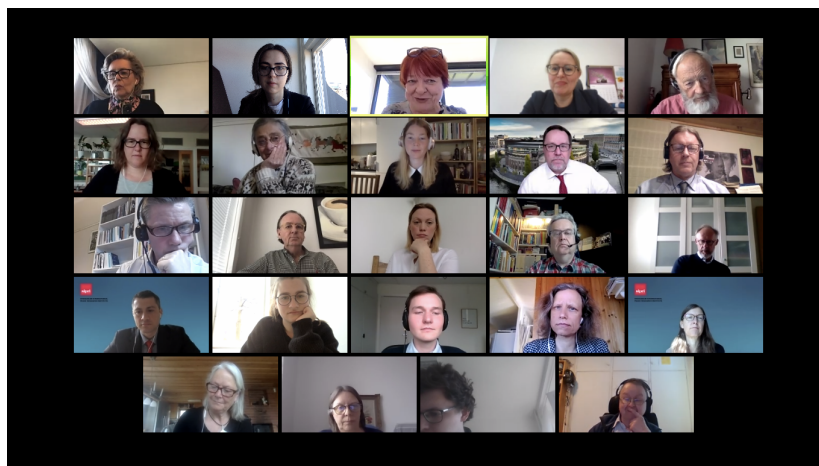




PARLIAMENTARY FORUM  
ON SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS

Sweden parliamentary launch of  
**ASSURING OUR COMMON FUTURE:**  
PARLIAMENTARY HANDBOOK ON DISARMAMENT FOR SECURITY AND  
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT  
April 26, 2021

An online roundtable meeting for parliamentarians



### Report<sup>1</sup>

At the virtual roundtable meeting, the parliamentary handbook “Assuring our Common Future: A Guide to Parliamentary Action in Support of Disarmament for Security and Sustainable Development” was introduced to Swedish parliamentarians. Nearly 25 Swedish parliamentarians, Government representatives, civil society organisations (CSOs) and other stakeholders joined the meeting to discuss key disarmament issues and processes, including the importance of preventing and reducing the uncontrolled proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) to contribute to more peaceful and sustainably developed societies.

The meeting was hosted by Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament (PNND), with the Parliamentary Forum on Small Arms and Light Weapons (PFSALW), the Association for the Right Livelihood Award in the Swedish Parliament and World Future Council (WFC) as co-sponsors, in cooperation with the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU).

The parliamentary handbook “Assuring our Common Future” was published in November 2020 to assist legislators around the world and across the political spectrum to undertake effective action on the range of disarmament issues highlighted in the United Nations (UN) Secretary General’s Disarmament Agenda “Securing our Common Future” from 2018.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This report was elaborated by the Parliamentary Forum on Small Arms and Light Weapons for documentation and learning purposes. The meeting was held under Chatham House rules.

<sup>2</sup> Kindly find the parliamentary handbook here: <https://disarmamenthandbook.org/>. It was prepared and launched by PNND, PFSALW, Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA), Geneva Centre for Security Policy (GCSP), WFC and IPU. It was supported by the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs.



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### **Panel presentations by invited speakers**

During the panel presentations, invited speakers including Swedish parliamentarians, a Government representative and representatives from international CSOs, highlighted key disarmament issues and processes of relevance to Sweden and globally, linking to the parliamentary handbook “Assuring our Common Future”.

As pointed out by the panellists, the global security situation has deteriorated during the COVID-19 pandemic, affecting societies and human beings worldwide. The capacity of states to uphold and efficiently exercise the conventional arms control regime is at risk when resources tend to be reallocated to health, social and economic responses, new nuclear capabilities are being developed and the technological advances with potential for military application are moving fast. During the interventions, it was underlined that conventional arms, including SALW, as well as weapons of mass destruction (WMD) continue to pose a threat to societies decade after decade. In the wake of the pandemic, investing in disarmament efforts is key in order to ensure sustainable recovery, development and peace. In fragile states already affected by poverty and social and political instability, the pandemic threatens to reinforce economic hardship and conflict, in turn increasing the risk of civil unrest and violence.

Hence, a holistic approach to global security is vital, which should include increased attention to the prevention and reduction of uncontrolled flows of SALW and their ammunition as an integral part. As highlighted by one of the speakers, more than 1 billion SALW are circulating worldwide, 85% in the hands of civilians, causing the death of approximately 223 300 people every year. Armed conflicts and violence, independent of their scale, are perpetuated by the uncontrolled availability of SALW, increasing the need for concise and effective steps on behalf of parliamentarians to tackle its proliferation.

The presenting speakers agreed on the usefulness of the handbook as tool for parliamentarians to engage with disarmament processes and advance the implementation of the UN Secretary General’s Disarmament Agenda. A representative from one of the publishing organisations explained that the handbook was developed to serve as a resource for parliamentarians as well as those working with parliamentarians. The handbook includes background on disarmament issues, key agreements and processes, as well as specific examples of proven effective policies and recommendations for further parliamentary action. By bringing together several perspectives, including linking disarmament processes to sustainable development, global security, climate change and more, the handbook supports parliamentarians in combining their daily work on issues of urgency to their constituencies with disarmament processes that are long-term.

The role of parliamentarians in advancing the Disarmament Agenda was highlighted throughout the interventions. One aspect that was emphasised was the key function of parliamentarians as lawmakers. In several countries, parliamentarians lack adequate knowledge of how to make effective laws. In this regard, international organisations and membership based networks for parliamentarians can provide vital support. The parliamentarians participating in the meeting underlined that exchange between lawmakers from different countries and the sharing of experiences is key in order to learn from each



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other and strengthen the capacity of parliamentarians. This can also support parliamentarians in their important oversight and awareness raising roles, including holding their government accountable and raising awareness among the public and parliamentary colleagues on disarmament issues.

A recurring point made by several of the panellists was the importance of parliamentarians and CSOs working together – albeit respecting their different roles - in the evaluation, implementation and modernisation of disarmament policies, including on preventing SALW-related violence. As emphasised in the UN Secretary General's Disarmament Agenda, strengthened partnerships are vital to advance with disarmament processes. Multilateralism and multilateral cooperation are necessary in order to efficiently tackle the various challenges that societies are facing today. Bringing all relevant stakeholders to the table, including women and youth, would provide better understanding of the challenges as well as satisfactory policy responses.

Finally, the speakers also stressed throughout the vital contributions of women in peace and security processes, and the need to increase women's representation in leadership positions when it comes to peacebuilding as to ensure that women's voices are included.

### **Open floor debate**

In the open floor debate, it was observed that although the disarmament issues of relevance to parliamentarians varies depending on the national context, a common trend globally is that increased military spending is draining resources from human security issues, in the form of finances, human resources or scientific research. Placing human security at the centre of disarmament processes is more important than ever, which has been proven during the spread of the coronavirus, since increased military budgets cannot prevent the outbreak of a pandemic.

The discussions also focused on what parliamentarians considered as the most prioritised actions to take in relation to the handbook. An area that was specifically pointed out was the need to address the uncontrolled spread of SALW as a universal problem, as well as the effective implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). Moreover, strengthened collaboration between parliamentarians and CSOs was highlighted as a priority, including with women's and youth organisations, along with ensuring that all parliamentarians have the capacity and knowledge base to effectively exercise their legislative, oversight and awareness raising roles in order to advance the Disarmament Agenda.

Finally, the parliamentarians attending the meeting were asked to predict what would be the main electoral issues in the upcoming Swedish elections in relation to disarmament. Implementation of international treaties on SALW and WMD, cyber security, the military industry and relationship with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) were pointed out, as well as the effects of the pandemic on the global security situation. The meeting was concluded with the statement that all areas within the Disarmament Agenda are mutually reinforcing, and that any parliamentary action within one of the areas will have a positive effect on disarmament as a whole. Hence, it is key to continue to provide support to parliamentarians to further increase their capacity and knowledge on future parliamentary actions to contribute to more peaceful and sustainably developed societies.