



PARLIAMENTARY FORUM ON SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS

Newsletter May 2021

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Honourable Members and Friends of the Forum,

On behalf of the Secretariat of the Parliamentary Forum on Small Arms and Light Weapons (the Forum), I hope that you are all well in these challenging times. Now that more than a year has passed since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, we all look forward to a return to normalcy as the vaccination process continues around the world. Despite this light at the end of the tunnel, it is undeniable that the COVID-19 pandemic continues to present significant health and socioeconomic challenges globally. As the world continues to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic, **it is more crucial than ever to prevent armed violence** as to allow societies to focus resources on saving lives, efficiently deal with serious societal challenges, and as to build back towards more peaceful and sustainably developed societies. **Therefore, we need to remain committed to preventing and reducing Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW)-related violence through parliamentary action.** I would like to take the opportunity to convey gratitude to all of you pursuing determined work in this direction in your respective contexts, despite the existing challenges.

Silencing the guns is crucial in the midst of the pandemic, as highlighted by the United Nation's (UN) Secretary General in his [Global Appeal for Ceasefire](#) last [March](#) and reiterated on the 75th Anniversary of the UN in October the same year, as well as in the UN Security Council's unanimous resolution in late February 2021 **calling on all Member States to [support ceasefires to allow for COVID-19 vaccinations](#).** One should also keep in mind the surge of domestic violence cases that have been reported worldwide since the outbreak of the pandemic. **This already dire trend is worsened by the presence of firearms [which further exacerbates the situation and threatens women's rights and safety](#).** Preventing SALW-related violence saves lives and **parliamentarians continue to play a vital role in tackling this ongoing crisis and its aftermath.**

As Members and Friends of the Forum you all play a vital role in our joint work to reduce armed violence by raising awareness and taking action to contribute to a more peaceful and sustainably developed world. **I am therefore deeply thankful for your continued dedication and support.** I would also like to express my gratitude for the much-appreciated financial support of the current donors; the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) and the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation (UNSCAR).

The aforementioned support and the organisation's wide adaption to the COVID-19 situation has allowed the Forum to continue its determined efforts towards more peaceful and sustainably developed societies. Through the virtual working model adopted, the Forum has since the last newsletter in November 2020 realised several qualitative activities. One such key event was the webinar on the 16th of March "*Connecting the Dots: Enhancing implementation of the UN PoA and the Women, Peace & Security and 2030 Agendas – through increased parliamentary engagement and action in international processes*" held in cooperation with the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (AIPA), please find more details about this event and other key activities below.

Moreover, an extensive Planning, Monitoring, Evaluating and Learning (PMEL) process has been conducted in relation to the Forum's work during 2020 based on a recently strengthened methodology. Effective PMEL is crucial for improved monitoring of results achievement as to ensure that the Forum's work meets the needs of the Members and to safeguard sustainability of results mid-and long-term. **I would like to thank the Members of the Forum for helping us realise this process by participating in surveys and interviews.**

With this letter I would also like to give a brief update on coming activities. **The COVID-19 pandemic and its consequences continue to be a factor of uncertainty affecting the planning of the Forum in the upcoming period.** Based on recommendations from relevant expert authorities, and in dialogue with the Forum's Board and collaboration partners, the Forum has postponed its physical activities, including the General Assembly that is now tentatively planned for the end of this year, please see further details below. However, the Secretariat, together with the Board and partners, is closely monitoring the situation and adjusts planning accordingly. Furthermore, there is continuous cooperation and communication between the Secretariat and relevant international organisations in preparation for future events. **The safety and health of the Forum's Members, collaboration partners and staff are vital for us, and it is also a societal responsibility to curb the spread of the virus, especially now in what appears to be the later stages of the pandemic.**

Lastly, I would like to highlight that these challenging times have caused several organisations to face difficulties due to shifting donor priorities brought about by a more complex world. **Therefore, the Forum welcomes the support of Members and Friends to help 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 donating to the Forum's cause. **Small or big, all contributions make a difference and are highly appreciated!** To donate, please visit our website, where swift and secure channels enable donations via both Donorbox and Swish [here](#). Thank you very much in advance, **together we can contribute to a more peaceful world!**

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

Stay safe and healthy!

Best Wishes,



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Past events

Social media campaign- Words Over Bullets 2020

Between the 7th and 11th of December 2020, the Forum relaunched its social media campaign **#WordsOverBullets**. A fundamental pillar of the Forum's work is awareness-raising, where campaigns on social media play a vital role in involving and reaching a great number of people. The objective of the campaign was to contribute to increased awareness on the importance of reducing armed violence worldwide. **I want to reiterate my heartfelt gratitude to all Members and Friends who participated in this important effort and shared the message in their networks.**

Publication of French version of parliamentary handbook "Assuring our Common Future" in support of the United Nation's Secretary General's Disarmament Agenda January 2021

On the 27th of January the French version of the parliamentary handbook "Assuring our Common Future: A Guide to Parliamentary Action in support of Disarmament for Security and Sustainable Development" was launched during an online event hosted by [Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament](#) (PNND) and the [Inter-Parliamentary Union](#) (IPU). Supporting the implementation of the UN's Secretary General's Disarmament Agenda, **the handbook provides background to disarmament issues and makes connections between disarmament and sustainable development.** The Forum is one of the co-sponsors in this vital process led by PNND, with the IPU, [Parliamentarians for Global Action](#) (PGA), [Geneva Centre for Security Policy](#) (GCSP) and [World Future Council](#) (WFC) as additional co-sponsors. It is also supported by [UNODA](#). **The launch of this handbook demonstrates a coordinated effort on behalf of distinct relevant global parliamentary organisations to act on and promote vital disarmament efforts worldwide.** This substantial tool on parliamentary action can be found in English [here](#) and in French [here](#).

Key results from year 2020

Despite the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Forum and its Members continue to be active by virtual means. Looking back at a productive year 2020, the Forum carried out a total of nine key activities, **including five capacity building, policy shaping, awareness raising activities and three institutional activities:** four webinars, one physical parliamentary conference, three Board meetings of which one extraordinary meeting and one social media campaign. Through these activities, over 400 persons in total were reached, including approximately **180 parliamentarians** and additionally over **230 other stakeholders** from civil

society, governments and international organisations. The Forum and its Members featured in media 45 times, including the publication of three opinion pieces. The number of actions taken by Members based on Forum support, for the achievement of the Theory of Change of the organisation reached over **60 individual parliamentary legislations, oversight actions and awareness raising initiatives**. The actions contributed to **substantial policy advances** in the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (UN PoA), ratification and/or implementation processes of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), the UN Secretary General 's Disarmament Agenda "Securing our Common future", the 2030 Agenda, the Women, Peace & Security (WPS) agenda and the Youth, Peace & Security (YPS) agenda.

AIPA-The Forum "Connecting the Dots" Regional Webinar March 2021

On the 16th of March, **the Forum and AIPA hosted a successful regional webinar for Southeast Asia** "*Connecting the Dots: Enhancing implementation of the UN PoA and the Women, Peace & Security and 2030 Agendas – through increased parliamentary engagement and action in international processes*". At the webinar, parliamentary recommendations on actions were identified as part of the preparation for the Seventh Biennial Meeting of States (BMS 7) of the UN PoA, which will take place between the 26th and 30th of July 2021. **Approximately 74 different stakeholders participated in the webinar, including parliamentarians from AIPA Member and observer countries, experts from international and civil society organisations, as well as other stakeholders with an interest for the region. The discussions during the webinar demonstrated advances in the implementation and the commitment of parliamentarians in the ASEAN region to the UN PoA, as well as the WPS agenda and 2030 Agenda.** The webinar formed part of the ongoing project support for 2020-2021 from the UNSCAR fund. **A physical follow-up seminar is tentatively planned later this year, depending on the COVID-19 situation.** You can find a report summarising the webinar [here](#).

Swedish launch of the parliamentary handbook "Assuring our Common Future" in support of the United Nation's Secretary General's Disarmament Agenda

On the 26th of April, **a virtual roundtable meeting took place** with the goal of introducing the previously mentioned parliamentary handbook "*Assuring our Common Future*" to Swedish parliamentarians. The meeting was hosted by PNND, with the Forum, WFC and the Association for the Right Livelihood Award in the Swedish Parliament as co-sponsors, in cooperation with the IPU. **Nearly 25 Swedish parliamentarians, Government representatives, civil society organisations and other stakeholders joined the meeting** to discuss key disarmament issues and processes, including the importance of preventing and reducing the uncontrolled proliferation of SALW to contribute to more peaceful and sustainably developed societies. **The Forum was represented in the panel by Hon. Olle Thorell, Member of the Forum and the Swedish Committee on Foreign Affairs.** Please find the report from the webinar elaborated by the Forum [here](#).

The Forum's participation in relevant policy processes

The Forum's Members, Board and Secretariat continue to be highly active in virtual activities connected to the organisation's mandate as moderators and panellists. One example is **President Hon. Daisy Tourné** participating as a panellist in a conversation with youth in Latin America. Hosted by the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Development and Disarmament in Latin America and the Caribbean (UNLIREC) the webinar "Nuevas generaciones de cambio: mujeres protagonistas en el desarme, la no proliferación y el control de armas comparten sus experiencias, retos y recomendaciones con las futuras generaciones" was held on the 11th of December and sought to **support young people to take further action by featuring discussion with women experts on disarmament.** You can find more information about the event [here](#).

The Forum's Secretary General Karin Olofsson participated as moderator in a webinar organised by the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific (UNRCPPD) and the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA) on International Women's Day on March 8. **Several of the Forum's Members formed part of the panel at the webinar** entitled "*Taking stock of the series of events on gun violence and illicit small arms trafficking from a gender perspective in Asia-Pacific*". **The webinar highlighted conclusions from the series of previous seminars, summarising findings and experience on how parliamentarians and leaders from civil society can work together to strengthen gender mainstreaming of SALW control in national contexts.** Learn more about the event [here](#).

Lastly, the Forum was invited to share its expertise during an internal webinar hosted by the Social Democratic group within the Committee of Justice in the Swedish Parliament. The webinar focused on the topic of illicit SALW trafficking and the Swedish Minister of Interior, Mr Mikael Damberg, was also among the speakers. **The Forum took the opportunity to highlight the serious global situation related to the uncontrolled flow of SALW and presented its recommendations to the Swedish parliamentarians on possible measures to prevent and reduce armed violence in Sweden and globally.**

Board meetings December 2020 and April 2021

Finally, **two Board meetings** have been held since the last newsletter, one in December 2020 and one recently in April 2021. The meetings were held online where the Board, among other things, provided strategic guidance and advice on the planning, implementation and monitoring of activities and results, as well as discussed the current state of the pandemic and its effect on the Forum's mandate and work.

Ongoing and upcoming events

Pan-African Parliament-The Forum Regional Webinar on the 24th of June 2021

Within its “Connecting the Dots”-project, financed by UNSCAR, the Forum is implementing and planning a range of activities with thematic focus on the UN PoA and the 2030 Agenda in relation to the UN Security Council Resolutions (UNSCRs) on WPS. One such activity is the **regional webinar for Africa, scheduled for the 24th of June**, which will be hosted in collaboration with the [Pan-African Parliament](#). The initiative will follow up on the [results of the previous productive regional seminar](#) held in [October 2019](#), as well as serve to continue to supporting parliamentary initiatives connected to the overall theme of the African Union on [“Silencing the Guns”](#). The objective is to enhance implementation of international instruments by parliamentary action through capacity-building, policy-shaping and awareness-raising. Moreover, the webinar is planned to be followed by a physical regional seminar later, when the conditions so permit. Conclusions from the webinar will feed into the run-up and preparation of [BMS 7](#) on the [UN PoA](#) highlighted further below.

BMS7 UN PoA & the CSP7 ATT mid-2021

The [BMS 7 of the UN PoA](#) is set to take place from the 26th to the 30th of July 2021, after having been postponed during 2020. **The Forum intends to actively participate in the conference and will highlight the importance of advancing the implementation of the UN PoA in relation to our mandate with a side-event, as part of its UNSCAR 2020-2021 “Connecting the Dots” project.** The conference grants the opportunity to confer with governments and public institutions regarding different policies related to SALW control and armed violence reduction. **Parliamentarians have an essential role to play in this process, and the Forum is looking forward to promoting experiences, challenges and opportunities for parliamentary action during the meeting.**

Furthermore, the Seventh Conference of States Parties to [the ATT \(CSP7\)](#) is set to take place between the 30th of August and the 3rd of September this year. Although the structure of the meeting is still being developed, the Forum is looking forward to contributing actively with parliamentary perspectives in the conference.

Conference by Piku “Against firearm-related violence” to take place between 3-4 November 2021

Between the 3rd and 4th of November 2021, **the conference “*Against firearm-related violence*”** is planned to take place in Malmö, Sweden, arranged by the educational company Piku, founded in 2001 and known to deliver new and valuable knowledge in matters that affect the public sector in Sweden. This conference is the first one in a newly launched conference concept BraveTalk, dedicated to urgent and important challenges that Swedish municipalities face today. Firearm-related violence in Sweden is a complex issue that requires taking multiple perspectives into account in order to find the best strategies to prevent armed violence. **The Forum’s Member and co-founder**

Hon. Karin Enström will participate as opening speaker in this event. Moreover, the Forum's Secretary General Karin Olofsson is part of the reference group of experts and practitioners, invited to contribute to the planning and implementation process by sharing their knowledge and expertise in order to ensure a successful conference. Learn more about the conference [here](#).

UNDP SEESAC-The Forum Regional Seminar in the Western Balkans late 2021

Dependent on the COVID-19 situation at the end of 2021, a regional seminar for the Western Balkans will be held in cooperation with the [South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons \(SEESAC\)](#) and the [Regional Cooperation Council](#). The seminar aims to strengthen parliamentary action in relation to the [Regional Roadmap for a sustainable solution to the illegal possession, misuse and trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons \(SALW\) and their ammunition in the Western Balkans by 2024](#), and seeks to include parliamentarians from the six jurisdictions participating in the implementation of the Roadmap in the region.

The Forum's General Assembly late 2021

The Forum is preparing to hold its biennial **General Assembly**, the highest organ of the Forum, as soon as the situation so permit. The Assembly is an opportunity for a representative selection of the Forum's Membership to **meet and discuss the recent achievements and challenges of the organisation, share national, regional and international experiences, and provide strategic feedback for the future actions of the organisation as well as to elect the Board of the Forum for the upcoming period**. Following the dialogue and decisions taken during the extraordinary Board meeting in October 2020, **the General Assembly planned to take place late 2020 was postponed until the COVID-19 restrictions have been lifted** and the security and well-being of the Forum's Members, partners and staff can be guaranteed.

The Assembly is tentatively planned to take place in conjunction with the above-mentioned regional seminar for Western Balkans in late 2021. The Forum and its partners remain in committed and continuous dialogue on the realisation of this event, further information will be provided to Members timely before the Assembly.

Call for Action- Please sign and spread the word!

The Forum has launched a [Call for Action](#) to highlight the vital role of parliamentarians in preventing the uncontrolled flow of SALW. With the global COVID-19 pandemic, when democracy is under pressure and conflicts as well as armed violence is on the rise, **parliamentary action is more vital than ever to prevent armed violence**. Despite this fact, there is still uncertainty in the future donor funding panorama on the topic of armed violence prevention due to shifting donor priorities. **We therefore urge you to sign the petition to demonstrate the continued**

importance of this crucial issue. Welcome – both as a parliamentarian or any other actors - to sign the petition online, it takes less than a minute. Please spread the word and share the link in your networks.

Many thanks to all who have already signed the petition. Together we can contribute to human security, peace and sustainable development worldwide!

Contribute with your stories

We are very interested in hearing **stories from you, our Members and Friends**, to 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.

For an interesting example of a recent Member story, kindly refer to the section below. **Please contact the Secretariat** if you have any initiatives that you would like us to share by sending an email to texier@parlforum.org.

A story from Board Member Hon. Vincent de Paul Emah Etoundi

On the 3rd of December 2020, Board Member Hon. Vincent de Paul Emah Etoundi from Cameroon chaired a workshop entitled “The Contribution of Female Parliamentarians in the Prevention of Conflicts and Consolidation of Peace” with the purpose to raise awareness and strengthen the capacities of women parliamentarians in Cameroon on conflict prevention and consolidation of peace. The workshop, realised in cooperation with the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), offered an opportunity for parliamentarians to discuss the role women and women parliamentarians play in conflict prevention and peacebuilding by making use of tools such as the UNSCR 1325 and other related resolutions alongside the UN agenda on WPS. Based on the discussion, recommendations were identified to serve as a roadmap for the network of women parliamentarians in Cameroon during their continued work in 2021 and onwards.