken adequate steps to ensure that their operations conform with the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. The High Commissioner underlines the need for States to take further effective measures, including through cooperation with States and the business sector, to address the negative human rights impact resulting from the contribution by the business sector to the supply and demand for firearms by civilians. The High Commissioner also proposes practical recommendations to the business sector on how to address the risks associated with involvement in the civilian firearms industry.

38. At its fifty-third session, the Council adopted resolution [53/15](#), in which it requested the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to prepare, in consultation with States, United Nations agencies and other relevant stakeholders, an analytical report on the impact of arms transfers, including the diversion of arms and unregulated or illicit arms transfers, on the enjoyment of human rights, with a focus on the role of access to information in preventing, mitigating and responding to the negative human rights impact thereof. The report will be presented to the Human Rights Council at its fifty-sixth session.

39. In the same resolution, the Human Rights Council also requested the Office of the High Commissioner to organize a full-day intersessional workshop to hold stocktaking discussions on the role of States and the private sector in preventing, addressing and mitigating the negative human rights impact of arms transfers, including the diversion of arms and unregulated or illicit arms transfers, to be held

before the fifty-seventh session of the Human Rights Council and open to participation of States, relevant treaty bodies and mandate holders and members of academia, civil society and other relevant stakeholders, so as to inform the preparation of a report on gaps and future steps on the subject, to be presented to the Council at its fifty-eighth session.

Firearms Protocol

40. At its eleventh meeting, the Working Group on Firearms³ addressed two substantive agenda items on operationalizing the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, in view of technological developments relating to the illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms, their parts and components and ammunition and the implementation of article 5.

41. The Working Group adopted various recommendations related to the two agenda items, including recommendations on convertible weapons, the use of postal and fast parcel courier services to traffic firearms, addressing the use of 3D-printing technology to illicitly manufacture firearm parts, for instance by criminalizing the possession of blueprints for weapons, and on enhancing the traceability of firearms by marking their essential parts and components, where appropriate and feasible. UNODC and other relevant organizations were requested to conduct research and provide support to States in relation to new and emerging trends and technological developments related to the illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms, their parts and components and ammunition.

42. Furthermore, the Working Group requested UNODC to organize expert meetings for the purpose of developing voluntary, non-binding technical standards and/or guidelines on the implementation of certain requirements of the Firearms Protocol, including marking, record-keeping, deactivation and destruction standards, and updating the Legislative Guide for the Implementation of the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition, the Technical Guide to the Implementation of the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition, and the Model Law against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition. Finally, the Working Group recommended that States expand the scope of measures to address criminal offences that are guided by implementation of the Firearms Protocol by applying the same approach to offences related to light weapons and explosives. These recommendations will be brought to the attention of the twelfth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, to be held in October 2024.

³ In its resolution 5/4, entitled “Illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms, their parts and components and ammunition”, the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime decided to establish an open-ended intergovernmental working group on firearms, which meets on an annual basis.

III. Activities carried out by the United Nations on the implementation of resolutions 78/46 and 78/54

A. Coordinating Action on Small Arms mechanism

43. The Coordinating Action on Small Arms mechanism functions as the United Nations system-wide inter-agency mechanism to address the negative impact of the illicit trade in and misuse of small arms and light weapons, conventional ammunition management and the arms trade. United Nations partners continued to promote the mechanism as a critical common platform for United Nations efforts in this area.

44. During the reporting period, the mechanism held three meetings. Relevant briefings and discussions promoted cohesive United Nations action in such areas as: the Global Framework for Through-life Conventional Ammunition Management; weapons and ammunition management in a changing disarmament, demobilization and reintegration context; addressing the nexus between terrorism, arms and crime in Africa and Central Asia; and updates on the illicit arms flows questionnaire, which supports data collection for the Firearms Protocol. The mechanism also served as a forum for overseeing the development and utilization of the Modular Small-arms-control Implementation Compendium; exchanging information in relation to the Saving Lives Entity fund; and consulting on the operations of the United Nations Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation.

B. Modular Small-arms-control Implementation Compendium

45. The Modular Small-arms-control Implementation Compendium continues to provide guidance, on a voluntary basis, to national authorities regarding small arms control measures and can serve as a metric against which to measure progress. In 2023, the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), in cooperation with the Office for Disarmament Affairs and in consultation with United Nations stakeholders, began the development of a new self-assessment tool as part of the Compendium, so as to enable interested parties to conduct voluntary national assessments of small arms and light weapon control capacities and practices. The tool is scheduled to be released in September 2024.

46. The Office for Disarmament Affairs also continues to improve the Compendium through the creation of new modules and will review its governance structure in order to identify ways in which to improve it. In 2023, a new module on small arms and light weapons control in the context of gun-free zones was released, which provides guidance on how to establish, maintain, enforce, monitor and evaluate gun-free zones for national and local authorities and local communities, as well international and regional governmental and non-governmental organizations that are supporting them in this process.

C. Saving Lives Entity fund

47. The Saving Lives Entity fund (SALIENT) is a United Nations funding facility dedicated to supporting Member States in tackling armed violence and illicit small arms and light weapons as part of a comprehensive approach to sustainable security and development. It is a joint initiative of the Office for Disarmament Affairs and UNDP, which started operations in 2021. The Entity supported holistic, nationally led, people-centred and preventive activities aimed at small arms control and the reduction of armed violence in eight countries. The first phase was initiated in

Cameroon, Jamaica and South Sudan; activities in Ghana, Honduras, Kyrgyzstan, Panama and Papua New Guinea were rolled out subsequently.

48. In 2023, the Entity completed the implementation of activities in Cameroon, Jamaica and South Sudan, which included the following: supporting legislative and policy frameworks, including gender mainstreaming; capacity-building for law enforcement; and educational activities with civil society, journalists, women and young people, including on attitudes and perceptions towards violence, guns and masculinity.

49. In Cameroon, the Entity supported multi-stakeholder engagements to take stock of vulnerabilities and resilience to small arms and light weapons-related violence. In addition, the Entity helped to frame the issue of small arms within the national development agenda; provided training and education to women ex-combatants; convened government representatives for gender-informed discussions on regulation and control; and enhanced the capacities of national authorities, culminating in the production of the country's first gender and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration strategy.

50. In Jamaica, the Entity bolstered ongoing efforts to reduce access to firearms and ammunition; strengthened the interdiction capacity of law enforcement officials at seaports; and trained officials in the analysis of firearms and ammunition evidence. The Entity also enabled Jamaica to conduct a violence audit, thereby establishing a baseline and advancing the efforts of the Government of Jamaica to utilize data in its development planning and decision-making processes, and supported the development under the framework of the Entity, in coordination with the Government, of guidelines for the development of protocols to tackle the presence and use of firearms in schools so as to bolster the current institutional framework and enable it to respond to violence in schools through practical strategies that support teachers in preventing conflict and violence, and through discussions on peer-to-peer conflict resolution and mediation on masculinity and gun culture.

51. In South Sudan, the Entity supported local authorities and communities to catalyse voluntary civilian disarmament efforts, while actively encouraging the participation of women and building trust between police and security institutions and civilians. The project established 11 senior leadership dialogues on the proliferation of illicit small arms and light weapons and voluntary civilian disarmament, which advocated the voluntary handover of firearms. The establishment of new women's networks within the South Sudan National Police Service increased the quality of engagement with community members, particularly with women, and strengthened connections between women officers through the sharing of best practices. Radio talk shows hosted by local police officers reached over 2 million people.

D. United Nations Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation

52. The United Nations Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation is focused on quick-impact, short-term, small-scale, practical, theme-focused projects, mainly in partnership with civil society organizations. A total of 148 States have benefited from activities funded by the Trust Facility thus far, under the guiding principle of national ownership.

53. In 2023, the United Nations Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation continued to support work on a variety of small arms control issues. During the reporting period, the Trust Facility dispatched a monitoring mission to Malawi to support the destruction of 1,027 stockpiled weapons and the submission of

a national report on small arms control, and to Sierra Leone to facilitate gun-free declarations in border communities.

E. Fellowship training programme on small arms and light weapons

54. In General Assembly resolution [77/71](#), Member States decided to establish a standing fellowship training programme on small arms and light weapons for government officials directly responsible for the implementation of the Programme of Action and International Tracing Instrument, particularly in developing countries. The programme will consist of a self-paced online course and four-week in-person training with the objective of building the conceptual and practical knowledge of practitioners regarding key small arms control issues.

55. The fellowship will train 60 officials per year, 15 each from Africa; Asia and the Pacific; Latin America and the Caribbean; and Europe and other States. The Office for Disarmament Affairs will provide the overall coordination and management of the training programme and will seek to establish a community of practice for graduated fellows. Currently, the Office is developing both the online and in-person training materials in preparation for the in-person training in 2025.

F. 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the decade of action to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals

56. The uncontrolled proliferation of illicit small arms and light weapons creates an insecure environment that impedes sustainable development. As such, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and specifically Goal 16, target 16.4, calls for the significant reduction of illicit arms flows by 2030.

57. In that vein, the Office for Disarmament Affairs has taken concrete steps to support actors at the country level in integrating small arms control into national development frameworks. One avenue includes raising awareness of the value of pursuing whole-of-government approaches when addressing small arms and light weapons control, as well as facilitating the direct participation of local communities affected by small arms in order to promote integrated and coordinated approaches. The Coordinating Action on Small Arms mechanism is developing a guidance note to support country-level approaches to integrating national arms control measures into national development frameworks.

58. Furthermore, under the umbrella of the United Nations Resident Coordinators and the United Nations country teams, United Nations partners coordinate efforts to ensure that small arms and light weapons issues are included in the common country analyses when relevant. That process then allows for these issues to be addressed through the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks for the States most affected by armed violence and conflict.

59. Data collection on targets 16.1 and 16.4 of the Sustainable Development Goals further supports the nexus between disarmament, arms control and development. As the custodian agencies for indicator 16.4.2, UNODC and the Office for Disarmament Affairs have continued to collect and analyse data to measure progress in significantly reducing illicit arms flows.

60. Member States submitted relevant data through the illicit arms flows questionnaire in support of the Firearms Protocol and the national reports on the implementation of the Programme of Action and International Tracing Instrument. Low levels of reporting on these instruments have limited the collection of data that can be analysed to assess the progress made by States in meeting these targets.

61. The collection and tracing of weapons used in the context of conflict, organized crime and armed violence represent key steps in reducing illicit arms flows. Nevertheless, available data show that tracing has remained a global challenge, owing in part to States' lack of capacity and resources and the lack of effective international cooperation. In order to strengthen national data collection and analytical capacities, UNODC organized three workshops on data collection for countries in West and Central Africa, the Caribbean, and in Central Asia and the Caucasus.

62. In 2023, UNODC also worked on the development of three subregional studies on the trafficking of firearms and related forms of crime in West Africa, Central Asia and the Western Balkans, for publication in 2024. In addition, UNODC continued to update the legislative and case law databases in its Sharing Electronic Resources and Laws on Crime (SHERLOC) knowledge management portal. Furthermore, UNODC is developing a pilot database on firearms, gathering data on firearms seizures from open sources and allowing for the visualization thereof through dashboards.

63. The Revised Arusha Declaration of the World Customs Organization (WCO) concerning good governance and integrity in customs guides countries in complying with their obligations under anti-corruption conventions and work to achieve Goal 16. In that regard, the Security Programme of WCO is aimed at reducing violence and improving the security situation within countries by restricting the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons components. A project in the framework of the Security Programme also promotes as best practice the tracing of all recovered firearms, which directly addresses indicator 16.4.2, while providing awareness-raising and training for customs administrations to assist in the detection of illicit small arms and light weapons at borders.

G. Africa Amnesty Month

64. In support of the Africa Union Silencing the Guns initiative and pursuant to Security Council resolution [2457 \(2019\)](#), the Office for Disarmament Affairs continued its cooperation with the Africa Union to commemorate the Africa Amnesty Month. The core objective of the Africa Amnesty Month is to champion disarmament, arms control and the establishment of sustainable peace by encouraging the voluntary surrender of illicit arms held by civilians.

65. In September 2023, the United Nations and the African Union supported Mozambique in holding the continental celebration of the Amnesty Month. The event brought together members of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, the African Union High Representative for Silencing the Guns in Africa, the Office for Disarmament Affairs and the Government of Mozambique.

66. In January 2024, the Office for Disarmament Affairs and the African Union resumed their joint project for the organization of activities for Africa Amnesty Month, for the 2024 edition.

H. Preventing armed violence

67. In the Western Balkans, the South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons remained actively engaged in responding to factors that are fuelling the demand and misuse of firearms, notably through awareness-raising activities, including a voluntary collection campaign conducted in Serbia, which yielded an unprecedented collection of 82,398 pieces of small arms and light weapons and 26,485 pieces of explosive ordnance by 30 June 2023. The Clearinghouse also helped to develop operational capacities through the

establishment of a regional awareness-raising task force for the Western Balkans, which contributes to ongoing, region-wide activities to advance several awareness tools.

68. In the Sudan, the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in the Sudan and the United Nations Country Team used the Arms-Related Risk Analysis Toolkit produced by UNIDIR in order to identify entry points for integrating arms control and conflict prevention in the context of United Nations special political missions.⁴

69. In 2023, an assessment of lessons learned from the experience of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali was conducted to address the threats posed by illicit arms, ammunition and improvised explosive devices. The assessment highlighted ways in which peacekeeping operations could monitor and trace illicit arms flows so as to enhance situational awareness and tackle impunity by illicit arms actors in hostile environments.⁵

70. Also in 2023, the regional centre of UNIDIR and the Office for Disarmament Affairs, the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa, in partnership with Switzerland, co-organized a regional seminar on the prevention of violent extremism and the management of conventional weapons in West Africa. It fostered a holistic, people-centred and prevention-oriented approach, addressing both the root causes of violence and the supply of weapons, and devised recommendations aimed at the local, national, regional, continental and international levels.⁶

I. Weapons and ammunition management

71. The United Nations continues its weapons and ammunition management commitment, as set out initially by the Secretary-General in the Agenda for Disarmament and further reinforced through Security Council mandates and other agreements.

72. Conceptually, the United Nations took steps to consider options for promoting a whole-of-system approach for coordinating support to Member States through an informal strategic dialogue on through-life weapons and ammunition management organized by UNIDIR in cooperation with the Office for Disarmament Affairs, in September 2023. UNIDIR also organized the first symposium on weapons and ammunition management in Geneva in November 2023 to provide a platform for informal dialogue between Member States, the United Nations, regional organizations, non-governmental organizations and civil society on weapons and ammunition management frameworks, policies and practices. Both events allowed for the gathering of lessons learned for enhancing international cooperation and assistance to strengthen national frameworks, policies and practices.

73. Operationally, the joint Department of Peace Operations and the Office for Disarmament Affairs initiative on effective weapons and ammunition management in a changing disarmament, demobilization and reintegration context has continued to deepen collaboration between key stakeholders to promote the integration of weapons

⁴ United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), *The Arms-Related Risk Analysis Toolkit: Practical Guidance for Integrating Conventional Arms-Related Risks into Conflict Analysis and Prevention* (2021).

⁵ Nils Holger Anders, "Peacekeeping in hostile environments: the impact of illicit arms on MINUSMA", 2023.

⁶ UNIDIR, United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa and Federal Department of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland, « Rapport de synthèse : Séminaire régional sur la prévention de l'extrémisme violent et la gestion des armes conventionnelles en Afrique de l'Ouest, Lomé, Togo, 5–7 décembre 2023 », 2024.

and ammunition management policies and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes.

74. In order to strengthen regional cooperation and capacity-building efforts, the initiative supported the Regional Centre on Small Arms in the Great Lakes Region, the Horn of Africa and Bordering States, in coordination with the Bonn International Centre for Conflict Studies in Germany, in organizing a regional dialogue aimed at bolstering regional cooperation and capacity-building endeavours. The platform facilitated exchanges among States to identify prevalent challenges and gaps within existing national frameworks on small arms and light weapons control in the context of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, and to draft a regional road map to be presented during the fourth United Nations 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.

75. In addition, the joint initiative continued to operationalize the technical assistance mechanism in diverse settings and succeeded in integrating weapon and ammunition provisions into disarmament, demobilization and reintegration strategies, including in Chad. It also supported the development of key manuals (Cameroon) and studies on weapons and ammunition dynamics (Somalia) and, together with the Central and Southern Africa Division of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, conducted assessment missions (Great Lakes region) to explore the possibility of establishing a regional infrastructure of country-based centres for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes, so as to enhance coordination and effectiveness in addressing regional challenges.

76. Furthermore, in collaboration with relevant partners, the Department of Peace Operations and the Office for Disarmament Affairs successfully implemented the annual training course on effective weapons and ammunition management in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration settings, which equips practitioners with skills needed to plan and implement safe, secure and effective disarmament operations and transitional weapons and ammunition management initiatives.

77. In 2023, the Mine Action Service extended its support in weapons and ammunition management to six countries and territories (Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Libya, Somalia, South Sudan, and Abyei) through assessing, rehabilitating and constructing storage areas, as well as providing technical and policy support to national authorities.

78. In the Central African Republic, the Mine Action Service delivered nine specialized courses to national defence and internal security forces and conducted technical assessment activities and quality assurance visits to ammunition storage facilities, in coordination with the national authorities. The United Nations peacekeeping operations continued to work with the national commission for the fight against the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, particularly in the establishment of procedures and coordination mechanisms and the development of a five-year national action plan to prevent, combat and eradicate the proliferation and illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

79. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Mine Action Service conducted weapon and ammunition management training for national security forces and supported the national defence and security forces in the safe and secure storage of weapons and ammunition in North Kivu and South Kivu. In addition, with support from United Nations entities, the Democratic Republic of the Congo was also able to finalize its national action plan on small arms and light weapons control for the period 2024–2028.

80. In Somalia, the Mine Action Service provided expert advice and coordination support to the Office of National Security, along with capacity-building support to the Somali security forces. It further provided infrastructure support in South-West State and information technology equipment to the Central Monitoring Department responsible for weapons and ammunition management, which will contribute to the implementation of a digitized national database that is aimed at ensuring that accounting and management systems are functioning and effective.

81. The Office for Disarmament Affairs, through its regional centres, also continued to support States, including through collaboration between the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean and the United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti on legal assistance regarding the development of a draft firearms law. The Centre also conducted assessments of armoury facilities, the findings and recommendations of which will inform further support to Haiti in 2024.

82. The Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific, which is the regional centre of the Office for Disarmament Affairs, in collaboration with the Mines Advisory Group, provided targeted assistance to the Government of Sri Lanka to enhance national capacities in managing stockpiles and promoting safe and secure accounting, storage and handling of small arms and light weapons. The assistance resulted in the construction of a container armoury, the construction of 17 weapon cabinets; and specialized training sessions for armoury storekeepers and managers, which also included a module on gender-responsive operational small arms control.

83. Support for enhanced security of small arms and light weapons storage and evidence rooms was also supported in South-Eastern and Eastern Europe by the South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons, through continued efforts to upgrade infrastructure in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, the Republic of Moldova and Serbia. A regional workshop on weapons and ammunition management held in September 2023 further reinforced the exchange of practices on stockpile management of armed forces from the Western Balkans and the Republic of Moldova.

84. For its part, UNODC assisted Member States in implementing preventive and security measures envisaged in the Firearms Protocol and other relevant instruments. Notably, it finalized the development of record-keeping software for integrated firearms registry systems in order to help States to track firearms throughout their life cycle. UNODC also conducted missions to two pilot countries, Honduras and Senegal, in order to customize the software. Furthermore, UNODC handed over a storage warehouse for seized arms and ammunition to the Niger and furnished a storage warehouse for seized and confiscated arms and ammunition in Burkina Faso.

85. WCO, under a joint project with the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) and Small Arms Survey, also supported States members of the League of Arab States through training sessions on border control, the marking and tracing of weapons and ammunition, and stockpile management and security. During the reporting period, such training included regional train-the-trainers and national firearms training sessions for the Comoros, Jordan, Lebanon and Yemen.

86. The Reference Methodology for National Weapons and Ammunition Management Baseline Assessments, published by UNIDIR⁷ and used by 15 Member States to date, continued to be a key tool used by States to assess institutions, policies and operational capacities. In 2023, Côte d'Ivoire and Somalia conducted follow-up assessments. States with experience in baseline assessments indicated that assessment

⁷ Hardy Giezendanner and Himayu Shiotani, *A Reference Methodology for National Weapons and Ammunition Management Baseline Assessments* (Geneva, UNIDIR, 2021).

results have been used for a variety of purposes, including the development of road maps and strategies, in reviewing or informing broader strategies, and in informing the adoption of procedures as well as operational capacity-building activities.

87. The United Nations continued to use the SaferGuard programme to promote the use and application of the International Ammunition Technical Guidelines. The Ammunition Management Advisory Team continued to provide technical advice and assistance in ammunition management to States, including Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Mozambique, the Republic of Moldova, Peru and Ukraine, as well as to international and regional organizations.

88. The Office for Disarmament Affairs also continued its targeted efforts for women's capacity-building, empowerment and networking in the field of ammunition management through the Women Managing Ammunition Expert Network. In the framework of the Network, the SaferGuard programme partnered with the Ministry of Defence of Austria and the Ammunition Management Advisory Team to hold an annual international training for women ammunition technical experts on the International Ammunition Technical Guidelines, which strengthens participants' knowledge on a wide range of technical ammunition management topics, while familiarizing them with the issue of gender mainstreaming and gender equality.

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

89. The United Nations continued to support gender-responsive arms control policies, programmes and actions at the global, regional and national levels.

90. At the global level, the Office for Disarmament Affairs implemented its multi-year project in support of the Programme of Action, of which gender mainstreaming is one pillar. During the reporting period, the project supported States in three regions through capacity-building and knowledge-sharing activities. The Office's regional centre in Africa held one webinar to review practices on gender-responsive actions in small arms control measures. The United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean developed and piloted a new course on small arms and gender in November 2023, in Colombia. Each of the Office's three regional centres also held joint webinars on gender mainstreaming small arms control in their respective regions, in collaboration with UNIDIR.

91. The United Nations also supported legal and policy frameworks. For instance, the South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons drafted guidelines and toolkits, including for first-line responders to assess and address the risks of the misuse of firearms in domestic violence and for gender-responsive firearm licence approval. In addition, UNODC also provided legislative advice and drafting support on gender-sensitive firearms licensing, including by giving advice on licensing criteria that prevent potential perpetrators of violence against women being given access to firearms.

92. Research and analysis were also conducted during the reporting period. The South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons is conducting analyses on institutional responses to the misuse of firearms in domestic violence as well as women's participation in the control of small arms and light weapons. Meanwhile, recent research by UNIDIR noted that, in countries with available data, approximately 70 to 90 per cent of incidents of conflict-

related sexual violence involve small arms and light weapons.⁸ The report provides options to leverage arms control and disarmament measures in conflict-related sexual violence prevention efforts, such as by integrating arms-related risks into early warning mechanisms; collecting and sharing data disaggregated by presence of weapons; and considering the risks when making decisions about arms transfers.

93. UNIDIR research also shows that women still only account for a small percentage of people working in technical roles relating to weapons and ammunition management.⁹ In most disarmament forums, including those related to small arms and light weapons, men largely outnumber women.¹⁰ In order to better understand what works to improve women's participation, UNIDIR published a report entitled "Best practices for gender equality in conventional arms control: survey results", in which it found that targeted practices such as gender equality directives in public administration and gender-sensitive communication can have a positive impact.¹¹

K. Youth mainstreaming

94. The Office for Disarmament Affairs has made significant headway in facilitating the meaningful participation of young people. During the reporting period, briefings conducted by young leaders were included in several meetings and events, including the regional preparatory meetings for the upcoming fourth Review Conference. Youth speakers also contributed towards training projects and outreach initiatives conducted under the Office's flagship youth outreach programme, Youth for Disarmament. Efforts were made to identify and highlight the linkages between small arms and light weapons control and the advancement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly with respect to illicit arms flows.

95. The Office for Disarmament Affairs also organized creative activities to engage young people on issues related to small arms and light weapons. In 2023, in partnership with IM Swedish Development Partner, the Office organized two workshops with several young people to design their own artworks representing peace, using pastels created from smelted down firearms.

96. Furthermore, on International Youth Day, on 12 August, the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean organized a social media campaign that presented the youth leaders from Latin America of the Leaders for Tomorrow, an initiative of the Youth for Disarmament programme, to showcase the relevance of youth as agents of change.

L. Crime prevention and criminal justice

97. The United Nations continued its assistance to States to prevent and combat the illicit trafficking in small arms, their components and ammunition, in particular through the strengthening of institutional capacities and criminal justice responses.

⁸ Hana Salama, "Addressing weapons in conflict-related sexual violence: the arms control and disarmament toolbox", UNIDIR, 2023.

⁹ Hana Salama and Emma Bjertén-Günther, *Women Managing Weapons: Perspectives for Increasing Women's Meaningful Participation in Weapons and Ammunition Management* (Geneva, UNIDIR, 2021).

¹⁰ UNIDIR Gender and Disarmament Hub. Available at <https://unidir.org/tools/gender-disarmament-hub/>.

¹¹ Renata Hessmann Dalaqua, Manaved Nambiar and Hana Salama, "Best practices for gender equality in conventional arms control: survey results", UNIDIR, 2023.

98. For instance, UNODC expanded its assistance to 31 countries in Africa, Central Asia, Eastern and South-East Europe, and Latin America and the Caribbean, with regard to legislative and policy development, preventive and security measures, criminal justice responses, and international cooperation and information exchange, as well as the monitoring of illicit firearms flows and emerging threats. That assistance included the provision of legislative advice and drafting support for the strengthening of firearms control regimes and legislation regarding criminal offences related to firearms criminality, and the delivery of more than 30 specialized workshops and training courses in the detection, identification and classification of firearms, crime scene management, electronic evidence, investigative techniques and firearms tracing, data collection, international cooperation and information exchange.

99. Assistance to countries in Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean to promote more advanced forms of international cooperation on complex firearms trafficking cases, including through the establishment of joint investigative teams and contact groups, showed results: national authorities established joint investigative teams or informal contact groups and opened transnational investigations against trafficking networks.

100. In order to bolster criminal justice responses against the illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms, their parts and components and ammunition, UNODC also developed a manual on detecting firearms using X-ray technology and launched a global capacity-building toolkit, entitled “Guidelines on the Investigation and Prosecution of Firearms Offences”. The Guidelines are currently being customized for the Western Balkans and the Caribbean.

101. With the support of UNODC, two law enforcement operations tackling firearms trafficking and related forms of crime were organized in Africa (Operation KAFO IV) and Latin America (Operation Armstrong, jointly organized with the European Multidisciplinary Platform against Criminal Threats of the European Union), involving more than 2,300 officers from 11 countries.

102. In addition, INTERPOL continued to support law enforcement authorities through the provision of specialized training to over 400 officers, including on firearms identification, tracing, trafficking and related investigations. In November 2023, during the first INTERPOL operation coordinated across Asia against illicit small arms and light weapons, authorities in 10 countries made over 1,700 arrests and seized 714 firearms, 921 parts and components, and 45,383 rounds of ammunition. Furthermore, INTERPOL and UNODC collaboration enabled follow-up on judicial cases emanating from their Trigger operations. In the Western Balkans, UNODC supported national institutions in countering the threat of firearms trafficking by way of postal and express courier parcels, through capacity-building efforts.

103. Meanwhile, the South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons supported the capacity development of key institutions in the Western Balkans for combating arms trafficking through technical-level regional platforms such as the Regional Meeting of the Border Police and Customs Representatives, the meeting of the Criminal Police Services process, the annual workshop for firearms focal points from the Western Balkans, the Republic of Moldova and the European Union, and the regional workshop on crime scene investigations.

104. Comprehensive support in the form of provision of equipment for the border police services of Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia saw significant progress in 2023. In addition, all jurisdictions in the Western Balkans developed standard operating procedures with the support of the South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons. Furthermore, cooperation with the European Border and Coast Guard Agency

(Frontex) resulted in the development and distribution of the regional Western Balkans version of the “Handbook on Firearms for Border Guards and Customs”, accompanied by Firearms Detection Training for Border and Customs officials from six jurisdictions in the Western Balkans.

M. Counter-terrorism

105. Contributing to the prevention of the illicit flow of small arms and light weapons to terrorists remains a priority for the United Nations. In a spirit of “all-of-United Nations” cooperation, the Office of Counter-Terrorism and the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate continued to intensify joint efforts to enhance the capacities of Member States in preventing, detecting and countering the traffic of small arms and light weapons and their illicit supply to terrorists, through the facilitation and delivery of training and expert workshops.

106. During the reporting period, the Office of Counter-Terrorism, the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate and UNIDIR promoted and operationalized technical guidelines for the implementation of Security Council resolution [2370 \(2017\)](#) and related international standards and good practices on preventing terrorists from acquiring weapons, including small arms and light weapons, improvised explosive device components and unmanned aircraft systems through regional workshops in East Africa and the Sahel.

107. Furthermore, the Office of Counter-Terrorism and UNODC, in collaboration with the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate and the Office for Disarmament Affairs, enhanced the capacities of States in Central Asia by providing technical assistance, legislative workshops, inter-institutional cooperation workshops, training, meetings and the establishment of a community of practitioners, through the regional implementation of the joint Office of Counter-Terrorism-UNODC project on the terrorism-arms-crime nexus in Central Asia.

108. Through its assessments conducted on behalf of the Counter-Terrorism Committee, the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate identified the need to bolster national capacities to detect, investigate, prosecute and adjudicate cases of trafficking and to develop national firearms registers so as to increase the efficiency of the traceability of small arms and light weapons combined with the systematic use of the INTERPOL Illicit Arms Records and Tracing Management System. The Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate actively facilitates the delivery of technical assistance by sharing its recommendations related to small arms and light weapons with Global Compact entities.