



PARLIAMENTARY FORUM
ON SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS

Communication Strategy¹

1. Statement of purpose

The state of the world underlines the need to prioritise the prevention and reduction of armed violence. The world in 2016 is marked by an upsurge of violence and armed conflict, as reflected by for example the Syrian civil war, the conflicts in Yemen and East Ukraine, as well as the spread of global terrorism and organized crime. The number of forcibly displaced people has reached 65.3 million, the highest number since the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees records began.² Armed conflicts and violence, independent of the scale, are perpetuated by the availability of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW), increasing the need for concise and effective steps to tackle its proliferation.

The Parliamentary Forum for Small arms and Light Weapons (Forum, hereafter) is an international platform for Members of Parliament across party-political lines specifically related to the issues of reducing and preventing Small Arms and Light Weapon, SALW, related violence. As established in the Strategic Plan 2016 -2018 the over-all objective aims to: *“Contribute to the achievement of more peaceful and developed societies by parliamentary action against armed violence to increase human security”*.

Communication is a vital tool or the Forum as to advance towards its over-all objective. It shall be seen as an integral part of the work towards achieving the joint objective to reduce and prevent armed violence. This Strategy is an important framework for the Forum to strengthen communication to Members, partner organizations and the general public. Likewise it means to highlight the work and progress done by the Forum and its Members.

Moreover the Strategy supports the underlying working method by assisting its policy-shaping and capacity-building role through raising further awareness about SALW related violence and changing the public perceptions associated with SALW possession in order to increase the level of compliance with the law. This Strategy allows the Forum to attend to

¹ Approved by the Board on the 24th of November 2016 during the Board Meeting in Montevideo, Uruguay

² <http://www.unhcr.org/news/latest/2016/6/5763b65a4/global-forced-displacement-hits-record-high.html>

and interact with an increasing membership base by actively involving them in its work in an adequate way. It is also relevant for the tracking, measuring and reporting of the results of the Forum and its Members.

2. Intended audiences

Primary target audience:

- Members of the Forum

The Forum is convinced that Parliamentary Members are key actors for action on armed violence. Parliamentarians have the ability to take the necessary measures towards prevention and reduction of SALW violence by for example controlling the civilian acquisition and possession and addressing the demand for SALW at national, regional and international levels. This communication strategy intends to address the key roles of a Parliamentarian; legislative, over-sight and awareness-raising.

Secondary target audiences:

- Partner organizations, as well as other organizations that work with SALW
- Friends of the Forum
- General public

The existing partners of the Forum are important communication assets that will be consulted for further increase of network with potential new partners and members. The Forum is constantly working on reaching out to Parliamentarians with an interest in SALW who are not yet Members, as well as other politicians and government official to involve as many as possible and to keep SALW related violence high on the political agenda.

3. Communication objectives

This Communication Strategy is based on the overall objective and specific objectives of the Forum as stated in the Strategic Plan and supported by a detailed, internal Communication Plan that together intend to:

Specific objective	Communication objective
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Improve, refine and harmonize the policy framework for SALW control at national level and regionally harmonize laws on SALW	→ By our Members participation in and communication from national and international level events; providing them with necessary material and communication tools to keep SALW issues high on the political agenda
Develop further Parliamentarians' capacities to address SALW issues	→ By providing frequent updates and new policy material to our members and highlighting & systematize their actions and progress on SALW related issues.
Contribute to the building of an international consensus on SALW and armed violence through Parliamentary exchange and intervention	→ By providing a communication platform to our Members to share ideas, progress and news with each other and introduce the work of the Forum to potential new members.
Increase public awareness of SALW violence, its impacts, and Parliamentary action	→ By actively communicating about and providing the latest news about the challenge of SALW prevention and reduction through our communication channels and receive report on Members activities.
Consolidate the financial and operational sustainability	→ The Forum aims for a sustainable communication by not only strengthening communication outwards but also within the Secretariat and between Secretariat and the Board. Communication shall be planned as integral part of all operations.

4. Channels

- Policy statements and Policy briefs
- Declarations
- Newsletters on key activities of the Forum
- Seminars, Workshops & Campaigns
- Surveys
- Social media platforms including:
 - Webpage

- Newsletters
- Facebook
- Twitter

The Forum is currently using the website parliamentaryforum.org and Newsletters for main communication with Members. Through these two platforms Members gain access and stay updated about new Policy statements, Briefs and Declarations.

This Communication Strategy together with the Strategic Plan 2016 -2018 will strengthen the outreach capacity and develop the cooperation and communication with Parliamentary Members. It will increase the capacity of the Secretariat to communicate adequately with all Members and respond to their needs. The Strategy will also serve to strengthen and systematize methods of follow-up and monitoring of activities of Members in order to track and report results of the work on reducing and preventing SALW related violence.

The Forum makes use of social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter to increase appearance and reach out to a wider audience. The platforms allow the Forum to actively and frequently interact with all target audiences and allow the announcement of news to all target audiences, since the Newsletters are only for the Members of the Forum.

5. Guiding principles

The Forum will:

- Prioritize communication to, with and from the primary target audience: Members of the Forum,
- All Board Members, Members, employees and interns at the Forum play an important role in representing the organisation and maintaining communication. Board Members have a crucial role in functioning as “Ambassadors” for the over-all objective and work of the Forum.
- Aim for efficient, user friendly communication channels and easy access to policy-shaping documents and news,

- Increase activity and quality of communication through various channels to reach out to a larger audience for awareness raising about the Forum and SALW related issues,
- Improve Newsletter services to Members by making them more consistent and summarized, reflecting key activities from Members,
- Intensify the work of the Forum to include the gender equality perspective in communication and various publications,

6. Quality assurance, Follow- up & Evaluation

The Forum will follow-up on the progress in relation to the Communication Strategy based on its established Results Framework. Follow-up and evaluation will mainly be realized annually, as integral part of the over-all narrative reporting to donors. As the Strategy is a new initiative for the organization, it is vital to analyze lessons learned continuously to further improve the quality of communication. Internally, semi-annual progress reports are to be compiled in forms of statistics and evaluation of the active communication channels mentioned above.