



PARLIAMENTARY FORUM
ON SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS

Policy Statement on Sustainable Development Goal 16 of the 2030 Agenda

Board of the Parliamentary Forum on Small Arms and Light Weapons, meeting on the 19th of August, 2016

The proliferation and use of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) constitutes an obstacle to development and human security globally. Armed violence caused by the proliferation and misuse of SALW has widespread human, economic and social costs. The Sustainable Development Goals in the Agenda 2030 are integrated and indivisible, and their implementation thereby mutually dependent. As armed violence has a negative impact on many development aspects, SDG16 is not only a crucial goal in itself, but the reduction and prevention of armed violence is a necessity if the Agenda 2030 is to succeed by 2030. Based on their legislative, oversight and awareness-raising roles, Parliamentarians are crucial in the work for armed violence reduction and prevention and for the national ownership in the implementation of Agenda 2030.

Armed violence results in more than half a million deaths every year, and over 40 per cent are estimated to be caused by Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW).¹ Today, 875 million SALW are estimated to circulate worldwide, and 75 per cent of these are in civilian hands.² Apart from causing injury and loss of life, armed violence has severe effects on development, good governance and contributes to the persistence of armed conflict. Further, it facilitates violations of human rights and impedes economic investment, having a negative impact on public health systems and productivity levels by draining public resources away from education and socio-economic development. The proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons also has a direct or indirect effect on women as victims of gender-based or domestic violence, increasing the levels of violence.

On 25 September 2015 the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted 17 new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with the ambitious overall objective to “free the human race from the tyranny of poverty (...) and to heal and secure our planet”.³ Unprecedentedly, SDG16 aims to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.⁴ The adoption of an SDG on the reduction of armed violence signals a consensus within the international community that peace and security is a precondition for development. Goal 16 and specifically target 4 “to significantly reduce illicit financial and arms flows”⁵, acknowledges that the proliferation and misuse of Small Arms and Light Weapons and armed violence are obstacles to sustainable development.

¹ Global Burden of Armed Violence 2015: Every Body Counts, Executive Summary, <http://www.genevadeclaration.org/measurability/global-burden-of-armed-violence/gbav-2015/executive-summary.html>

² Small Arms Survey 2015, <http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/weapons-and-markets/stockpiles.html>

³ UN General Assembly, “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, A/RES/70/1, October 21, 2015, p. 25, http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/1&Lang=E

⁴ UN General Assembly, A/RES/70/1, p. 25

⁵ *Ibidem*



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The Sustainable Development Goals are the successors of the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) adopted in 2000, which addressed “extreme poverty in its many dimensions - income poverty, hunger, disease, lack of adequate shelter, and exclusion - while promoting gender equality, education, and environmental sustainability.”⁶ Significant progress has been made within all eight MDGs but challenges still remain.

In the Parliamentary Forum’s Policy Statement on SALW-related violence and the Millennium Development Goals from 2012, it was concluded that armed violence severely impeded the implementation of the MDGs. The Policy Statement emphasized the lack of a specific goal on peace and security, and the inclusion of such a goal in the post-2015 framework was promoted. The Forum is therefore very pleased to find SDG16 within the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable development, as it provides a clear international goal and point of departure on the issue of armed violence and SALW proliferation. The Parliamentary Forum has been successful in supporting action within arms control instruments such as the Arms Trade Treaty and the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade of Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (UNPoA).

As pointed out repeatedly in the Reports of the UN Secretary General on Small Arms , the issue of armed violence can however not be addressed with arms control measures alone, but need to be part of a wider spectrum of policy solutions in which security, crime, human rights, health and development intersect.⁷ The Forum will therefore have the implementation of Goal 16 and the 2030 Agenda as a main guideline for its upcoming work, while drawing from its experiences of working towards implementation of the ATT and the UNPoA.

The UN Resolution on the 2030 Agenda explicitly states that “sustainable development cannot be realized without peace and security; and peace and security will be at risk without sustainable development”.⁸ In the 2015 UN Report on the MDGs it was admitted that conflicts remain the biggest threat to human development.⁹ However, SALW-related violence does not only have an adverse effect in conflict countries, and the vast majority of violent deaths occur outside of armed conflicts. Armed violence caused by the proliferation and misuse of SALW hinders sustainable development globally. In light of the global impact of armed violence is it imperative that SDG16 not only focuses on negative peace defined as absence of conflict, but aims towards creating societies where all people have the opportunity to “lead peaceful and fulfilling lives, free from violent conflict and insecurity”.¹⁰

⁶ Millennium Project, “What they are”, Millennium Project, 2006, <http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/goals/>

⁷ UN Security Council, “Small arms and Light Weapons: Report of the Secretary-General”, S/2015/289, April 27, 2015, http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2015/289

⁸ UN General Assembly, A/RES/70/1, p. 9

⁹ Wu Hongbo, “The Millennium Development Goals Report 2015”, New York: United Nations, 2015, [http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/2015_MDG_Report/pdf/MDG%202015%20rev%20\(July%201\).pdf](http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/2015_MDG_Report/pdf/MDG%202015%20rev%20(July%201).pdf)

¹⁰ Attree, Larry, Möller-Loswick, Anna, “Goal 16—Ensuring Peace in the Post-2015 Framework: Adoption, Implementation and Monitoring”, *UN Chronicle*, April, 2015, <http://unchronicle.un.org/article/goal-16-ensuring-peace-post-2015-framework-adoption-implementation-and-monitoring/>



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The indicator on SALW proliferation for target 16.4 is “percentage of seized small arms and light weapons that are recorded and traced, in accordance with international standards and legal instruments”.¹¹ The Forum welcomes this indicator as a first step towards establishing a consolidated and much needed information platform to measure and identify issues and subsequent policies to reduce the illicit flow of arms, as it concerns adherence to international instruments such as the ATT, the UNPoA and the International Tracing Instrument (ITI).

The indicator reiterates the importance of continued work for the signing, ratification and implementation of the ATT, and the implementation of the UNPoA. However, it needs to be made clearer by the relevant UN agencies and working groups how this indicator can be used as basis for specific action towards reducing and preventing the illicit flow of arms. Furthermore, as pointed out by Small Arms Survey, “no single indicator would cater for the fully required measurability, but a combination of several (...) indicators can be useful for monitoring results at the national level”.¹² Measuring seized SALW only demonstrates part of the problem, and seized weapons could be both legal, illegal, and/or temporarily seized. This indicator should thereby be complemented by additional ones when appropriate in order for progress within target 16.4 to be measured and followed-up successfully. In this respect, parliamentarians have the possibility and responsibility to contribute and influence the development and use of indicators at the national, regional and international level by means of awareness raising, allocating the necessary budgets, passing laws and overseeing the government to have a more comprehensive approach to the use of indicators. The indicators established by the 2030 Agenda should be the starting point of measure, rather than the ultimate implementation level.

The Secretary-General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) argues that parliamentarians have a powerful role to play in the implementation of the SDGs “by ratifying international agreements, passing budgets and legislation, monitoring their implementation and ensuring government is accountable to the people.”¹³ The role of the Parliamentary Forum is to translate the global policies and goals to the political language of parliamentarians, and connect them to the national level, where parliamentarians affect implementation through their legislative, over-sight and awareness raising roles.

The costs of implementing the SDGs are estimated to lay “in the trillions of dollars”¹⁴, which means that sufficient national budget allocations are critical to success. Parliamentarians need to advocate for comprehensive national implementation plans and make sure that budgets are aligned accordingly. The work done by the Parliamentary Forum on SALW can contribute to create a common understanding on SALW as a development obstacle and thereby facilitate regional harmonization of legislation aimed at

¹¹ UN Economic and Social Council, “Report of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators”, E/CN.3/2016/2, December 17, 2015, p. 35, <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/47th-session/documents/2016-2-IAEG-SDGs-E.pdf>

¹² Small arms survey, “Reducing Illicit Arms Flows and New Development Agenda”, March 2015, http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/fileadmin/docs/H-Research_Notes/SAS-Research-Note-50.pdf

¹³ Chungong, Martin, “Politics must change to build the world we want”, *Inter-parliamentary Union*, August 28, 2015, <http://www.ipu.org/english/news2.htm>

¹⁴ Sustainable Development Goals, “The Sustainable Development Agenda: Frequently Asked Questions”, *United Nations*, <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/development-agenda/>



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promoting implementation of SDG16. Based on previous experiences, there is a risk that discussions on international mechanisms for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda will lack a parliamentary component. Parliamentarians need to take part in the initial discussions and information-sharing, as to secure the necessary level of understanding and involvement to guarantee implementation.

Objectives

The Board of the Parliamentary Forum on Small Arms and Light Weapons, meeting on the 19th of August, 2016;

Welcomes the inclusion of SDG16 in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

Reaffirms that the availability and misuse of SALW constitutes a development obstacle;

Emphasizes that armed violence has an impact on the 2030 Agenda as a whole;

Recognizes the need to develop additional indicators for measuring progress within target 16.4;

Calls on parliamentarians to work with and urge their governments to act towards a more comprehensive set of indicators, complementing those already included in the 2030 Agenda;

Stresses the importance to unify and strengthen all efforts, including financing opportunities to implement and reach the Goals by its deadline 2030 in order to guarantee higher levels of human development, security and human rights;

Recognizes the importance of the legislative, oversight and awareness-raising roles of parliamentarians for the implementation of SDG16;

Reiterates the importance of signing, ratifying and implementing the ATT and the advancement of the commitments under the UNPoA;

Urges its members and all parliamentarians to ensure that reaching the Sustainable Development Goals is on the top of the political agenda of their countries and that the interrelations between armed violence and human development are adequately addressed within the policy, legislative and budget work of their respective parliaments;

Calls on parliamentarians to make sure that legislation and budget allocations align with the national sustainable development strategies;

Mandates the Forum, its Members, and the Secretariat to undertake all necessary efforts towards the implementation of the Agenda 2030, SDG16, and in particular target 16.4.