



PARLIAMENTARY FORUM
ON SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS



SWEDISH INSTITUTE
ALEXANDRIA

Regional Meeting for Middle East, North Africa and the Horn of Africa

“Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons – Responsibilities, Challenges and Opportunities for the Middle East, North Africa and the Horn of Africa”

Alexandria, Egypt, May 26-27, 2016
Swedish Institute Alexandria

Organized by the Parliamentary Forum on Small Arms and Light Weapons and the Swedish Institute Alexandria





Executive summary

The illicit trade and proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) compose a real obstacle to human security and sustainable development in the Middle East, North Africa and the Horn of Africa. The Sustainable Development Goal 16 (SDG16) on peace, justice and strong institutions presents a unique opportunity for working against SALW. Based on the legislative, awareness-raising and oversight roles, parliamentarians have a central role in the implementation of SDG16. The participation of women in armed violence prevention and reduction, and the implementation of the UN Programme of Action on SALW (UNPoA) and the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) are imperative for lasting peace and security in the region. Considering the human, social and economic costs caused by armed conflicts and extremist groups, parliamentarians and other relevant actors need to have a clear determination to find solutions to the violence in the region.

These are the main conclusions from a regional seminar in Alexandria, Egypt on 26 and 27 May 2016 organized by the Parliamentary Forum on SALW and the Swedish Institute Alexandria. During two productive days, parliamentarians and representatives from international organizations and civil society exchanged knowledge and discussed how parliamentarians can contribute to the reduction and prevention of armed violence and SALW proliferation in the Middle East, North Africa and the Horn of Africa.

Participation

A total of 18 people participated including; 6 Members of Parliament from Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco and Palestine; representatives from UNDP, the League of Arab States, Danish Demining Group (DDG), Women and Development Foundation, El Karama, Permanent Peace Movement, the Parliamentary Forum on SALW and the Swedish Institute Alexandria.

Opening and welcome

In the opening session of the seminar, Ms Karin Olofsson, General Secretary of the Parliamentary Forum on SALW and Mr Peter Weiderud, Director of the Swedish Institute Alexandria, welcomed the participants to the seminar and introduced their





respective organisations. The agenda for the upcoming sessions was presented and Ms Olofsson and Mr Weiderud gave an introduction to the human, social and economic costs of SALW and the role of parliamentarians in violence prevention and reduction.

Session I: Overview of the context in the region – with focus on Peace, Security and armed violence reduction and prevention - Mr Fadi Abi Allam, President, Permanent Peace Movement, Lebanon

Mr Fadi Abi Allam gave an overview of the context in the region in terms of peace and security. He touched upon several challenges in the region, including terrorist attacks, gender-based violence, piracy, environmental challenges, and lack of security. All of these issues contribute to undermining human rights, security and development. SALW are readily available in many countries in the region, and there is widespread tradition of viewing the possession of SALW as a means to achieve personal security. Mr Allam emphasized the importance of enabling a culture of peace and respect and of implementing the ATT in the region. The importance of the rule of law, education and dialogue between actors was emphasized. In terms of different actor's roles in violence prevention and reduction, Mr Allam highlighted the inclusion of civil society and the legislative role of parliamentarians. In wrapping up the presentation, Mr Allam noted the necessity of implementing UN Resolution 1325 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the new 2030 Agenda.

MP Basem Shabb from Lebanon made a parliamentary intervention, reiterating the necessity of a sense of peace, security and rule of law for being able to implement legislation that is introduced by Parliaments. MP Shabb commented on the importance of participation by civil society and moderate religious figures in fighting the problem of SALW, and on the necessity of proper oversight of gun licenses. He also noted the inability of the Parliament in Lebanon to fulfil its role, reflecting a general problem in the region of varying influence and oversight by Parliaments. This was a topic about which discussions arose at several points throughout the seminar.

During the ensuing parliamentary discussion, several important issues related to SALW proliferation in the region were brought up. Women's participation in conflict resolution and in Parliaments, and the importance of allocating budget to the implementation of the SDGs was highlighted, reflecting the upcoming thematic foci of the seminar. Additional points were made related to the necessity of finding diplomatic solutions to the illicit trafficking of arms and the responsibility of Western countries exporting arms. Furthermore, several of the participants made reference to the Arab-Israeli conflict and its consequences for peace and political stability.

Session II: The Role of Women in armed violence reduction and prevention - Ms Hibaaq Osman, Founder and CEO, El-Karama Egypt



Ms Hibaaq Osman offered her valuable expertise about the role of women in armed violence reduction and prevention. In her presentation Ms Osman highlighted how men and women are differently affected by armed violence, with men being more likely to die from fighting while women are disproportionately affected by the indirect effects of conflicts and armed violence. She gave a short overview of UN Security Council Resolution 1325, and subsequent relevant resolutions, explaining their content and importance. Key points about the indirect effects of conflicts that women suffer included domestic and sexual violence, and Ms Osman highlighted the necessity of more countries adopting national action plans for the implementation of Resolution 1325, and the importance of political will. The fact that women's representation and participation increases human security was also noted, an example being that peace-agreements from processes in which women have been involved are more likely to last. The role of parliamentarians in the implementation of Resolution 1325 and in mobilizing resources was highlighted.

MP Sahar Qawasmi from Palestine, Board Member of the Parliamentary Forum, reiterated that Resolution 1325 is a mechanism for creating more peaceful societies and ultimately a resolution to eliminate war.

All participants agreed that implementing Resolution 1325 is vital, and emphasised the importance of education for moderation and gender equality. The issues with Resolution 1325 were also touched upon, including the lack of time tables, deadlines and quotas for women's representation. The issue of resistance in some parts of the region to the inclusion of women in processes during wars was also raised. In concluding the session, the participants noted that in order to build healthy societies, women must be part of the everyday problems and the development of the country. The necessity of thinking outside of the box in order to increase women's participation was highlighted.



Session III: Agenda 2030, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 16) - The Role of Parliamentarians - Mr Jos De La Haye, Regional Cluster Leader for Governance and Peacebuilding for UNDP's Bureau for Policy and Programme Support



PARLIAMENTARY FORUM ON SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS



SWEDISH INSTITUTE
ALEXANDRIA

Mr Jos De La Haye gave a comprehensive presentation about the role of Parliaments and parliamentarians in implementing SDG16 within the 2030 Agenda. Mr De La Haye explained how SDG16 “is often referred to the glue of the other SDGs”. Working for more peaceful and inclusive societies with accountable institutions is key for implementing the 2030 Agenda as a whole.



Parliamentarians have a central role to play in implementation through allocation of funds, oversight of the government, introducing new legislation, ratifying international treaties and through their relationship with civil society. Parliamentarians both represent and are accountable to their respective constituencies, and are important actors in the formation of national ownership of the SDGs and in ensuring accountability in the

implementation process. The importance of parliamentarians working together, for example through parliamentary groups, was highlighted. Mr De La Haye also emphasized some of the challenges to successful implementation in the Arab region, ranging from low inclusiveness, unequal distribution of resources, and limited institutional access, to lack of integration of women in political processes. Challenges that Parliaments face in fulfilling their legislative and oversight roles were also highlighted, including weak capacities and lack of resources. This observation shines light upon the need to empower Parliaments to fulfil their important roles in ensuring human security and sustainable development.

MP Shant Chinchinian from Lebanon explained the conditions under which the Lebanese Parliament works and how the situation affects the accomplishment of different goals. For example the Parliament struggles in holding the Government accountable, which is undermining the oversight function in relation SDG implementation. MP Shabb emphasized the importance of increased cooperation between the Parliament and NGOs in enhancing implementation of the SDGs.

In the discussions, other participants concurred with the observations made about the work of the Parliament in Lebanon, perceiving similarities in their own countries. Meanwhile, the importance of also acknowledging the opportunities for parliamentary work was noted. Enhancing implementation of the SDGs on the community level was also pinpointed as vital.



Day 2

Session I: International instruments and treaties to prevent and reduce armed violence - how can Parliamentarians contribute to the implementation? - Mr Fadi Abi Allam, President, Permanent Peace Movement in Lebanon

Mr Fadi Abi Allam gave an overview of the violence in the region and how the proliferation and use of SALW is connected to various other issues, such as trafficking and gender-based violence. Mr



Allam emphasised the importance of implementing the UNPoA, and of the upcoming Sixth Biennial Meeting of States (BMS6) about the UNPoA in New York as an opportunity to discuss the challenges and opportunities ahead. He pinpointed the importance of the progress within the ATT and called for ratification by all countries. Mr Allam brought up the necessity of producing countries making sure their exported arms are

not used to violate human rights and emphasised the importance of working against the illicit flow of SALW in order to ensure socio-economic development. Mr Allam explained that parliamentarians have an important role to play in the implementation of international instruments and treaties by raising the issues to international organisations, Government ministries, unions and civil society, and by following up on violations of the treaties.

MP Belal Qasem from Palestine added the important role of parliamentarians in raising awareness of the danger of both possession and trafficking of SALW. He also noted the risk when supplying warring parties with weapons that they end up in the hands of extremist groups. MP Qasem further emphasised the importance of partnerships between Parliaments, Governments and civil society in tackling the problem of SALW.



In the parliamentary discussion, the issue of treaties and instruments not being binding was brought up, as well as the problems created when some countries do not sign. The implementation of treaties and instruments was noted as one of the most important roles of Parliaments in their SALW-related work, together with the responsibility to adapt implementation to the national context and instruments. The opportunity that partnerships with civil society constitute when there is hesitance to ratification was also emphasised.

Session II: Challenges and opportunities related to armed violence/SALW related violence in the region; e.g. (PSSM, use explosive weapons, illicit traffic of SALW) - Mr Abdirahman Warsame Nour, District Safety Coordinator, Danish Demining Group (DDG), Somaliland

Mr Abdirahman Warsame Nour gave a comprehensive overview of the problems that SALW pose in the Horn of Africa, and in particular in Somaliland. He noted that the Horn of Africa currently experiences spikes in political and social tensions, armed conflict, communal clashes and violent extremism, and that 74% of all households in Somaliland possess SALW. According to surveys, the main reason for possession is protection, which sends a strong signal about the general conception of SALW as a means of protection and not a driver of insecurity. Some of the highlighted challenges in Somaliland include lack of commitment, resources and security, while opportunities include a strong civil society and a desire from the population to tackle the problems.



The ensuing discussion touched upon the use of weapons in the respective countries in the Horn of Africa. The participants expressed their interest in the issues presented and posed several questions, including questions about the market price of SALW and lessons learned from previous DDG projects. The importance of legislation and of linking the issues and solutions to the community level was also brought up during the discussion.

Session III: Parliamentary experiences and initiatives in armed violence reduction – The Role of Parliamentarians in armed violence reduction – Mr Drissa Sanogo, Board Member of the Forum, Coordinator, West African Inter-parliamentary Network on SALW, Burkina Faso



Mr Drissa Sanogo, Board Member of the Parliamentary Forum and former MP in Burkina Faso shared his reflections and experience on the role of parliamentarians in violence prevention and reduction. The importance of the awareness raising, legislative and monitoring roles of parliamentarians was highlighted. South-South cooperation and partnerships with civil society were lifted as important aspects when working with SALW-related issues. Mr Sanogo shared his valuable experience from the West African Inter-parliamentary Network on SALW, and the valuable platform for discussion and cooperation it provides. In concluding his presentation, Mr Sanogo expressed some concern about a number of previous initiatives related to SALW that have not been very fruitful, albeit reiterating the importance of continued efforts against the loss of life and violations of human rights caused by SALW.

MP Taghouan Bouamor from Morocco raised the important question of how the role of Parliaments is not as strong as it should be in many countries. Another issue raised was that proper laws and legislation are often in place, but enforcement is sometimes lacking. MP Bouamor also made some reflections about the illicit flow of SALW caused by armed conflicts in the region.

The participants discussed the role of Governments in relation to that of Parliaments and parliamentarians, as well as the importance of ongoing dialogue between all concerned actors. The topic of ongoing conflicts in the region was once again brought up by several participants, including the violence by extremist groups. MP Shabb from Lebanon noted that the Lebanese Parliament has previously not put much focus on the issue of SALW, but given the problem it poses it should be prioritized. This indicates that the seminar has given some valuable insight to the participants about SALW as a development obstacle and why working against the proliferation and use of SALW should be prioritized by Parliaments both in the region and globally.

Closing and adoption of the final declaration

At the final session of the seminar the participating parliamentarians unanimously adopted a final declaration. In the 'Alexandria Declaration' the parliamentarians welcomed the adoption of SDG16 in the 2030 Agenda and emphasised the importance of implementing the ATT and the UNPoA. Along the lines of the UN Resolution 1325, the active and equal participation of women and men in armed violence prevention and reduction was highlighted. The participants expressed concern about extremist groups and determination about finding solutions to the violence in the region. The Declaration summarized the conclusions from the seminar and has the potential of serving as a basis for parliamentary action and continued efforts for the prevention and reduction of armed violence.



PARLIAMENTARY FORUM ON SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS



SWEDISH INSTITUTE
ALEXANDRIA

Mr Peter Weiderud concluded the seminar by emphasizing the importance of promoting dialogue in the region, the role of the Swedish Institute and how parliamentarians can cooperate, learn from each other and trigger actions that lead to a reduction in armed violence. Ms Karin Olofsson further reiterated the vital role of parliamentarians in their awareness-raising, legislative and oversight functions. Parliamentarians constitute a bridge between the population and the government, facilitate policies to prevent and reduce armed violence, and oversee the government as to ensure implementation and support initiatives aimed at reducing SALW proliferation. In sum, parliamentarians have a crucial role in contributing to peace and sustainable development in the region.

