



PARLIAMENTARY FORUM
ON SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS

Policy Statement on Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons and Terrorism

Board of the Parliamentary Forum on Small Arms and Light Weapons,
meeting on the 23rd of November, 2017

The availability of illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) is a key factor enabling terrorism, having high human, social and economic costs.¹ Based on the over-all objective to contribute to the achievement of more peaceful and developed societies through parliamentary action against armed violence to increase human security, the Parliamentary Forum on Small Arms and Light Weapons finds it crucial to strengthen the role of parliamentarians in addressing conditions conducive to terrorism. Importantly, the parliamentary responsibility relate to aligning efforts with existing international frameworks for preventing and reducing armed violence, specifically the 2030 Agenda, the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) and the United Nations Programme of Actions to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (UNPoA).

Over the last couple of decades the world has seen an increase in terrorist activity, today more serious and widely distributed across the world than at the turn of the century. The Middle East, North Africa, South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa are particularly affected, accounting for 84% of attacks and 94 % of all deaths, in 2016 amounting to more than 24 000 victims. The majority of terrorist attacks are carried out in countries experiencing internal conflict, disproportionately affecting developing countries. Hence, tackling terrorism has bearing on conflict prevention and the consolidation of peace.²

SALW are used by terrorists in a wide range of activities supporting their cause, including massacres, robberies and kidnappings. These arms are oftentimes the most readily available and tactical option for terrorists, being easy to transport and conceal as well as causing extensive damage during a short period of time.³ Firearms were used in 18% of terrorist attacks globally in 2016, and in 32 % of the 50 most deadly terrorist attacks in 2015.⁴

¹ United Nations Security Council Resolution 2220 (2015), http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_res_2220.pdf

² Global Terrorism Index 2017, <http://visionofhumanity.org/app/uploads/2017/11/Global-Terrorism-Index-2017.pdf>

³ Cukier, W. & Chapdelaine, A., 2007, Small Arms, explosives and incendiaries, In Levy, B., S. & Sidel, V., W. *Terrorism and Public Health: A balanced approach to strengthen systems and protecting people*. Oxford University Press, p. 2

⁴ Global Terrorism Index 2017, <http://visionofhumanity.org/app/uploads/2017/11/Global-Terrorism-Index-2017.pdf> & Global Terrorism Index 2016 <http://economicsandpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Global-Terrorism-Index-2016.2.pdf>

The proliferation of illicit arms is an important source considerably increasing armed capabilities of terrorist groups.⁵ Much of the illicit small arms trade depends on the lack of control of legal transfers. Diversion of lawful arms and ammunition to the illicit market, in the form of theft or unlawful transfers from civilian and national stockpiles, is the principal cause for illicit arms proliferation.⁶

The extensive availability of illegal SALW as well as their ammunition underlines the need for coordinated efforts to limit the acquisition of arms by terrorist groups. In this regard, the Parliamentary Forum particularly highlights the relevance of the ATT, adopted in 2014, providing a global framework for arms transfer controls, requiring exporting countries to ensure that arms exported are not used to fuel conflict or facilitate terrorism.⁷ Additionally, states need to implement and comply with the UNPoA, adopted in 2001, aiming to promote coordinated international efforts to curtail the illicit trade in SALW⁸, as well as the Firearms Protocol.⁹

As acknowledged in the United Nation's resolution on the 2030 Agenda; "sustainable development cannot be realised without peace and security; and peace and security will be at risk without sustainable development".¹⁰ Sustainable Development Goal 16 of the 2030 Agenda, on peaceful and inclusive societies, is the beacon in recognising the need to reduce illicit flows for sustainable development and peacebuilding. However, all sustainable development goals are indivisible, their implementation mutually dependent,¹¹ underlining the need to address all factors conducive to terrorism, including socioeconomic conditions.

The Parliamentary Forum also welcomes the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2370 from 2017 on preventing terrorists from acquiring weapons, which highlights the need to strengthen national legal frameworks for effective control over export, import and transfer of SALW, particularly to conflict affected areas. The resolution also emphasises the contribution of international and regional organisations, civil society and the private sector in these efforts.¹²

In view of their legislative, oversight and awareness raising functions, parliamentarians have a responsibility to advocate for the ratification of international instruments, overseeing their implementation and holding governments responsible. Parliamentarians also play a key role in sharing experiences and good practices between countries to maximise synergies and to improve legislation and parliamentary control of arms exports and illicit proliferation.

⁵ United Nations Security Council Resolution 2370 (2017), http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_res_2370.pdf

⁶ Small Arms Survey

<http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/fileadmin/docs/A-Yearbook/Special/SAS-Small-Arms-Control-Measures-and-ATT.pdf>

& United Nations Secretary General Report (2016) http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/71/438

⁷ United Nations The Arms Trade Treaty <https://unoda-web.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/English7.pdf>

⁸ Report of the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects(2001) [http://www.un.org/events/smallarms2006/pdf/192.15%20\(E\).pdf](http://www.un.org/events/smallarms2006/pdf/192.15%20(E).pdf)

⁹ The Firearms Protocol http://www.weaponslaw.org/assets/downloads/2001_UN_Firearms_Protocol.pdf

¹⁰ United Nations General Assembly Resolution 70/1 *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (2015) http://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/Resolution_A_RES_70_1_EN.pdf

¹¹ United Nations General Assembly Resolution 70/1 *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (2015) http://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/Resolution_A_RES_70_1_EN.pdf

¹² United Nations Security Council Resolution 2370 (2017), http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_res_2370.pdf

In light of the risk that counter-terrorism related measures may lead to increasing levels of violence and armaments races in turn becoming drivers of terrorism,¹³ states need to ensure that counter-terrorism measures are responsible and comply with the rule of law and human rights, as well as focusing on preventive measures such as disarmament and arms regulation.

The illicit trade and availability of SALW is a major destabilising force, intensifying armed violence and terrorist activity. Moreover, terrorism negatively impacts on the economy, having high costs related to deaths and injuries, reducing investments and resulting in reallocation of public resources to counter-terrorism expenditures.¹⁴

Given the detrimental effects of the accumulation and misuse of SALW in the hands of terrorists on human security, particularly the security of vulnerable groups, all affected actors need to be involved in efforts to eliminate armed violence. In line with their role as peace agents, recognised in UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security from 2000¹⁵, and UNSCR 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security adopted in 2015, women and youth play a central role in the process towards more peaceful and inclusive societies. UNSCR 2250 specifically highlight the threat of increasing radicalisation to violent extremism of youth, oftentimes conducive to terrorism, and the vital role youth play as positive role models in preventing and countering violent extremism and armed violence.¹⁶

Parliamentarians are particularly important for building sustainable peace and sustainable development by ensuring a platform for different actors to express views – including women and youth. As such, they can serve as the connecting agent between government institutions and civil society in the common efforts to tackle terrorism.

Objectives

The Board of the Parliamentary Forum on Small Arms and Light Weapons, meeting on the 23rd November, 2017;

Acknowledges the devastating consequences of terrorism on societies and communities, and its high humanitarian and socioeconomic costs negatively impacting on sustainable development;

Affirms that sustainable development, peace and security are interlinked, and that all conditions conducive to terrorism need to be addressed;

Recognises the importance of preventing and reducing the proliferation of illicit SALW to limit the armed capabilities of terrorist groups;

Draws attention to the fact much of the illicit small arms trade depend on lack of control of legal transfers, where legal SALW are being diverted to the illicit market through theft or unlawful transfers;

¹³ Taylor, I. 2016. State responsibility and counterterrorism, *Ethics & Global Politics*, 9(1)

¹⁴ Global Terrorism Index 2016 <http://economicsandpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Global-Terrorism-Index-2016.2.pdf>

¹⁵ United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (2000) [https://undocs.org/S/RES/1325\(2000\)](https://undocs.org/S/RES/1325(2000))

¹⁶ United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security (2015) <http://unoy.org/wp-content/uploads/SCR-2250.pdf>

Calls on parliamentarians to review and scrutinise government policies, party programmes, appropriation bills and budgets action plans related to the 2030 Agenda, ATT, UNPoA, UNSCR 2370, UNSCR 2250, UNSCR 1325 and other relevant resolutions and processes related to counter-terrorism, arms control and peace and security;

Reiterates the importance of signing, ratifying and implementing the ATT and the Firearms Protocol, compliance with the UNPoA as well as implementation of other international instruments relevant to counter-terrorism and the elimination of illicit SALW proliferation;

Welcomes and supports the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2370 on preventing terrorists from acquiring weapons (2017), and *calls* for its full and immediate implementation;

Reiterates the need to harmonise responsible legislation between different countries, to avoid terrorists taking advantage of loopholes;

Encourages collaboration between international and regional organisations, civil society and the private sector in efforts to tackle terrorism and establishing mechanisms to monitor and report on proliferation of SALW;

Supports global partnership initiatives to combat the proliferation of SALW and *recognises* the need to further maximise these efforts;

Promotes women's and young people's participation in processes on peace and security at national, regional and international level and calls for the establishment of structures in decision-making processes at all levels to bring in women's and young people's skills and perspectives on issues related to counter-terrorism and to peace and security; *encourages* parliamentarians to create partnerships with women's and youth organisations to increase the impact of parliamentary action;

Underlines the responsibility of states and parliamentarians to ensure that counter-terrorism actions comply with the rule of law and human rights, and *recognises* the need to work with an integrated approach on demilitarisation, disarmament and sustainable development to enhance human, national and international security;

Calls on parliamentarians to work in relation to their governments on strengthening relevant legislation, policies, national programs and political engagement to combat violent extremism and terrorism;

Mandates the Parliamentary Forum, its Members and the Secretariat to undertake all necessary efforts towards universalisation and effective implementation of relevant international instruments to counter-terrorism and the proliferation of illicit SALW.