



PARLIAMENTARY FORUM  
ON SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS

## Side event

at the 141<sup>st</sup> Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union,

15 October 2019, 13:00 – 14:00, Art Café (one F) Sava Centre, Belgrade, Serbia

***“Agenda 2030: preventing Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW)-related violence and building peaceful and sustainably developed societies - how can parliamentarians contribute?”***

### REPORT

The state of the world underlines the need to prioritise prevention and reduction of armed violence. 2019 has been marked by an upsurge of violence and armed conflict, as well as the spread of global terrorism and organized crime. The number of forcibly displaced people has reached more than 70 million, the highest number since the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees records began.

Approximately 25 parliamentarians, parliamentary staff as well as UN agencies and civil society representatives from Africa, Europe, Latin American and the Middle East participated in the seminar to discuss how to contribute to reducing and preventing small arms and light weapons (SALW) related-armed violence with regards to important global arms control instruments. The side event presented a vital opportunity for parliamentarians around the world to discuss arms control initiatives, with focus on sharing experiences from a recent regional seminar in the Middle East – and North Africa on needed actions in the work towards preventing armed violence.

Key questions for discussion:

- To reach Sustainable Development Goal 16.4 of the 2030 Agenda, what are the main priorities and actions for parliamentarians in enhancing universalization and effective implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) as well as the UN Programme of Action on illicit SALW (UN PoA)?
- What are the main priorities and actions for parliamentarians in promoting the Women, Peace and Security agenda?

Young people have an important but, to date, neglected role in the prevention and resolution of conflicts. How can we foster a dialogue to contribute to young people taking an active role as peace-builders as well as promoting young lawmakers?

Moderator of the panel and discussions **Ms Karin Olofsson, General Secretary of PFSALW**, welcomed participants and thanked the IPU for the opportunity. Behind the political and technical aspects of discussions, she said we must never forget that we are talking about human lives. Every year, armed violence kills half a million people globally and firearms are used in about 38% of all violent deaths.

She introduced the Parliamentary Forum on SALW (PFSALW) as the only membership-based organisation gathering parliamentarians globally across party-political lines, specifically related to the issues of reduction and prevention of SALW-related violence. Despite the urgency and dimension of the problem, SALW – control often remains an under-prioritised area on the international disarmament agenda and parliamentarians are underutilised actors in sustainable development efforts. An important part of the seminar was to discuss the continued low participation of women as active agents in decision-making on peace and security. Another key area is the important but, to date, neglected role of youth in the prevention and resolution of conflicts. Young are highly underrepresented in the world's parliaments. Parliamentarians under the age of 30 make up less than 2 % of the world's lawmakers.

**Mr Dragan Bozanic, South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SEESAC) - United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)** opened and stated that the discussion was not only important, but also very timely as two broad frameworks - SALW control and the women peace and security (WPS) agenda - come together and are increasingly seen as interlinked. There is a growing awareness that SALW-related violence is highly gendered and also that we cannot have effective SALW control if the gender perspective is ignored. He noted that the UN Programme of Action on illicit SALW<sup>1</sup> (UN PoA) had been silent on gender. In a similar manner UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on WPS makes no reference to SALW. The Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), as a multilateral, legally binding agreement created to establish common standards for the regulation of the international trade in conventional arms was a game changer since it obliges governments to assess the risks of Gender Based Violence (GBV) when exporting arms.

Since then, positive new developments have been taking place and changes are noted within the UN PoA process. Also the 2018 Disarmament Agenda "Securing our Common Future" launched by the UN Secretary General calls for all states to incorporate gender perspectives in the development of national legislation and policies on disarmament and arms control. He finished by giving an overview of SEESAC's current work where the latest effort in boosting regional cooperation and addressing challenges in the region is the Roadmap for a sustainable solution to the illegal possession, misuse and trafficking of SALW, developed by Western Balkans authorities with SEESAC's technical support.

**Hon. Marko Djuricic, MP Serbia, Deputy Chair Defence and Internal Affairs Committee**, continued by highlighting that Serbia was among the first countries to ratify the ATT. Although the new laws provide a high level of export control and transparency, in practice, weapons and ammunition produced in Serbia still enter the black market. There is a need to further strengthen the control. The most common arguments against increased control include a lack of state resources and/or reference to the importance of the industry and increasing exports as a key government priority. At the same time, the Parliament lacks resources as well as an interest for better oversight. As a Serbian MP, he is striving to improve the situation, for example through proposing a process of encouraging registration of illegal weapons in combination with a weapons amnesty. He emphasized that Serbia still experiences a dominant gun culture and legacy of armed conflict. With only 7 million citizens, Serbia has more than 1,000,000 licenses. Throughout the region, illegal weapons are widespread and are being used in crimes, including domestic violence and femicide. He concluded that the outcome of the efforts made so far had been disappointing and that more dedication is needed in order to significantly reduce the number of uncontrolled SALW in the region.

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<sup>1</sup> UN Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade of SALW, 2001

**Ms Ekram Zubaydi, the Palestinian Centre for Peace and Democracy** expressed her gratitude for the opportunity to speak before an international parliamentary audience. She gave an overview of the situation of youth in Palestine where 49.9% of Palestinian youth are unemployed and only 1.4% are active in political parties. She noted that the main concern for youth is trying to make a living. In addition to these economic obstacles, social challenges include a traditional culture which still sees older people as better equipped to make decisions than the young. The patriarchal system prevents many women's participation in political life. Lastly, the Israeli occupation in combination with the weakness of the Palestinian political system is a major political challenge for Palestinian youth. Regarding UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2250 she noted it is still relatively new and more awareness is needed about its importance.

**Hon. Sabine Ghoubatini, MP Tunisia, Security and Defence Committee** continued by highlighting the importance of promoting women and young parliamentarians. She noted that the situation in Tunisia is different from a regional perspective. The country has ratified the ATT and is committed to the UN POA. For example at domestic level Tunisia has a relatively strict firearms legislation, prohibiting carrying of weapons unless for hunting purposes. Tunisia has also come much further with regards to democracy, with higher levels of political freedom as well as free media. Tunisia is also unique in the MENA-region with over 30% women in parliament. Quotas for gender parity are instrumental.

**Hon. Mahmoud Kissari, Senator Algeria, National Council on Local Development Committee**, noted that the situation was similar in Algeria to Tunisia which also has similar firearms legislation i.e. licensing is restricted to hunting purposes. However, he noted that the country is also facing terrorism. As a male parliamentarian he underscored the importance of encouraging women to take active part in political life. As stipulated in various studies, this is crucial for sustainable development and peace. In terms of the youth peace and security agenda and UNSCR 2250 he explained that Algeria is in the process of adapting its educational system in order to build a culture of peace. A national strategy has been developed in order to embrace and accommodate different religious beliefs and encourage peace.

**During the floor debate** the Western Balkans was discussed as a region where SALW and their ammunition are diverted due to poor controls and thus end up on the black market. The importance of ammunition was also highlighted and that this aspect continues to be neglected in discussions on arms control and armed violence prevention. It was noted that some weapon types are more sought after than others due to easier access to their ammunition. Participants also discussed the supply and demand aspects of SALW. Producing countries, many of which are found in Europe, have a responsibility to ensure that arms produced do not end up in the wrong hands. The African Union Agenda of 'Silencing the guns by 2020 was also brought up. It was noted that strong regional political blocks, as for example ECOWAS, have been key in arms control as regional cooperation is imperative to stop the flow of illicit SALW. The importance that any efforts including action plans and road maps must come with sufficient funding was emphasized. In terms of youth peace and security, ideas were brought forward of the benefit of parliamentarians to be more involved in the schools in order to influence young people. It was also underscored that more young MPs will be crucial in this dialogue. Lastly the importance of cooperation was emphasized, including the need for parliamentarians and advocates from all areas of disarmament to come together and work for a sustainable peace and development.

## Participant list<sup>2</sup>

| <b>Name</b>                       | <b>Country</b>  | <b>Committee</b>  |
|-----------------------------------|---|---|
| Hon. Mahmoud Kissari              | Senator, Algeria  | Committee on Security and Defence                             |
| Hon. Anicet Tuyaga                | MP, Burundi   | Committee on Peace and Security                               |
| Hon. Vincent de Paul Emah Etoundi | MP, Cameroon  | National Commission for Human Rights and Freedoms of Cameroon |
| Hon. Soren Sondergaard            | MP, Denmark   | Leader of the Delegation, Cultural Affairs Committee          |
| Hon. Ala Talabani                 | MP, Iraq  | Foreign Relations Committee                                   |
| Hon. Billay G. Tunkara            | MP, The Gambia  | Committee on Foreign Affairs                                  |
| Hon. Musa Amul Nyassi             | MP, The Gambia  | Chairperson of the Committee on Local Government & Lands      |
| Hon. Gordana Comic                | MP, Serbia  | Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly                       |
| Hon. Marko Djurisc                | MP, Serbia  | Vice chair security and defence committee                     |
| Hon. Tunis Sidie                  | MP, Sierra Leone  | Majority Leader   |
| Hon. Paul Akamba                  | MP, Uganda  | Member Legal Committee  |
| Hon. Rebecca Kadaga               | MP, Uganda  | Speaker of Parliament   |
| Hon. Latif Sebagala               | MP, Uganda  | Member Foreign Affairs Committee                              |
| Hon. Graham Jones                 | MP, United Kingdom  | Chair Committees on Arms Export Controls, Defence committee   |
| Hon. Sabrina Ghoubantini          | MP, Tunisia   | Security and Defence committee                                |
| Hon. Noslin Rodriguez             | MP, Venezuela   |   |
| Genci Goli                        | Albanian Parliament   | Secretary of the Albanian Parliament                          |
| Alyn Ware                         | Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-Proliferation And Disarmament (PNND) | Global Coordinator  |
| Dragan Bozanic                    | SEESAC  | Gender and Research Project Officer                           |
| Ikram Zubaydi                     | The Palestinian Centre for Peace and Democracy                        | Project coordinator   |
| Karin Olofsson                    | PFSALW  | Secretary General   |
| Teresa Dybeck                     | PFSALW  | Programme Manager   |

<sup>2</sup> Estimate number for the event was 25-30 participants.