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**Integrated and coordinated implementation of and
follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations
conferences and summits in the economic, social and
related fields**

**Security Council
Seventieth year**

**Letter dated 9 December 2015 from the Permanent Representatives
of Angola and Lithuania to the United Nations addressed to the
Secretary-General**

We have the honour to transmit herewith the summary of the Co-Chairs of the informal Arria-formula meeting of the Security Council, held at United Nations Headquarters on 30 November 2015, on the impact of the illicit transfer of small arms and light weapons on poaching in Africa (see annex).

We should be grateful if you would circulate the present letter and its annex as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 15, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Ismael Abraão **Gaspar Martins**
Permanent Representative of Angola to the United Nations

(Signed) Raimonda **Murmokaitė**
Permanent Representative of Lithuania to the United Nations



Annex to the letter dated 9 December 2015 from the Permanent Representatives of Angola and Lithuania to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Summary of the informal Arrria-formula meeting of the Security Council on the impact of the illicit transfer of small arms and light weapons on poaching in Africa^a

On 30 November 2015, the Permanent Missions of Lithuania and Angola to the United Nations organized an Arrria-formula meeting of the Security Council on the impact of the illicit transfer of small arms and light weapons on poaching in Africa.

The meeting was co-chaired by the Permanent Representative of Lithuania, Raimonda Murmokaitė, and the Permanent Representative of Angola, Ismael A. Gaspar Martins. The following speakers addressed the meeting: Chief Warden of Virunga National Park in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Emmanuel de Merode; senior researcher at the Small Arms Survey and co-author of the article entitled “In the line of fire: elephant and rhino poaching in Africa”, Khristopher Carlson; and Coordinator of the Global Programme for Combating Wildlife and Forest Crime at the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Jorge Rios. Representatives of all Member States, international organizations and civil society were invited to attend and make statements.

Objective

The aim of the meeting was to expose the linkages between illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons and poaching. It also presented an opportunity for Member States, in particular those directly affected by poaching, to outline reasons why poaching fuelled by illicit trade in arms should be considered a threat to peace and stability and to suggest how the Security Council should contribute to tackling the threat.

Background

The decline of wildlife populations in Africa has escalated in recent years, with poaching being the key reason behind the trend. Over 100,000 African elephants have been poached during the past three years alone. With the street-market value of rhino horn reportedly at \$65,000 per kg, surpassing that of gold, profits have attracted armed groups, international criminal networks, commercial poaching syndicates, rogue military personnel and others, contributing to a thriving international illicit trade. Even when situated in protected areas, wildlife populations remain vulnerable, and park rangers themselves have fallen victim to attacks by armed groups. In some national parks, 10 to 15 groups of poachers might be operating at any given time. In Africa, close to 30 rangers lost their lives in 2014, with nearly 80 per cent of them killed by poachers. The number of ranger deaths is even higher in Asia.

^a The summary was prepared by the Co-Chairs under their own responsibility and reflects their interpretation of the main points under discussion. It does not represent a full record of all the issues discussed, nor should it be seen as reflecting the consensus view of States on any of the specific points covered.

Poaching does not just threaten entire ecosystems but also degrades habitats, corrupts officials, undermines rule-of-law structures and causes the loss of tax and tourist revenue in countries that can least afford it.

Small arms and light weapons — ranging from expensive and sophisticated hunting rifles to military-style weapons available for as little as \$60 apiece — are the principal tools used by poachers to kill wildlife and target protection officers. Helicopters, unmanned aircraft and other types of advanced technology, such as night recognition devices, are also employed. Firearms are often illicitly trafficked or introduced as temporary imports and subsequently diverted to the black market. They are seldom registered and are thus difficult to trace.

In a number of resolutions, such as resolution 2220 (2015) on small arms, the Security Council has recognized the link between the illegal exploitation of and trade in natural resources and the proliferation and trafficking of arms and its role as a major factor fuelling and exacerbating many conflicts. Country-specific resolutions, such as those on the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, also contain references to the exploitation of natural resources, wildlife trafficking and poaching.

In his report on Central Africa (S/2013/297), the Secretary-General concluded that poaching and its potential linkages to other criminal, even terrorist, activities constitute a grave menace to sustainable peace and security in Central Africa. In July 2015, the General Assembly unanimously adopted resolution 69/314 on tackling illicit trafficking in wildlife and, inter alia, requested the Secretary-General to report to it at its seventieth session on the global status of illicit trafficking in wildlife, including poaching and illegal trade.

Key messages

During the discussion, the speakers, members of the Security Council and other participants highlighted the following principal points:

(a) The detrimental effects of poaching are manifold: on the one hand, it is a major source of financial revenue for armed groups that fosters further growth of criminality and illegal activities; on the other hand, it weakens State authority and increases the corruption of government officials, undermining trust in State institutions and increasing the risk of civil unrest;

(b) The fight against poaching needs to be seen through a wider rule-of-law perspective. Such an approach was supported by affected countries, which stressed the need to strengthen the application of national environmental laws and underlined the importance of strategies and plans developed by local governments;

(c) It is no less important, however, to understand that poaching is a “two-way activity” driven by supply and demand. Thus action is needed on both sides, including in end-user countries for trafficked wildlife as well as in arms exporting countries;

(d) There can be no “one-size-fits-all” approach against poaching since there are major differences among those who engage in such illicit activities, including organized criminal groups, rogue military or state security officers, international criminal networks and local subsistence or meat hunters;

(e) At times, poachers target a protected species not because of direct profits, but in order to stop Governments from protecting the habitats of that species, which could then be exploited for profit (e.g., killing gorillas in the Virunga National Park in order to obtain access to its natural resources);

(f) The types of weapons and ammunition used for poaching vary greatly, from craft-made or old refurbished weapons to military-style firearms, such as AK-47s, to more sophisticated and expensive hunting rifles;

(g) The sources of weapons also vary, as small-scale poachers typically purchase the weapons on the domestic black market or through local production, whereas for armed groups, diversion is the primary method, mostly through seizures of State or even peacekeeping stocks, financial transactions or covert donations;

(h) The tracking of weapons used by poachers and subsequent identification of sources is a major challenge. Weapons found at poaching sites are not systematically identified, recorded or traced;

(i) In countries such as the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan, armed groups are operating on a scale beyond the reach of traditional law enforcement, while some countries are increasingly militarizing their response;

(j) Park protection officers are underprotected, underequipped and insufficiently trained to combat poachers. Proper equipment, mentoring programmes and special training are needed, yet long-term positive change is unlikely as long as poaching remains a “high profit/low risk” activity;

(k) In countries such as the Central African Republic, effective patrolling and anti-poaching operations are further hampered by the lack of weapons available to park personnel;

(l) UNODC indicated that it is engaged in its first global wildlife crime research project to better understand the scale of trafficking. The report, due to be issued in May 2016, will look at several of the most highly traded species and products from species protected under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, including caviar, parrots, pangolins, ivory, reptile skins, marine turtles, apes, bear bile, rhino horn, deer musk and big cat skins.

Suggested action

The following courses of action were identified by the speakers as a way forward in tackling poaching and the illicit arms transfers that fuel it:

(a) Supporting Governments in building their capacities to combat poaching by providing more training and equipment to park protection officers;

(b) Raising awareness and bringing international attention to the issue;

(c) Ensuring that all United Nations actors, including peacekeeping operations, do more and coordinate their efforts in fighting poaching and illicit trafficking in arms;

(d) Making better use of instruments available to the Security Council, in particular the inclusion of poaching-related activities among the designation criteria for sanctions measures;

(e) Encouraging the human security approach and emphasizing the importance of working with local communities to minimize threats that civilians face owing to increasing militarization of poaching and anti-poaching activities;

(f) Prioritizing efforts aimed at long-term solutions, such as tackling corruption, building responsible governance structures based on the rule of law, improving the implementation of existing environmental laws and ensuring accountability for wildlife crimes;

(g) Criminalizing poaching and related offences as serious crimes in a manner consistent with the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocol on firearms;

(h) Increasing regional and subregional cooperation in disrupting the smuggling of protected species through law enforcement and intelligence cooperation, including joint operations, information sharing, communication protocols or even cross-border relocation of animals to ensure their safety;

(i) Significantly improving capabilities to collect information about weapons and ammunition found at poaching sites to enable better identification of countries of origin, establishing patterns of diversion and detecting where trafficking in wildlife and weapons intersect;

(j) Strengthening preventive arms control measures, such as marking and record keeping, import and export control systems, stockpile and ammunition management, marking and tracing weapons and sharing technologies;

(k) Realizing the potential of existing instruments related to combating the illicit arms trade and, in particular, the Arms Trade Treaty, which, when universalized, will become a crucial tool in tackling both illicit cross-border arms flows as well as diversions from government stockpiles.

Conclusion

It is the view of the Co-Chairs that most interventions at the meeting reaffirmed the link between the security and stability of some countries or even whole regions and the poaching activities that are facilitated by illegal arms transfers. It is our belief that the Security Council should increase the attention it dedicates to this issue both in country-specific situations and horizontally. We also consider that a meeting in a formal Security Council setting with a concrete outcome would be beneficial and hope that members of the Security Council will undertake to do so in the near future.