



PARLIAMENTARY FORUM ON SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS

Newsletter November 2020

Content:

- **Greeting from the Secretary General**
- **Past events**
 - *Launch of the parliamentary handbook “Assuring our Common Future” in support of the United Nations Secretary General’s Disarmament Agenda*
 - *Webinar on the role of parliamentarians in achieving the 2030 Agenda, Goal 16.4*
 - *Participation in policy relevant processes*
 - *Recently published opinion pieces*
- **Ongoing and upcoming events**
 - *Call for action- Please sign and spread the word!*
 - *Social media campaign- Words Over Bullets*
 - *Regional webinar- Asia*
 - *Upcoming events in 2021*
 - *Contribute with your own stories*

Honourable Members and Friends of the Forum,

On behalf of the Secretariat of the Forum, I hope you are all well in these challenging times. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected us all, with severe health and socioeconomic consequences globally. However, the Forum remains committed to strengthening parliamentary action for the prevention and reduction of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW)- related violence based on the dedicated and determined efforts by all of you. I would also like to express gratitude for the much appreciated support of the current donors of the organisation; the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the United Nations (UN) Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation (UNSCAR).

As highlighted by the UN’s Secretary General in his Global Appeal for Ceasefire in March this year, repeated recently on the 24th of October marking the 75th anniversary of the UN, **the need is palpable to silence the guns in the midst of the pandemic**. A surge of domestic violence cases has also been reported worldwide since the outbreak of the pandemic. This is indeed a serious tendency where the presence of firearms further exacerbates the situation especially exposing women’s rights

and safety. With the COVID-19 pandemic, it is more important than ever to prevent armed violence as to allow societies to focus resources on efficiently dealing with the serious health, social and economic crisis and to save lives and rebuild societies.

Parliamentarians have a vital role to play in tackling the ongoing crisis, for example, relating to passing emergency laws, allocating resources and scrutinising government actions. The way we live has changed, and social distancing and isolation measures apply to parliaments as well as societies. Under these special circumstances it is key to ensure that parliamentarians are able to continue to carry out the vital work under safe and adequate conditions. The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) has summarised specific recommendations on how parliaments can work during the pandemic, to be found [here](#).

The safety and health of our Members, staff and collaboration partners is vital to us, and curbing the spread of the pandemic is a societal responsibility. Given the scope of the Forum's work with its international character, COVID-19 along with restrictions on international mobility have affected the operations of the organisation. Based on recommendations from relevant expert authorities, and in dialogue with the Forum's Board and collaboration partners, **the Forum has postponed its physical international activities, now tentatively planned for next year.** This includes the Forum's General Assembly, the highest organ of the organisation originally planned to take place in late 2020, which through a decision by the Forum's Board has been postponed until 2021.

Despite the difficult circumstances, **the Forum continues its efforts for more peaceful and sustainably developed societies with determination and has adapted its work to the new reality.** On October 29, the Forum carried out the webinar "Realising the 2030 Agenda in a changing world affected by COVID-19: Parliamentary action on armed violence prevention to build back better for more peaceful and sustainably developed societies" (find more details below) and the work to support Members continues in distance mode.

However, these challenging times also have resulted in many organisations facing difficulties and insecurities as a result of a more complex world along with the tendency of shifting donor priorities. **Therefore, the Forum welcomes the support of Members and Friends to safeguard the long-term survival of the organisation.** For your kind consideration, I would like to take this opportunity to warmly welcome you to contribute to our work by giving a donation^{**}. **Small or big, all contributions make a difference and are highly appreciated!** To make a donation, please visit our website, now with new channels enabling swift and secure donations by both Donorbox and Swish [here](#). In appreciation for a donation, we will send you a Christmas card! Thank you very much in advance, together we can contribute to a more peaceful world!

The year of 2020 is coming to an end. At the Forum, we are aware of the difficult situation that our Members, parliamentarians globally, as well as other stakeholders, have been facing during the year. It gives me hope to know that notwithstanding the challenges faced by countries worldwide; parliamentarians, civil society and the international and diplomatic community, are still coming together to support each other in our efforts to promote more peaceful and sustainably developed societies globally. **In order to effectively address the uncontrolled spread of SALW, and to prevent and reduce armed violence, we must stay committed and strengthen our common efforts to make a change for human security and sustainable development.**

If you want to stay tuned on further updates on coming activities, please follow us on our social media channels [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#). Please do not hesitate to contact us and share ideas and news with us on the important work you are doing!

Stay safe and healthy!

Best Wishes,



Karin Olofsson, Secretary General

E-mail: olofsson@parlforum.org

Twitter: [@KarinOlof](#) [@ParlForumSalw](#)

** All revenues and expenses are audited annually by an independent external auditor.

Past events

Launch of the parliamentary handbook “Assuring our Common Future” in support of the United Nations Secretary General’s Disarmament Agenda

Recently, the [Parliamentary handbook “Assuring our Common Future”](#) was launched in support of the implementation of the UN’s Secretary General’s Disarmament Agenda “Securing our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament”. The handbook provides background to disarmament issues, makes connections between disarmament and sustainable development, provides examples of effective policies and parliamentary action, and offers recommendations for further parliamentary action.

The handbook is co-sponsored by Parliamentarians for Non-Nuclear Proliferation and Disarmament ([PNND](#)), the Parliamentary Forum on Small Arms and Light Weapons (the [Forum](#)), the Inter-Parliamentary Union ([IPU](#)), Parliamentarians for Global Action ([PGA](#)), the Geneva Centre for Security Policy ([GCSP](#)) and World Future Council ([WFC](#)) and supported by the UN’s Office for Disarmament Affairs ([UNODA](#)).

During 2020, the Forum worked on supporting global parliamentary efforts in relation to the handbook and UN’s Secretary General’s Disarmament Agenda. Forum Members participated as panellists in consultations and **the Forum contributed to the handbook with policy experiences on parliamentary action for prevention and reduction of SALW-related violence**. Virtual consultations on the handbook took place in February and July this year, and the launch on November 5 and 6. Please see the launch event of the handbook in [English](#) and [French](#).

Webinar on the role of parliamentarians in achieving the 2030 Agenda, Goal 16.4

On October 29, the Forum hosted the webinar “Realising the 2030 Agenda in a changing world affected by COVID-19: Parliamentary action on armed violence prevention to build back better for more peaceful and sustainably developed societies”. Members of the Forum as well as representatives from civil society, international and research organisations and government formed part of the panel,

sharing their expertise and recommendations on the ways forward to build back better following the COVID-19 pandemic for more peaceful and sustainably developed societies. **One of the main conclusions from the webinar was the continued important role of parliamentarians for the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16.4 of the 2030 Agenda** on “significantly reducing illicit arms flows”, through their legislative, oversight and awareness raising functions. **As has become evident during the global COVID-19 pandemic, political will and strong and resilient institutions are key** in order to adequately address the societal, economic and health crises. For a summary of the discussions, kindly find the webinar report [here](#).

Participation in policy relevant processes

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent restrictions, efforts globally for peace and security have continued in innovative ways, including in virtual mode. For example, the Sixth Conference of State Parties ([CSP 6](#)) to the [Arms Trade Treaty](#) took place on 17-21 August by written procedure, allowing for a vital dialogue on relevant topics but affecting the discussion on substantial issues. **The Forum, as an internationally recognised expert for its work to promote parliamentary action to prevent SALW-related violence, has participated as panellist in online events.** For example, the Forum’s Secretary General participated in the high-level closing panel in the Small Arms Survey’s online Forum “[Taking Stock of Action on the Illicit Small Arms Trade](#)” on June 15-26 highlighting lessons learned from 20 years of implementing the UN’s Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (UN PoA). The Forum also participated in the UN’s Office on Drugs and Crime’s (UNODC) high-level side event “[Celebrating the 15th anniversary of the entry into force of the Firearms Protocol: Time for universalization and effective implementation](#)” on October 14 on the margins of the 10th session of the Conference of the Parties to the UN’s Convention against Transnational Organised Crime (UNTOC). In addition, **the Forum and its Members have actively participated in a high number of peace and security relevant virtual conferences and webinars, sharing expertise and knowledge.**

Recently published opinion pieces

Increasing public and political awareness on the severe effects of SALW-related violence is key to promote change. Hence, awareness-raising is one of the cornerstones in the Forum’s work for more peaceful and sustainably developed societies. Since the last Newsletter, the Forum has signed and published two opinion pieces. In May, the Forum co-signed an [opinion piece](#) (in Swedish) published on the online platform Omvärlden, highlighting the need to implement the UN’s Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security (YPS). The opinion piece was co-signed together with nearly 20 other civil society organisations (CSOs) part of the Swedish 2250-network active within the YPS field. On the International Day of Peace in September, 11 representatives, current and former parliamentarians from a broad range of political parties, Members and co-founders of the Forum published an [opinion piece](#) (in Swedish) in the web-magazine Utvecklingsmagasinet. The opinion piece highlights the important role of parliamentarians in preventing and reducing armed violence, emphasising the need of political will and to increase development cooperation funding to parliamentary institutions and organisations to safeguard democracy and more peaceful societies.

Ongoing and upcoming events

Call for Action- Please sign and spread the word!

In times when democracy is under pressure, while at the same time conflicts and armed violence is on the rise, global parliamentary action is vital to contribute to peaceful and sustainably developed

societies. With the global pandemic of COVID-19, it is now more important than ever to prevent armed violence. In March 2020, the UN's Secretary General made a Call for Global Ceasefire, urging warring parties to put down their weapons in order to counter the pandemic together.

However, the future donor funding panorama on the topics of armed violence prevention for sustainable development is uncertain due to shifting donor priorities. Therefore, the Forum has launched a [Call for Action](#) to highlight the vital role of parliamentarians to prevent the uncontrolled flow of SALW. A warm thank you to all who have already signed the petition. If you haven't signed, **we welcome you to sign the petition online, as a parliamentarian or any other actor, if you agree on the importance to prevent and reduce armed violence globally.** Please spread the word and share the link, together we can contribute to human security, peace and sustainable development worldwide!

Social media campaign- Words Over Bullets

The Forum is relaunching its social media campaign **#WordsOverBullets**, starting on the 7th of December. A fundamental part of the Forum's work is awareness-raising, where the campaigns on social media play a vital role in involving and reaching a great number of people. The objective of the campaign is to contribute to increased awareness on the importance of reducing armed violence worldwide and to encourage support of the Forum.

As always, we warmly encourage you as Members and Friends of the Forum to participate in this campaign! This is how you can get involved:

1. Use your creativity and write the campaign name **#WordsOverBullets** on a paper or what you have at hand, or print a document with the name [here](#).
2. Take a photo of yourself holding the hashtag and post it in your own social media channels online during the campaign between 7th – 12 December and tag us on Facebook: [@PFSALW](#) or Twitter: [@ParlForumSalw](#), using the hashtag **#WordsOverBullets**.

Regional webinar- Asia

The Forum, in cooperation with the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly, is planning to hold a **webinar in February 2021**, with focus on parliamentary implementation of the UN PoA, in relation to the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda as well as the 2030 Agenda. The webinar is part of the Forum's "Connecting the Dots" project for 2020-2021, financed by UNODA's UNSCAR fund, which builds on key results obtained in the previous UNSCAR project, where a fundamental part of the work was the adoption of a Parliamentary Action Plan (PAP) in 2018. The webinar is planned to have a regional character, and aims to include parliamentarians and relevant stakeholders from the region to discuss the status of relevant conventional arms control instruments and how parliamentarians can contribute to their implementation, following up on the results derived from the PAP adopted in 2018.

Upcoming events in 2021

The COVID-19 pandemic affects millions of lives worldwide, signifying an extraordinary institutional burden not only to countries but also to international organisations and processes. Due to the pandemic, important disarmament fora had to be postponed or its format adapted. This has been the case of the **Seventh Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the [UN PoA \(BMS 7\)](#)**, originally planned to take place in June 2020 but now postponed until the last week of [July 2021](#). As for the Seventh Conference of State Parties to the [Arms Trade Treaty \(CSP7\)](#) in 2021, the exact format is yet to be decided, but [CSP7's President](#) already signalled that one of the foci of the

conference will be SALW. The Forum is looking forward to contribute to these processes, and is planning to participate actively in them regardless of the format in which they may take place.

The Forum's core activities have also been considerably affected, where key processes and projects have been postponed until 2021. The Forum is currently working and coordinating closely with partners worldwide, in order to plan and implement activities in a responsible manner. The General Assembly, originally due to take place in 2020 has been postponed, as well as the planned regional seminars in Africa, Southeast Asia and the Western Balkans, and will be realised when the situation so permits. **The Forum is working hard to continue supporting the vital efforts of its members during these extraordinary circumstances!**

Contribute with your own stories

We are very interested in hearing **stories from you, as our Members and Friends**, and make visible your vital efforts around the world as a part of our awareness raising- and communication work. Therefore, we want to **kindly encourage you to contribute with your own personal experiences and initiatives** that you are or/and have been part of in your local or national settings, related to tackling armed violence during the COVID-19 pandemic. **Please contact the Secretariat** if you have an initiative you would like us to share with the Forum's Members and Friends: texier@parlforum.org.