

**Regional seminar in Africa**  
**“Connecting the Dots: Enhancing Implementation of the Women, Peace & Security, UN PoA and 2030 Agendas – through increased parliamentary engagement and action in international processes”**

**21-22 June, 2022**

**Venue: National Assembly of Cameroon, Yaoundé**

**Preparatory step to the Eighth Biennial Meeting of States (BMS8) on 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), 27 June- 1 July 2022**

**PARLIAMENTARY ACTION PLAN<sup>1</sup>**

**Part 1 – Introduction and purpose**

The state of the world, marked by violence and conflict, underlines the need to prioritise the prevention and reduction of armed violence. According to the Small Arms Survey, more than 1 billion Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) are circulating worldwide, 85% in the hands of civilians<sup>2</sup>, causing the death of approximately 223 300 people every year<sup>3</sup>. The number of forcibly displaced people due to conflict, violence and persecution has reached over 89 million, the highest number since the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) records began.<sup>4</sup> The situations behind forced displacement are highly linked to the misuse of SALW. Armed conflicts and violence, independent of their scale, are perpetuated by the uncontrolled availability of SALW, increasing the need for concise and effective steps to tackle its proliferation. The uncontrolled proliferation of SALW has widespread human, economic and social costs. Furthermore, it threatens democracy and good governance and facilitates violations of human rights and International Humanitarian Law

<sup>1</sup> Based on the previous regional PAP for Africa adopted in 2019 at a seminar co-organised by PFSALW and the Pan-African Parliament, the present PAP has been revised and approved in updated version at the regional seminar for Africa, realised in collaboration with the National Assembly of Cameroon in Yaoundé, Cameroon on June 21-22, 2022. The seminar was part of PFSALW’s project financed by the United Nations Office of Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation Fund (UNSCAR), entitled “Connecting the Dots: Enhancing Implementation of the Women, Peace & Security, UN PoA and 2030 Agendas – through increased parliamentary engagement and action in international processes”.

<sup>2</sup> Small Arms Survey, Estimating Global Civilian-held firearms numbers, <http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/weapons-and-markets/tools/global-firearms-holdings.html>

<sup>3</sup> Small Arms Survey, “Global Violent Deaths in 2018”: <http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/fileadmin/docs/W-Infographics/SAS-GVD-March-2020-update.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 2021, Figures at a glance, <https://www.unhcr.org/figures-at-a-glance.html>

(IHL). Civilians are the main victims of violations of IHL in armed conflicts.<sup>5</sup> The serious human, social and economic effects of the global COVID-19 pandemic further underscore the need to prevent armed violence as to build back better.

In 2018, 596,000 persons died of lethal violence, including 93,700 women and girls, and millions more were affected by armed violence.<sup>6</sup> Globally, firearms were used in about 38% of all violent deaths in 2018, which resulted in 223,300 deaths. Alone in Africa in 2017, firearms were used in over 40% of the homicides.<sup>7</sup> Apart from causing injury and loss of life, armed violence has severe effects on sustainable development, good governance and contributes to the persistence of armed conflict. Further, it facilitates violations of human rights, gender-based violence and impedes economic investment, having a negative impact on public health systems and productivity levels by draining public resources away from education and socio-economic development.

Globally, between 2012 and 2016, occurred around 1 million firearms related deaths, whereas 44% of the homicides were committed with firearms during 2016.<sup>8</sup> The sub-regions most affected by lethal violence by firearms are—in decreasing order between 2012 and 2016—South America (with a rate of violent 18 deaths per 100,000 population), Central America (16), the Caribbean (8), and Southern Africa (6).<sup>9</sup> The change between 2016-2017 in terms of homicide and direct conflict death amounted to 11,500 more homicides in Central America and 8,200 more homicides in South America, whilst Southeast Asia experienced a rise in conflict related deaths amounting to 3,600.<sup>10</sup>

Uncontrolled SALW, their illicit acquisition and transfer is a recurring security dilemma in Africa. The concentration of most of Africa's estimated 100 million uncontrolled SALW can be found in crisis zones and other security-challenged environments, exacerbating and prolonging conflicts.<sup>11</sup> Apart from causing injury and loss of life, armed violence has severe effects on sustainable development, good governance and contributes to the persistence of armed conflict. Further, it facilitates violations of human rights and impedes economic investment, having a negative impact on public health systems and productivity levels by draining public resources away from education and socio-economic development.<sup>12</sup> The risk of gender-based violence (GBV) heightens in conflict situations and it is estimated that about 45.6 percent of African women have experienced GBV as a result of armed conflict, compared to 35 percent globally.<sup>13</sup>

In the last two years, following the outbreak of COVID-19 in 2020, the region has suffered devastating socioeconomic and political consequences in fragile contexts that lack the capacity to adequately address the crisis.<sup>14</sup> When states take a step back to focus on fighting

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<sup>5</sup> International Committee of the Red Cross, 2013, Contemporary challenges for IHL,

<https://www.icrc.org/en/document/contemporary-challenges-ihl>

<sup>6</sup> UNODC, Global Study on Homicide 2019 (Vienna, 2019): <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/global-study-on-homicide.html>

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> Small Arms Survey, "Global Violent Deaths 2017, Time to Decide" (2017): <http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/fileadmin/docs/U-Reports/SAS-Report-GVD2017.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> Small Arms Survey, "Darkening Horizons, Global Violent Deaths Scenarios, 2018-30":

<http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/fileadmin/docs/T-Briefing-Papers/SAS-BP-Violent-Deaths-Scenarios.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> Oxfam. 2017. The Human Cost of Uncontrolled Arms in Africa. [https://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/file\\_attachments/tr-human-cost-uncontrolled-arms-africa-080317-en.pdf](https://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/file_attachments/tr-human-cost-uncontrolled-arms-africa-080317-en.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> Oxfam. 2017. The Human Cost of Uncontrolled Arms in Africa. [https://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/file\\_attachments/tr-human-cost-uncontrolled-arms-africa-080317-en.pdf](https://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/file_attachments/tr-human-cost-uncontrolled-arms-africa-080317-en.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>14</sup> United Nations. 2021. How COVID-19 has impacted the SDGs in Africa. <https://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/august-2021/how-covid-19-has-impacted-sdgs-africa>

the virus some armed groups have stepped up violent activities to fill the void during the onset of the pandemic.<sup>15</sup>

The seminar's aim was to promote 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), the 2030 Agenda and the United Nations Security Council Resolutions (UNSCRs) on Women, Peace and Security (WPS). The intended outcome was to increase parliamentary engagement, participation and action in the implementation of the UN PoA, the WPS and the 2030 Agendas for SALW control. In the seminar, the Parliamentary Forum on Small Arms and Light Weapons' (PFSALW's) and the Pan-African Parliament's previously elaborated regional Parliamentary Action Plan (PAP) from 2019 was reviewed and revised with updated parliamentary recommendations on contextual aspects and in relation to WPS. Subsequently, the revised regional PAP was adopted at the seminar, to guide and support parliamentary action for universalisation and implementation on WPS, UN PoA and the 2030 Agenda at the national and regional level in the upcoming period. The seminar targeted parliamentarians from Sub-Saharan Africa, including from Cameroon and the project's focus countries<sup>16</sup>, Niger and Tanzania, as part of the run-up and preparation for the Eighth Biennial Meeting of States on the UN PoA (BMS 8) on 27 June-1 July 2022. Specific consideration was made to the equal inclusion of women parliamentarians in the seminar as to enhance women's active role and participation in peace and security processes. The conclusions from the regional seminar were presented at PFSALW's side event at BMS8 on June 30, 2022.

The seminar was included in a PFSALW project financed by the United Nations Office of Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation Fund (UNSCAR), entitled "*Connecting the Dots: Enhancing Implementation of the Women, Peace & Security, UN PoA and 2030 Agendas – through increased parliamentary engagement and action in international processes*". The seminar built on the previous efforts realised within the thematic scope, including a regional webinar for Asia in March 2021 and a regional webinar for Africa in 2021 hosted by PFSALW where the key conclusions were presented at a side event at the side lines of the Seventh Biennial Meeting of States (BMS7) in July 2021. Moreover, a regional seminar for Asia was realised on 8 June 2022 within the project.

The present PAP has been revised and adopted in its amended version, based on the PAP adopted in the Pan African Parliament in October 2019. It is a result of the seminar discussions identifying main conclusions from the participants' perspectives.

The PAP focuses on parliaments' role in strengthening the response to armed violence and uncontrolled SALW proliferation and has been designed to:

- Support the implementation of the UN PoA, addressing synergies between the instruments within the framework of Agenda 2030, Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16.4 and the UNSCR on the WPS Agenda and related instruments.
- Guide parliamentarians in their work related to the UN PoA within the framework of SDG 16 and SDG 5, to ensure that the legislative response is both nationally appropriate and consistent with the aims of the instruments;

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<sup>15</sup> Brookings. 2022. Non-state armed actors in 2022: Alive and powerful in the new geopolitics. <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2022/02/01/nonstate-armed-actors-in-2022-alive-and-powerful-in-the-new-geopolitics/>

<sup>16</sup> The project's focus countries in Sub-Saharan Africa are: Côte D'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Niger and Tanzania.

- Suggest mechanisms for effective oversight of Government;
- Recommend methods to strengthen links between the executive and legislative branches of Government and between parliaments and civil society on the armed violence prevention and reduction agenda – strengthening the social contract.

Three action areas have been identified and are based on the key roles of a parliamentarian;

1. Legislation
2. Oversight
3. Awareness raising

## **Part 2 – Recommendations on Universalisation and Implementation of 2030 Agenda SDG 16 and SDG 5, the UN PoA**

Based on the three key roles of a parliamentarian; legislation, oversight and awareness raising, below follow the most important recommendations for actions to be taken in the region. The recommendations serve as point of departure to reach maximum results when it comes to implementation of the UN PoA, 2030 Agenda SDG 16.4 and the WPS Agenda, as well as fulfilling States’ obligations on international frameworks considering vital aspects such as transparency and accountability. In all efforts, it is fundamental to include the gender equality perspective- the role of women-, as well as the youth perspective in relation to other relevant international instruments on conventional arms control.

### **1. Legislation**

- 1.1. Ensure signature, ratification, domestication of relevant international and regional Treaties and instruments related to the topic, such as the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT).
- 1.2. Ensure relevant national legislative initiatives are taken into account in the protection of civilians.
- 1.3. Ensure that the topic of illicit SALW ownership is prioritised.
- 1.4. Support harmonisation efforts of relevant legislation at the African level.
- 1.5. Ensure criminal laws safe-guard the well-being and protection of civilians, and that severe punishments are given for crimes against women.
- 1.6. Ensure strengthening of regional legislation related to the topic.
- 1.7. Promote cooperation between countries.
- 1.8. Promote the introduction and approval of a Model Law in collaboration with the Pan-African Parliament.
- 1.9. Include the gender equality perspective consistently in legislation.
- 1.10. Ensure equitable access to resources to address illicit proliferation of SALW.
- 1.11. Address foreign based root causes in relevant fora especially relating to natural resources interest, including wild life trafficking and illicit SALW.
- 1.12. Include the youth perspective consistently in legislation, and ensure that legislation relevant to youth is taking into account both the perspective of youth engaged in violence and the perspective of youth subjected to violence.

### **2. Oversight**

- 2.1. Maximise the monitoring and oversight of the Government by competent and or relevant Parliamentary Committees or parliamentarians themselves.
- 2.2. Encourage oversight by Civil Society Organisations (CSOs).

- 2.3. Empower the role and protection of the population as whistle-blowers regarding the illicit flow and use of SALW.
- 2.4. Encourage the population to voluntarily surrender SALW in their possession.
- 2.5. Ensure the establishment of commissions on SALW, and ensure adequate operation and function of the SALW commissions, including access to relevant capacity building efforts.
- 2.6. Address foreign based root causes in relevant fora especially relating to natural resources interest, including wild life trafficking and illicit SALW.
- 2.7. Collect data, document and report on SALW and ensure all parliamentarians have access to the information.
- 2.8. Address the issue of porous borders by relevant measures, including community policing, and increased collaboration between neighbouring countries.
- 2.9. Establish periodic reviews and evaluations by control mechanisms, for the monitoring and follow up of implementation of laws, including oversight of international treaties relating to SALW.
- 2.10. Consider the equal access to education, SDG 4.7 especially on reducing violence and promoting gender equality.

### **3. Awareness Raising**

- 3.1. Pursue sensitisation on the SDG 16, SDG 5, UN PoA, and ATT and other instruments relevant to SALW control among fellow parliamentarians to increase political will, by submitting a report on the topic to respective parliamentary committees and ensuring access to the instrument.
- 3.2. Promote the establishment of parliamentary networks on SALW.
- 3.3. Pursue sensitisation on the SDG 16, SDG 5, UN PoA, and ATT among the population, including the item of peacebuilding in schools.
- 3.4. Table questions in parliaments to relevant Government institutions.
- 3.5. Raise motions on the topic in relation to relevant instruments.
- 3.6. Promote and support arms amnesty initiatives among relevant Governmental entities, ensuring the protection of the population participating and encouraging the population to give up arms voluntarily.
- 3.7. Involve media at all levels coherently to highlight SDG 16, UN PoA, and ATT.
- 3.8. Maintain interaction with the population at grassroots level, in coordination with defence and security forces, including peacekeeping forces, if applicable.
- 3.9. Increased capacity building seminars with parliamentarians on ATT, UN PoA, SDG 4 and SDG 5.
- 3.10. Strengthen collaboration with CSOs.
- 3.11. Increase multi-stakeholder dialogues.
- 3.12. Establish periodic meetings with stakeholders at national sub-regional and international level.
- 3.13. Address foreign based root causes in relevant fora especially relating to natural resources interest, including wild life trafficking and illicit SALW.

## **Part 3 – Partnerships and resources<sup>17</sup>**

The efforts of parliamentarians and PFSALW in promoting increased or enhanced parliamentary action on the UN PoA, SDG 16.4 and the WPS Agenda can be multiplied if working in partnership with organisations with similar or overlapping interests. It is therefore recommended that the PFSALW and its members seek partnerships and structured dialogue with a range of actors.

Parliamentary action constitutes a unique effort to create the missing link between the local and national level. Parliamentarians have an important role in identifying and highlighting good practice at the local level in order to inform national policies and legislation and to promote good practice internationally.

### **Other Parliamentary networks**

[Inter-Parliamentary Union \(IPU\)](#)

[Pan-African Parliament \(PAP\)](#)

[East African Legislative Assembly \(EALA\)](#)

[Economic Community of West African States Parliament \(ECOWAS Parliament\)](#)

[Southern African Development Community Parliamentary Forum \(SADC Parliamentary Forum\)](#)

[Africa - Caribbean - Pacific - European Union Joint Parliamentary Assembly \(ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly\)](#)[Parliamentarians for Global Action \(PGA\)](#)

[The Parliamentary Forum on Small Arms and Light Weapons \(PFSALW\)](#)

### **Intergovernmental structures**

[United Nations Development Programme \(UNDP\) - Rule of Law, Justice, Security & Human Rights Team](#)

[ISACS Inter-Agency Support Unit](#)

[United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs \(UNODA\)](#)

[United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa \(UNREC\)](#)

[United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime \(UNODC\) – Global Firearms Programme](#)

### **Civil Society Organisations**

[Control Arms Coalition](#)

[International Action Network on Small Arms \(IANSA\)](#)

[International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War \(IPPNW\)](#) – Armed violence and health perspective

[Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom \(WILPF\)](#) – Gender perspective related to SALW and Women Peace and Security

[Gun Free South Africa](#)

### **Research institutes**

[Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces \(DCAF\) – Public - Private Partnerships Division](#)

[Group for Research and Information on Peace and Security \(GRIP\)](#)

[Small Arms Survey](#)

[Bonn International Centre for Conversion \(BICC\)](#)

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<sup>17</sup> The Plan is inspired by action plans and tools created by other international parliamentary organisations such as the Inter-Parliamentary Union and Parliamentarians for Global Action.

[Stockholm International Peace Research Institute \(SIPRI\)](#)  
[Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation – Africa Department](#)  
[Institute for Security Studies](#)

**Other sources**

[The Arms Trade Treaty](#)

[The UN PoA](#)

[NISAT](#)

[UNROCA](#)

[UNSCR 1325](#)

[UNSCR 2250](#)