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ANNIVERSARY

**PARLIAMENTARY FORUM**  
ON SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS

**Newsletter September 2022**

Contents:

- **Greeting from the Secretary General**
- **Past events**
  - *Key results from year 2021*
  - *Regional hybrid seminar in Latin America “Towards a regional parliamentary arms control agenda”, December 2021*
  - *Policy Statement on Preventing Violence Against Parliamentarians in the Global Context of Democratic Backsliding, December 2021*
  - *Social media campaign “WordsOverBullets”, December 2021*
  - *Webinar “Disarmament that saves lives: Curbing uncontrolled flows of Small Arms and Light Weapons, the role of parliaments”, March 2022*
  - *Board meeting, April 2022*
  - *Regional seminars in Asia with focus on Southeast Asia in Jakarta, Indonesia, June 2022*
  - *Regional seminar in Africa “Connecting the Dots” in Yaoundé, Cameroon, June 2022*
  - *International side event at the Eighth Biennial Meeting of States (BMS8) on the United Nations Programme of Action (UN PoA) in New York, United States of America, June-July 2022*
  - *The Forum’s participation in relevant policy processes*
- **Ongoing and upcoming events**
  - *Regional seminar in Africa, with focus on East Africa*
  - *Regional seminar for Latin America and the Caribbean*
  - *Regional seminar for the Western Balkans*
  - *The Forum’s 20th Anniversary*

- *The Forum's General Assembly*
- *Contribute with your stories*
- *Call for action – please sign and spread the word!*

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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 sincerely hope this message finds you well. Over two years have passed since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, and as the vaccination process continues worldwide it is rewarding to note the gradual improvement of the pandemic context. However, the pandemic continues to pose significant challenges to health and socioeconomic development around the world. [In addition to the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, societies also face challenges in the form of the largest number of conflicts witnessed since 1946 and climate change](#), as reported by the United Nations (UN), which are undermining international efforts to build back better. The socioeconomic effects of the intersecting crises are in turn impairing the capacity of states to uphold the arms control regime. **In this regard, it is more urgent than ever that we 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 my gratitude to all of you pursuing determined work in this direction in your respective contexts, despite the existing challenges.**

According to a recent update from the Small Arms Survey (SAS) [211,000 people were killed by firearms in 2020](#), implying a minor decrease of firearms related deaths compared to the death of 223,000 people in 2018. However, ongoing conflicts, such as in Ukraine, as well as a recent increase in homicide rates in some countries, constitute significant risks for reversing the positive trend. Continued and strengthened efforts for the achievement of more peaceful and sustainably developed societies are needed and parliamentarians play a key role in contributing to the work on prevention and reduction of armed violence through the legislative, oversight and awareness raising functions.

**As the Forum's Members and Friends, you all play an essential role in our joint efforts to prevent armed conflict and violence** by raising awareness and taking action to contribute to a more peaceful and sustainable world. **I am therefore grateful for your maintained**

**dedication and support.** I would also like to express my gratitude for the much-appreciated financial support of the current donors: the [United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs'](#) (UNODA) Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation (UNSCAR), the [Ministry of Foreign Affairs \(MFA\) of Canada](#) and the [Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Sweden](#).

**The Forum has been able to continue its determined work towards more peaceful and sustainably developed societies thanks to the aforementioned support and the organisation's wide adaption to the COVID-19 context.** Since the last newsletter in December 2021, the Forum has completed several qualitative activities through virtual methods, as well as the latest months in-person for the first time since the outbreak of the pandemic, as detailed below.

2022 is a special year for the Forum as it marks the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the organisation. The anniversary is an apt opportunity to draw attention to the topic of SALW-control and celebrate the significant achievements the Forum's Members have accomplished throughout two decades. **We warmly invite our Members and Friends to participate in the celebrations, that will be held onwards,** kindly find more details below.

Yet, 2022 is also an important year for the future of the Forum. **A vital ongoing process is the elaboration of a new Strategic Plan** for the period of 2023-2026, to be adopted by the Board at the end of the year. The Strategic Plan is a significant document that stakes out the main direction of the Forum's work long-term, with the possibility to integrate new elements of importance.

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 upcoming period.** The Secretariat, along with the Board and partners, is closely monitoring the situation and adjusting plans accordingly. In addition, the Forum and relevant international organisations are constantly cooperating and communicating in order to prepare for future events in a safe and responsible manner.

I would also like to highlight that in the current challenging times, many organisations are facing difficulties ensuring financial sustainability brought about by a more complex world. **Therefore, the Forum appreciates the support of its Members and Friends in ensuring the long-term sustainability of the organisation.** For your kind consideration, I would like to take this opportunity to warmly welcome you to support our efforts by making a donation 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**

### Key results from year 2021

**Despite the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Forum and its Members have continued efforts to prevent and reduce armed violence, including by virtual means.** Looking back at a productive 2021, the Forum carried out a total of ten key activities, **including seven capacity building, policy shaping and awareness raising activities** in the form of two regional webinars, one regional hybrid seminar, two international side events, one national webinar and one social media campaign as well as three institutional activities in the form of two ordinary Board meetings and one extra-ordinary Board meeting. Through the activities, nearly 370 persons in total were reached, including approximately **80 parliamentarians** and additionally **nearly 290 other stakeholders** from civil society, governments and international organisations. Moreover, the Forum and its Members featured in media approximately 50 times.

The number of actions taken by Members based on the Forum's support, for the achievement of the Theory of Change of the organisation, reached over **70 individual parliamentary legislative, oversight and awareness raising actions**. 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 and Security (WPS) Agenda and the Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) Agenda.

Regional hybrid seminar in Latin America "*Towards a regional parliamentary arms control agenda*", December 2021

On December 9, 2021, the regional seminar entitled "*Towards a regional parliamentary arms control agenda*", a recording of which can be found [here](#), was co-organised by the Forum together with the [Asociación para Políticas Públicas](#) (APP), [Red de Seguridad Humana en América Latina y el Caribe](#) (SEHLAC), [Control Arms](#) and the [Gender Equality Network for Small Arms Control](#) (GENSAC). On behalf of the Forum, Board Member Ms. Pia Devoto and President Hon. Daisy Tourné were part of organising the vital activity and participated actively. The seminar was realised in hybrid format with partial virtual participation, gathering parliamentarians, civil society, the diplomatic community and other relevant stakeholders from Latin America. **The outcome of the activity was the creation of a 'group of interest' of stakeholders engaged to mutually support each other for enhanced arms control in the region.**

Policy Statement on Preventing Violence Against Parliamentarians in the Global Context of Democratic Backsliding, December 2021

On December 16, 2021, the Board of the Forum adopted a [Policy Statement on Preventing Violence Against Parliamentarians in the Global Context of Democratic Backsliding](#). Worldwide, an increasing trend of violence against parliamentarians is noted which severely undermines democracy. The consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic have exacerbated the trend and the urgency of the situation calls for concise and effective steps at the national, regional, and international levels related to preventing violence against parliamentarians. As has been reaffirmed during the pandemic, parliamentarians and democratic institutions are key to adequately addressing social, economic and health crises, and therefore supporting parliamentary institutions and organisations is crucial. The Forum

is convinced that **preventing violence against parliamentarians to safeguard peace and sustainable development is fundamental to regaining momentum in efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda and to build back better following COVID-19.**

Social media campaign “WordsOverBullets”, December 2021

On 20-22 December, 2021, the Forum relaunched its social media campaign **#WordsOverBullets** on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#). A fundamental pillar 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 was to contribute to increased awareness on the importance of reducing armed violence worldwide. Parliamentarians as well as other relevant actors participated in the campaign with photos and key messages in videos. **Thank you to all participating in the campaign and spreading the message!**

Webinar “Disarmament that saves lives: Curbing uncontrolled flows of Small Arms and Light Weapons, the role of parliaments”, March 2022

On March 10, the webinar entitled “[Disarmament that saves lives: Curbing uncontrolled flows of Small Arms and Light Weapons, the role of parliaments](#)” took place, co-organised by the Forum together with the [Inter-Parliamentary Union](#) (IPU), [Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament](#) (PNND), the [Geneva Centre for Security Policy](#) (GCSP) and the [World Future Council](#) (WFC). The event was an opportunity to continue **strengthening the collaboration with aforementioned relevant international organisations** based on previous efforts in 2020 and 2021. The cooperation is highly strategic as it facilitates outreach and work with parliamentarians and increases the impact and results achievement on the topic.

Leaning on recommendations from the SALW chapter of the joint **parliamentary handbook “[Assuring our Common Future](#)”** launched in 2020 in support of the UN Secretary General’s Disarmament Agenda, **the webinar highlighted the role, opportunities and challenges that parliamentarians face when combatting the uncontrolled proliferation of SALW.**

While having a global scope, the webinar was realised through two separate sessions, one timed for Asia and the Pacific and one session timed for Africa, Europe and Latin America and the Caribbean. The Forum’s President Hon. Daisy Tourné, Board Member Ms. Pia Devoto and the Members Hon. Johanna Ebangha Agborntui, Member of Parliament from

Cameroon, and Hon. Lawrence Biyika Songa, Member of Parliament from Uganda, as well as Secretary General Ms. Karin Olofsson participated actively as moderators and panellists.

#### Board meeting, April 2022

On April 20, 2022, the Board of the Forum met for a virtual Board meeting. Among other aspects, the Board 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.

#### Regional seminars in Asia with focus on Southeast Asia in Jakarta, Indonesia, June 2022

In collaboration with the [ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly](#) (AIPA) the Forum realised two regional seminars in Asia in Jakarta, Indonesia between June 8-10. The **seminars targeted parliamentarians, including women parliamentarians from AIPA member parliaments, and AIPA observer parliaments in Asia**, and aimed to increase parliamentary engagement, participation and action on international frameworks to limit the uncontrolled proliferation of SALW.

The first seminar was arranged within the Forum's project *"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"* financed by the [UNODA](#)'s UNSCAR fund. The seminar identified updated parliamentary recommendations on actions to take for the implementation of the **UN PoA linking to the WPS Agenda and the 2030 Agenda**. The recommendations were incorporated into a revised regional [Parliamentary Action Plan](#) (PAP), which was approved by the parliamentarians.

The second seminar, *"Reducing threats to international security: Mobilising parliamentarians from Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean and Middle East to strengthen global parliamentary action for enhanced universalisation and implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty"* also resulted in the approval of a revised regional [PAP](#), based on the key parliamentary recommendations for the universalisation and implementation of the **ATT linking to the WPS Agenda** identified by the participants. The seminar was financed by the generous support of the [MFA of Canada](#).

Interested in learning more about the Forum's regional seminars for Asia? Kindly consult the [seminar report](#).

Regional seminar in Africa “Connecting the Dots” in Yaoundé, Cameroon, June 2022

Within the aforementioned “Connecting the Dots” -project, **the Forum also hosted a regional seminar in Africa on June 21-22.** The seminar was realised in collaboration with, and at the venue of, the National Assembly of Cameroon with the appreciated support of Board Member Hon. Vincent de Paul Emah Etoundi, Member of Parliament from Cameroon. The seminar gathered parliamentarians from the region, including Cameroon and the project’s focus countries Niger and Tanzania.

At the regional seminar, updated parliamentary recommendations on actions to take for the implementation of the **UN PoA linking to the WPS Agenda and the 2030 Agenda** were incorporated into a revised regional [PAP](#), which was adopted by the parliamentarians.

Kindly find more information about the seminar in the [seminar report](#).

International side event at the Eighth Biennial Meeting of States (BMS8) on the UN PoA in New York, United States of America, June-July 2022

The [Eighth Biennial Meeting of States](#) (BMS8) on the UN PoA took place during 27 June-1 July at the UN in New York. A Forum delegation, consisting of Secretary General Ms. Karin Olofsson and Vice-President Hon. Raphael Chegeni, Member of Parliament from Tanzania, participated in the conference. On 30 June the Forum arranged a side event presenting the conclusions from the aforementioned regional seminars in Southeast Asia and Africa. As described above, **the project has engaged parliamentarians to identify key parliamentary priorities and recommendations** regarding enhanced implementation of the UN PoA, the WPS and 2030 Agendas.

The Forum would like to extend its sincere gratitude to all participants. A special thank you to AIPA and the National Assembly of Cameroon for collaborating with the Forum for the implementation of the project, to the MFA of Sweden for sponsoring the side event and to the UNODA’s UNSCAR fund for the generous financing.

A [report](#) is available with more information about the conclusions from the side event.

The Forum’s participation in relevant policy processes

**The Forum through its Board, the Members and the Secretariat, has continued to be highly active in the international context, participating in several virtual and in-person meetings and seminars as speaker, facilitator or attendee.** For example, the Forum’s Secretary General Ms. Karin Olofsson participated as a panellist at a webinar on March 9 organised by the [United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific](#)



(UNRCPD) and the [International Action Network on Small Arms](#) (IANSA). Entitled “*Gun Violence and Illicit Small Arms Trafficking from a Gender Perspective in Asia Pacific*”, the event’s objective was to gather parliamentarians and representatives of civil society as well as other stakeholders to **share experiences and reflect on the progress made in the Asia and Pacific region regarding promoting a gender responsive framework in small arms control and complementary agendas at the national and regional level, in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.** The webinar formed part of a series of webinars and workshops on the topic organised by UNRCPD and IANSA, where the Forum has been continuously active as moderator and speaker. A recording of the webinar can be found [here](#).

On May 6, 2022, the Forum was also invited to participate as speaker in the first ever “*Constructive Dialogue on Firearms related to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime (UNTOC) and its protocols*” organised by the [United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime](#) (UNODC) and chaired by the Government of Mexico. The Forum’s Secretary General Ms. Karin Olofsson participated actively in-situ in the Constructive Dialogue in Vienna, sharing the experiences on behalf of the Forum’s Members.

As highlighted in the UNTOC, **illicit trafficking in firearms endangers the wellbeing of peoples, their socio-economic development and right to live in peace**, as has been made particularly evident in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. In her [statement](#), the Secretary General **highlighted that the urgency of the situation calls for concise steps by all, including parliamentarians, to implement UNTOC and other relevant international instruments.**

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## Ongoing and upcoming activities

### Regional seminar in Africa, with focus on East Africa

Tentatively planned for **the end of the year**, the Forum is aiming to realise a seminar in Africa, with focus on East Africa. By providing targeted support to parliamentarians in East Africa, the seminar’s objective is to **enhance parliamentary capacities, actions and leverage related to the implementation of the UN PoA and the WPS Agenda**, in countries where women’s political participation and decision-making role is limited. Parliamentarians from the focus countries Comoros, Madagascar, Rwanda, Uganda and Tanzania will be particularly targeted. The seminar is taking place within the Forum’s project “*Connecting*

*the Dots: Advancing the implementation of the UN PoA and the WPS Agenda by enhancing parliamentary capacity and action in East Africa and Asia*”, supported by the [UNODA](#)’s UNSCAR fund.

#### Regional seminar for Latin America and the Caribbean

In the upcoming period, the Forum is planning to realise a regional seminar in the Latin American and Caribbean region in collaboration with the [Latin American and Caribbean Parliament](#) (Parlatino). The seminar will be realised within the Forum’s project supported by the [MFA of Canada](#), which aims to **promote parliamentary action for enhanced implementation and universalisation of the ATT, linking to the WPS Agenda.**

#### Regional seminar for the Western Balkans

A regional seminar for the Western Balkans, to 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](#) (RCC), is planned to take place in the upcoming period after having been postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. 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 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 20th Anniversary

**20 years have passed since a group of parliamentarians from Latin America, Sweden and Spain convened** in the Spanish Congress with the conviction to support national legislative efforts on prevention of SALW-related violence as well as to strengthen parliamentarians’ role in the implementation of relevant international instruments. The idea consolidated into what is currently known as the Forum, present in over 100 countries and with 320 Members gathered across party political lines. **The Forum’s 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary is a milestone that will be celebrated in various ways in the coming period. A special [logo](#) has been designed to commemorate the occasion and an anniversary seminar is tentatively planned for December 2022.**

#### The Forum’s General Assembly

The Forum is preparing to hold its biennial **General Assembly**, the highest organ of the Forum, as soon as the global pandemic situation so permits. Following the decision taken during the extraordinary Board meeting in October 2021, the General Assembly has been

postponed until tentatively the **beginning of 2023**, when hopefully the COVID-19 pandemic situation has stabilised. The Assembly is tentatively planned to take place in conjunction with another Forum activity.

Contribute with your stories

The Forum is 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 conflict and violence. **Please contact the Secretariat** if you have any initiatives that you would like to share, by sending an email to [texier@parlforum.org](mailto:texier@parlforum.org).

Call for Action – please sign and spread the word!

**The Forum has launched a [Call for Action](#)** to highlight the vital role of parliamentarians to prevent the uncontrolled flow of SALW. In the aftermath of the global pandemic, it is now more important than ever to prevent armed violence.

**We welcome all, parliamentarians or any other actors that agree on the importance to prevent and reduce armed violence globally, to sign the petition online. 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!