



PARLIAMENTARY FORUM
ON SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS



Recommendations from the Parliamentary Seminar Controlling Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons in Transitional Contexts – Challenges and Opportunities for Middle East and North African States (MENA), meeting in Erbil, Iraqi Kurdistan Region May 27-28, 2012

Parliamentarians from the Iraqi Council of Representatives, the Jordan National Assembly, the Palestinian Legislative Council, the Parliament of Morocco, the Kurdistan Regional Parliament Iraq and the Swedish Parliament meeting in Erbil, for the second Regional Meeting of the MENA Region of the Parliamentary Forum, express great appreciation to the Council of Iraq, the Kurdistan Regional Parliament, the Parliamentary Forum on Small Arms and Light Weapons and the European Technology and Training Centre in Erbil for hosting the seminar.

Globally, more than 1000 people die each day of gunshots and three times as many are severely injured. No country is immune against violence by small arms and light weapons (SALW). For many states in the MENA region, human security is becoming an urgent preoccupation and a growing challenge. The increasing number of small arms in circulation is a threat to individuals and communities in everyday life. There is an estimation of 50-90 million SALW in the region, of which 80 per cent are in the hands of the civilian population. During transitional periods, parliamentarians hold the unique position of being able to address the complexity of the small arms proliferation and its impact on democratic development.

There are several reasons for the increased proliferation of SALW in the region. In many countries, the state is unable to provide security as a common good, which is encouraging individuals to arm themselves. The region has experienced break downs of state and security institutions, leading to substantial proliferation of military arms. The invasion of Iraq in 2003 resulted in an estimate diversion of more than 7 million fire arms into the hands of individuals and non-state actors. The revolution in Libya has resulted in extensive proliferation into North and West Africa. Other reasons are ineffective stockpile management of arms and ammunition, governments providing arms to non-state actors and unsatisfactory border controls. The seminar recognized with concern that the proliferation of arms cannot be addressed as a domestic issue alone, but requires international cooperation.

Parliamentarians have a key role in all aspects of the multi-dimensional approach needed to address the complex proliferation of SALW. The MENA region has several ongoing conflicts, which increases the risks and proliferation of small arms and requires committed efforts by the international community for preventive diplomacy and to uphold international law.

Parliamentarians meeting in Erbil, concerned with the violence associated with the proliferation of SALW in the region and consequences that proliferation has, had the opportunity to discuss some of the areas where there is need for a stronger parliamentary approach. We address the following recommendations to our fellow Parliamentarians and Governments:

- We reaffirm the declaration from the first MENA meeting of the Parliamentary Forum, in cooperation with the House of Representatives of Cyprus, held in February 2011 and recognize that many of the recommendations await implementation.

- We recognize the importance of exchange between Parliamentarians on how to address the proliferation of small arms to support each other to fully utilize all the instruments available to us to take the responsibility needed and speed up the regulation of the civilian possession of small arms.
- We encourage Governments and fellow Parliamentarians to increase effort to reach bilateral and international agreements to improve and tighten border control, aiming at stopping the illicit transfer of arms. We see the need to harmonize and strengthen legislation to integrate domestic, regional and international instruments on SALW into national legislation and reduce smuggling.
- We urge Governments in the region to enhance the stockpile management of small arms, including comprehensive inventorying, accounting, physical security and the post-manufacture marking of security force weapons.
- We recognize the important and unique responsibility of women in peace making and the democratization of societies in transition, as is pointed out in UN Security Council Resolution 1325. To better make use of this potential, we request improved analysis and data sharing on the role of women in armed violence, including impacts and their function as peace makers. We also promote improved capacity building for women, support for the advocacy role of women and the strengthening of women's networks.
- We see the need for improved cooperation with civil society organizations, including religious leaders and in particular in post-conflict countries.
- We endorse the Policy Statement on Privatization of the Security Sector issued by the Extra Assembly of the Parliamentary Forum in October 2007 and stress the importance of regulating training and contextual awareness of private security personnel. The Private Security Sector needs to be regulated to the same high standards desired of state security institutions.
- We welcome that the international community, with the negotiations of the Arms Trade Treaty and the Review Conference of the UN Programme of Action (UNPoA) in 2012, has become more conscious of the impact of the arms trade. With the political changes in the region, now more than ever, the proliferation and illicit trade of SALW has to be limited and the number of arms reduced.
- We urge Governments to submit their national reports to the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) within the framework of the UNPoA.
- We sturdily promote a strong and comprehensive Arm Trade Treaty (ATT), which includes SALW and ammunition in its scope, in order to improve the oversight control and supervision of the international arms trade. We note, in particular, the role of an ATT in promoting supplier state responsibility not to transfer or re-transfer arms to governments that violate Human Rights, supply arms to non-state actors or have ineffective stockpile management system.
- We ask governments to consider establishing national commissions on SALW, as a first step to developing and implementing national SALW controls, as outlined in the UNPoA.
- We call for a stronger presence of Parliamentarians in national delegations to international, regional and sub-regional conferences for negotiations related to the small arms agenda.

- We promise each other and ourselves to increase our efforts for awareness rising about the consequences of SALW related violence in order to promote a culture of non-violent resolution of conflicts in society. We particularly stress the need to make children aware of the danger of SALW.