



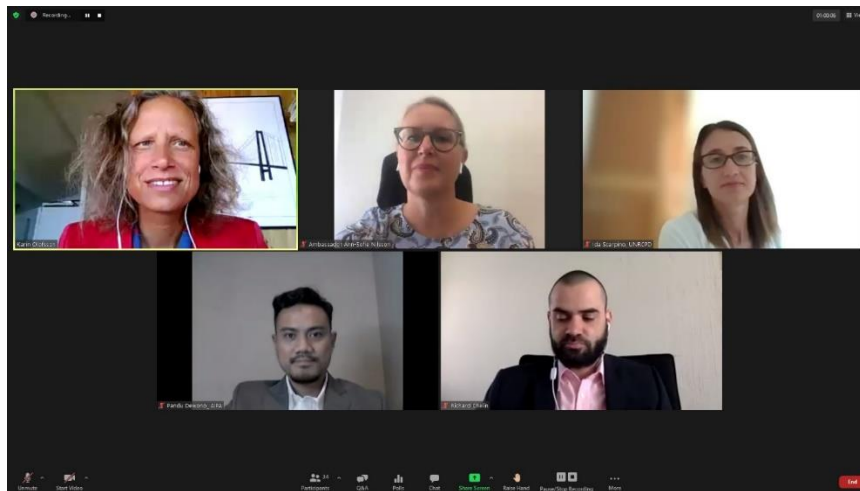
PARLIAMENTARY FORUM  
ON SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS

**Side event**

“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”

July 29, 2021

Seventh Biennial Meetings of States (BMS 7) 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)



**Report<sup>1</sup>**

The side event, a step in a chain of seminars and webinars, aimed to engage parliamentarians and identify parliamentary recommendations on actions for the run-up and active contributions to the BMS 7, as part of the “Connecting the Dots” project financed by the United Nations Office on Disarmament Affairs (UNODA), specifically the Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation (UNSCAR). During the side event, the recommendations for parliamentary action of the “Connecting the Dots” regional webinars in Southeast Asia and Africa were presented and analysed. The discussions included recommendations on actions and perspectives by Members of the Parliament (MPs) to support the UN PoA, Women, Peace and Security (WPS) and 2030 Agendas, with the aim to provide input to and underpin the impact of the discussions and results of the BMS 7, on the importance of parliamentary action in both regions to advance the implementation of the UN PoA.

The side event, with 90 participants registered, including panellists, of which 52 were women and 38 men, included the active participation of MPs, government representatives,

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<sup>1</sup> The views expressed herein are those of the Implementing Partner and participants and do not necessarily reflect those of the United Nations.



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civil society organisations (CSOs) and other stakeholders. Participants discussed key issues of parliamentary action, Gender-based Violence (GBV) and the consequences that the pandemic has had in its prevalence, prevention and reduction of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) related violence, including the importance of the implementation of the UN PoA to contribute to more peaceful and sustainably developed societies.

The virtual side event was hosted by the Parliamentary Forum on Small Arms and Light Weapons (PFSALW), in collaboration with Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Sweden and the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (AIPA). It builds on previous successful efforts in both regions, as well as the Forum's participation in previous UN PoA meetings and conferences, including the regional seminar in Southeast Asia in 2018, in Africa 2019, the Sixth Biennial Meeting of States in 2016 and the Third Review Conference of the UN PoA in 2018. The regional seminars were hosted in collaboration with the ASEAN-Inter-parliamentary Assembly and the Pan-African Parliament, where Parliamentary Action Plans were adopted to guide continuous parliamentary action in the regions.

During the discussions, the main conclusions including recommendations on parliamentary action deliberated during the webinars for Southeast Asia (March 16, 2021) and Africa (June 24, 2021) were presented, the summary of said recommendations is available [here](#).

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

The panel presentations included:

- Mr Richard Chelin, Senior Researcher, Institute for Security Studies, Pretoria (ISS),
- Ms Ida Scarpino - Coordinator on Gender mainstreaming control of SALW, United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific (UNRCPD)
- Mr Mario Pandu Dewono, Deputy Secretary General, ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (AIPA)
- Hon Biyika Lawrence Songa, Member of the Parliament of the Republic of Uganda
- HE Ann-Sofie Nilsson - Ambassador for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation, Sweden
- Hon Dr Raphael Chegeni, Tanzania – Vice-president of PFSALW

**Mr Richard Chelin** provided an overview of the UN PoA and its implementation in Africa. He highlighted that Africa has come a long-way in terms of incorporating GBV in the national agenda of different countries as a priority, with laws and policies amended or introduced to deal with a wide range of gender equality related issues. However, there are still challenges, especially in the implementation of policies at local and grassroots levels. A lack of trust in institutions, stigmatisation and fear of retribution lead to many instances of GBV and other crimes often going unnoticed despite the instruments available. Examples of the main challenges are in terms of how to deal with physical and psychological trauma, limited funding and political will, as well as limited number of interventions which are reactive rather than preventive. Some recommendations are: increased harmonisation of laws on domestic violence and firearms; GBV should be included in the national plan of



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actions on SALW; the need for more targeted research and data collection with proper monitoring and evaluation mechanisms; an adequate ratification and adoption of international instruments on violence against women; as well as strengthening and supporting justice systems.

**Ms Ida Scarpino** briefly shared an overview of UNRCPD's current and past projects related to the work on Gender and SALW control in Asia-Pacific. She mentioned positive signs of increased commitment by states in Asia-Pacific to increase women's participation in peace and security, arms control, while some ASEAN member states have taken decisive steps to end discrimination of women in security forces, which is a decisive step to promote a gender responsive framework on SALW in the region. She further emphasised the principle that gender equality in government and agencies in charge of implementing instruments for SALW control is an operational necessity, not only a moral obligation, as policies that include women in its design and implementation are simply more effective. Another positive trend from Asia-Pacific is a greater number of National Action Plans (NAP) on WPS. In 2020, 14 member states in the region have implemented NAP or similar policies, a trend increasing noticeable since 2015, indicating a momentum. MPs can draw on existing gender strategies in the security sector to promote the active role of women in the implementation of the UN PoA, as well as working with different organisations increasingly focusing on the issue of WPS and GBV in the region, in order to use existing synergies and strengthening the bridge between national and regional mechanisms.

**Mr Mario Pandu Dewono**, provided a brief overview on how AIPA works and its contribution to SALW control for peace, security and sustainable development in Southeast Asia. The main challenges mentioned by Mr Dewono were: countries in Southeast Asia are heavily affected by the illicit traffic of SALW, as the region is geographically situated in a crossroads of illicit SALW trafficking and production, with active criminal organisations. In addition, the consequences posed by the COVID-19 pandemic underscore the need of concerted efforts in the region. Furthermore, there is a need for enhanced continuity and accountability for AIPA member countries, especially related to resolutions adopted at the regional level, where policy recommendations and decisions require a follow up mechanism, to achieve sustainability in terms of decisions. The limited resources and funding also restrict from engaging in more awareness raising efforts, which slows down the implementation of existing programmes. He further mentioned that initiatives from MPs in the ASEAN region are needed to strengthen arms control loopholes and ensure successful implementation of existing valid frameworks. However, Mr. Dewono mentioned that AIPA Member Parliaments agreed to respect the cost of managing of the COVID-19 pandemic while retaining the will to implement arms control measures.

**HE Ambassador Ann-Sofie Nilsson**, provided perspectives from the Government of Sweden, stating that the illicit transfer, destabilisation, accumulation and misuse of SALW and their ammunition have devastating humanitarian consequences. Preventing armed conflict and securing sustainable peace, based on Human Rights principles, cannot be



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achieved without handling the harm done by SALW. Ambassador Nilsson underscored the fact that SALW violence is not exclusive to conflict areas, as gang violence and GBV takes place everywhere. For states and members of the international community, the UN PoA is one of the most important instruments in tackling the illicit flows of SALW. The UN PoA meetings are crucial, and side events are important to continue to put emphasis on the instruments and to review the implementation. The UN PoA and the International Tracing Instrument really remain relevant and effective instruments to deal with SALW, where Sweden observes development and improvements. From a Swedish standpoint, it is important to apply the gender equality perspective in the SALW control related work, including the mainstreaming of gender issues and fully integrating the gender perspective in the implementation of the UN PoA. Furthermore, the implementation of UN PoA is strengthened by synergies and complementarity with other international instruments such as the 2030 Agenda, the Arms Trade Treaty and the United Nations Secretary General Disarmament Agenda. Finally, she emphasised the connection that sustainable development has in relation to adequate arms control and SALW violence prevention and reduction, and the important role of MPs to continue building momentum and keeping the issue of gender perspective on the arms control and disarmament agenda.

**Hon Biyika Lawrence Songa**, shared key experiences from Uganda, where illicit SALW proliferation has a strong impact, given the serious challenges resulting from the porous borders. SALW related violence in the country and the region is closely related to natural resources conflicts, as well as wildlife trafficking. Both issues interconnect and extend affecting the livelihoods of people, where women and children are especially affected. He further mentioned that Uganda is taking some steps in addressing illicit SALW, e.g., developed national action plan on SALW with key objectives to control stockpile and access volume, as to prevent SALW proliferation. In the vision to move towards a society free of SALW-related violence, there is a need to strengthen capacity building, educate the population, involve stakeholders such as government, civil society, academia and the private sector. Despite the fact that Uganda has a firearms policy, there is a need to review the firearms act, the control database and increase capacity building and training. MPs can work for better policies and legislation to prevent SALW in the region and in the country, while CSOs continue with advocacy. Finally, he urged to address the root causes of conflict and violence, where challenges remain, such as limited resources; lack of in country coordination with the need to establish a specialised SALW control agency; as well as the lack of harmonised laws and storage facilities in the region.

**Hon Dr Raphael Chegeni**, provided PFSALW's perspective on the UN PoA and parliamentary action, highlighting that armed violence has devastating costs for individuals, families and communities. According to the Global Peace Index 2021, the economic impact of violence to the global economy in 2020 was \$14.96 trillion in purchasing power parity (PPP) terms. This figure is equivalent to 11.6 per cent of the world's economic activity (gross world product) or \$1,942 per person. Hon Dr Chegeni further underscored the urgency of the situation that calls for concise and effective steps on behalf of all relevant stakeholders,



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including parliamentarians, to implement international instruments relevant to the prevention of illicit arms proliferation, including the UN PoA, the WPS and the 2030 Agenda. He explained that parliamentarians play a vital role through their legislative, oversight and awareness raising functions, by bridging the gap between international arms control instruments and national and regional implementation level.

In conclusion, Hon Dr Raphael Chegeni, highlighted the 20th anniversary of the UN PoA as an opportunity for parliamentarians to join forces with other actors, including governments, civil society and international organisations to support the implementation of the UN PoA, specifically connected to the prevention and reduction of armed violence, and demonstrate the political will to put words over bullets. He hoped that the open floor discussions would be productive, highlighting current and past challenges and actions needed in the future to build back better following the global pandemic to silence the guns and to safeguard human security and sustainable development.

### **Open floor debate**

In the open floor debate, questions were made in relation to synergies between SALW instruments and other organisations outside the disarmament community, such as the World Health Organisation focal points on armed violence prevention, where the UN PoA could be a major vehicle for such collaboration, including national commissions on SALW.

Continuing with the discussions on synergies, a question was made in relation to the process regarding the Non-Proliferation Treaty, that primarily has a focus on Nuclear Disarmament, but in its Article 6 includes an obligation to all state parties to work on general and complete disarmament. The question focused on the opportunity to take forward vital disarmament items of concern, such as building more political support on the control of conventional arms, including SALW.

Other considerations were highlighted in terms on how to deal with the physical and psychological trauma inflicted to victims of terrorism, especially girls and women, such as victims of Boko Haram actions in Nigeria and in the region. Other panellists highlighted issues related to SALW proliferation in Asia, especially in India and in relation to the intra-border issues in the region, and how cooperation can be strengthened at the regional and international level.

Following a question on how momentum can be kept during the UN PoA in relation to the gender equality perspective, panellists wrapped up by emphasising the importance of awareness raising and adequate understanding of SALW violence and its consequences on women and girls. The need of political will at higher levels and grass-roots levels is a key aspect, as well as adequate funding, and a strong regional understanding with a multi-partner perspective is needed as to be able to implement harmonised SALW prevention and reduction policies.