



PARLIAMENTARY FORUM
ON SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS

Seminar report

International seminar

“Reducing threats to international security: Mobilising parliamentarians globally, with focus on Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean and Middle East, for enhanced universalisation and implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty.”

13-14 December 2023
Geneva, Switzerland

Objective: Strengthen parliamentary capacity and action for the universalisation and implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), linking to the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda.



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Executive summary

On December 13-14, 2023, the Parliamentary Forum on Small Arms and Light Weapons (PFSALW) in cooperation with the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) co-hosted an international seminar¹ in Geneva, Switzerland entitled “*Reducing threats to international security: Mobilising parliamentarians globally, with focus on Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean and Middle East, for enhanced universalisation and implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty*”. In total 44 parliamentarians from Africa, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific and the Middle East and representatives from the diplomatic community, international organisations and the civil society participated in the seminar².

The purpose of the seminar was to strengthen parliamentary knowledge for the universalisation and implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), linking to the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda. The international seminar formed part of a PFSALW project financed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Canada, titled “*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*”. Within the project, a regional seminar in Asia was realised on 8 June 2022 co-hosted by PFSALW and the ASEAN-Inter Parliamentary Assembly (AIPA) and on 30 June- 1 July 2023, a regional seminar in Latin America and the Caribbean was realised in collaboration with the Latin American and Caribbean Parliament (PARLATINO). In the seminars, key recommendations for parliamentary actions were identified by the parliamentarians and compiled into regional Parliamentary Action Plans (PAPs) in the respective regions, for the first time specifically focusing on the ATT and linking to WPS. Moreover, a regional seminar in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) is planned within the project.

Based on the regional efforts within the project, the international seminar was hosted at the end of 2023 to promote the achievement of the project objective through inter- regional exchange on good practices and to evaluate actions taken on ATT thus far. Furthermore, conclusions and recommendations from the international seminar will be compiled into a brief parliamentary policy publication at the end of the project to serve as a road-map for parliamentarians globally in the work to advance the universalisation and implementation of the ATT.

Opening session

The seminar was opened by **Ambassador Anda Filip, Director for Member Parliaments and External Relations at the IPU**, who commended the work of PFSALW in light of the importance of strong joint parliamentary commitment to political dialogue, the sharing of good practices and the promotion of solutions conducive to a more peaceful world in light of the global threat to peace and security that the uncontrolled proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) pose. She noted that the priority theme for the work of the IPU in 2024 will be on peace and international security. The IPU’s resolution on the role of parliaments in strengthening control of trafficking in SALW and their ammunition is a vital foundation in the work of the organisation. She further underscored that the IPU remains highly committed to the universalisation and implementation of the ATT, and realises targeted campaigns to countries that are yet to ratify the Treaty. Moreover, the IPU promotes the increased

¹ The seminar, which took place on December 13-14, 2023, was included in PFSALW’s project financed by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Canada entitled “*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*”.

² 18 parliamentarians from Africa, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific and the Middle East participated in the seminar, together with 26 representatives of the diplomatic community, international organisations and civil society.

participation of parliamentarians in national delegations to international conferences, including on the ATT.

In his opening remarks, **Hon. Dr Raphael Chegeni, President of PFSALW and Member of Parliament in Tanzania** expressed his sincere appreciation for the collaboration with the IPU in co-hosting the international seminar as well as gratitude to the donor Canada. He proceeded to note that with more than 1 billion SALW circulating worldwide causing the death of approximately 260 000 people yearly according to recent research by the Small Arms Survey, the need to prioritise the prevention and reduction of illicit flows of SALW is urgent. The situation calls for concise and effective steps on behalf of all relevant stakeholders, including parliamentarians, who play a vital role through the legislative, oversight and awareness raising functions by bridging the gap between international instruments relevant for SALW control, such as the ATT, and national and regional implementation levels. Moreover, he underlined the importance of linking efforts on ATT implementation and universalisation with the implementation of the WPS Agenda.

Session I: Universalisation and implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) globally, with regional outlook on Middle East and North Africa, Asia and the Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa and Europe

Objective: Enhancing parliamentary knowledge on the ATT, status on universalisation, and explore achievements and challenges in the universalisation and implementation of the ATT at the regional and national level, linking to the WPS Agenda and other relevant frameworks such as 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), Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16.4 of the 2030 Agenda and the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition (Firearms Protocol).

Ms. Sara Pinheiro Stocker, Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Officer, United Nations Office on Drug and Crime (UNODC) accounted for the devastating impact of firearms globally. In 2021, 458,000 people were killed in homicides, of which more than 47% were committed with a firearm. She reminded that the reduction of illicit arms flows is an overarching goal of the international community as identified in the 2030 Agenda, Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16.4. Several international instruments exist to support the achievement of the goal, including the UN PoA as a politically binding instrument and the Firearms Protocol and the ATT as legally binding treaties. The instruments are mutually reinforcing, where the ATT and Firearms Protocol are legally binding frameworks for the political commitments in the UN PoA. She concluded by encouraging parliamentarians to exercise their legislative role to ensure strong and harmonised national legal frameworks as basis for more effective arms control, noting that the implementation of international instruments minimises the risk of exploitation of gaps and loopholes in legislation.

In his presentation, **Mr. Callum Watson, Gender Coordinator at the Small Arms Survey** highlighted that diversion from national stockpiles is a key source of illicit SALW. As such, a significant share of illicit SALW originate from legal trade and are highly difficult to recover once in the hands of criminal and armed non-state groups, often being transferred from one conflict area to another. While the ATT is a vital tool for preventing the diversion of SALW, ratification and implementation of the Treaty is still lagging behind in certain regions such as East and Central Africa, MENA, South Asia and Southeast Asia. States may have reservations about their capacity to implement or report on the ATT, or have concerns about losing comparative advantage in relation to neighbouring countries in terms of

importing and exporting weapons. He noted that one effective response to the challenges mentioned is to apply a regional approach to strengthening arms control, thereby enabling countries with similar challenges to collaborate on implementation, addressing collective concerns and maintaining political momentum.

Mr. Marc Finaud, Senior Advisor and Associate Fellow, Global Fellowship Initiative, Geneva Centre for Security Policy (GCSP) expressed his view of the ATT as a success in regulating international arms trade. However, a key problem is that several of the countries playing a major role in global arms trade remain absent as States Parties to the ATT. According to figures from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), of the top ten arms exporting countries in the past five-year period, four countries had not joined the ATT. Among the top ten importers, seven were not States Parties to the ATT. Mr. Finaud underlined that the lack of universalisation of the Treaty, especially among vital arms exporting and importing countries, is weakening the impact of the instrument. Through their oversight role vis- a- vis governments, parliamentarians can play an important role in advocating for ATT ratification by clarifying misconceptions as well as the benefits of becoming a State Party. In the efforts, collaboration with civil society is encouraged for synergy effects. Since the entering into force of the Treaty, civil society has been highly active in monitoring ATT implementation, promoting increased transparency and calling attention to cases of non-compliance.

In his parliamentary response, **Hon. Elias Hankach, Member of Parliament in Lebanon** shared the perspective from Lebanon where the ATT has been ratified but where implementation remains slow overall. However, recently, vital initiatives to advance the ATT have been realised, including the establishment of a focal point on the ATT in the Lebanese Army. He also underlined the importance of applying a gender perspective in peace and security processes, and highlighted the “50/50” initiative which promotes quotas for women’s participation in the political sphere. Hon. Hankach concluded by reflecting on the serious security situation in the MENA region in relation to the war between Israel and Hamas and the risk of further escalation of violence, underlining the need for immediate ceasefire in Gaza as well as de-escalation of violence between parties involved in the region as to save human lives, including in Lebanon.

Hon. Gilberto Campos Cruz, Member of Parliament in Costa Rica gave an overview of the progress of the country in terms of SALW control, noting that Costa Rica is a State Party to the ATT. He also presented the national legislation on SALW which has been put in place, such as legislation which specifies prohibited items as well as regulates civilian legal possession of SALW. While data exists on violent crimes, there is a gap in terms of data that records the connection between illicit SALW trade and crimes, as well as gender-disaggregated data on armed violence. Such data would be vital to inform policies and legislation on SALW control from a gender perspective. Other areas where further efforts are needed are the establishment of a database to improve tracking of imported SALW as well as marking of SALW and ammunition in Government stockpiles.

Hon. Fobeh Soro, Member of Parliament in Côte D’Ivoire highlighted that Côte D’Ivoire remains highly committed to safeguarding peace and security after having been severely affected by civil war. Among other measures, the country has ratified the ATT and instated a parliamentary Commission on the prevention of illicit SALW proliferation. The Commission has been tasked with overseeing the harmonisation of national legislation with international norms regarding national stockpile management and as a result, all weapons belonging to law enforcement authorities have been marked. In the Parliament, capacity building workshops on the topic of preventing armed violence are realised annually. Moreover, efforts are being carried out to strengthen the involvement of women in political

processes on peace and security, including a legislation stipulating at least 30% representation of women in institutions and targeted initiatives to increase women's participation in law enforcement and armed forces.

In the **open floor discussion**, in light of the upcoming 10th Anniversary of the ATT in 2024, the discussions focused on the need for an evaluation of the ATT and its effectiveness in preventing armed violence and safeguarding international humanitarian law. Moreover, it was noted that several of the major exporters of arms are not States Parties to the ATT, raising the question of how these countries can be held legally accountable by the international community. Regional initiatives on the prevention of illicit SALW were also highlighted, including in Africa where specific efforts are realised to collect and destroy illicit SALW, ammunition and anti-personal mines. In the Caribbean, the region has advanced significantly in the universalisation of the ATT but implementation is lacking, underlining the need for increased support from the international community.

Session II: Towards inclusive processes on peace, security and sustainable development: Strengthening parliamentary action for the implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on WPS

Objective: To strengthen the gender equality perspective in parliamentary action for the prevention and reduction of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW)-related violence, linking to the ATT.

Mr. Callum Watson, Gender Coordinator at the Small Arms Survey presented recently published statistics from Small Arms Survey highlighting that 580,000 people died violently in 2021. Of the violent deaths, 260 000 people were killed by a firearm which constitute an increase compared to 2020. It is expected that the trend will likely worsen with the new figures for 2022 and 2023 that cover the conflicts for example in Ukraine, Sudan, Ethiopia, Israel and Gaza. Of people killed violently in 2021, 16% were women and girls. While the overall number of people killed varies significantly depending on the number of conflicts ongoing in the world, the number of women killed has generally remained constant over time in the data from Small Arms Survey since the start of recording in 2004. It can be explained by the fact that women less often die in armed conflicts- which comes in waves- but rather are subjected to deadly violence in the domestic setting which remains constant. While National Action Plans (NAPs) on WPS are important tools to address gender-based violence, only about half of NAPs refer to SALW control. Of NAPs with specific references to SALW, the mentions are generally limited to conflict-related sexual violence committed by non-state actors or foreign adversaries as opposed to domestic violence perpetuated by a family member.

Hon. Betty Achan Ogwaro, member of the National Transitional Legislative Assembly of South Sudan, and representative of the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders explained that South Sudan is among the countries in Africa most highly impacted by illicit flows of SALW with severe effects for the population, including women as primary targets for gender-based and sexual violence facilitated by SALW. The key challenges that the country faces include the lack of budget for reducing illicit proliferation of SALW, as well as lack of education among women preventing their access to decision making spaces. Parliamentarians can play a central role in ensuring adequate resources are being put in place, for example by supporting the vital role of civil society including in remote communities, as well as to raise awareness on the topics targeting specifically the stakeholders that are not already committed to the prevention of armed violence. Furthermore, parliamentarians have a responsibility to promote gender sensitive firearms control legislation.

The perspective from Cambodia was shared by **Hon. Samvada Kheng, Member of Parliament in Cambodia**, who observed that the country has experienced war and conflict during a significant part of its modern history. Since the establishment of peace in 1998, relevant legislation to reduce uncontrolled SALW, ammunitions and explosives and limit civilian ownership of SALW has been thoroughly enforced. Among several related initiatives, the Government launched nation-wide campaigns to collect SALW from soldiers and civilians in the wake of the war as to prevent their uncontrolled proliferation. More recently, Cambodia has also strengthened its commitment to the implementation of the WPS Agenda. The National Action Plan to Prevent Violence Against Women 2019-2023 has been instrumental in efforts within the area, and the Parliament has adopted legislation against domestic violence with specific parliamentary committees working on the topic of prevention of violence against women.

Hon. Halimeh Al Kaakour, Member of Parliament in Lebanon reflected on the role of women in decision making processes in Lebanon, noting that while 70% of students in universities are women, they only make up 5% of decision makers at the local level. In the Parliament, important work is being carried out on the WPS Agenda, for example, in 2017 a bill was adopted to criminalise harassment of women in the workplace and in 2020 amendments were adopted regarding the protection of women against domestic violence. The ATT, as a legally binding Treaty, recognises the link between SALW proliferation and gender-based violence. However, patriarchal power structures in the Lebanese political system and widespread resistance to women's empowerment along with continuous de-prioritisation of actions to address gender inequality are constituting an obstacle to the effective implementation of the ATT and its links to gender equality.

Hon. Mumtaz Binti Md Nawi, Member of Parliament in Malaysia highlighted the important progress in her country to regulate SALW possession, including severe punishments for trafficking of SALW. Moreover, Malaysia is fully committed to the UNSCR 1325 on WPS, and is working actively for its full implementation, where specific priority is dedicated to the empowerment of women in the workplace and reducing domestic violence. She concluded her parliamentary response by underscoring the need for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza as to safeguard the lives and wellbeing of the population, including women and children who are particularly vulnerable.

Hon. Wade Mark, Member of Parliament in Trinidad and Tobago noted that his country has begun work towards the achievement of the WPS Agenda, for example through a workshop in July 2023 targeting the judiciary branch, Ministries and civil society to identify the main challenges and solutions in implementing the agenda. An advisory committee with the support of the Government of Canada is expected to be established shortly with the goal of developing a NAP on WPS. Hon. Mark underlined the important role of parliamentarians in safeguarding an inclusive process in the drafting of the NAP as well as ensuring adequate allocation of resources to its implementation. He further recommended the establishment of mechanisms to support the oversight role of the Parliament in regard to the NAP, e.g. through annual reports to the Parliament.

Hon. Hisen Berisha, Member of Parliament in Kosovo accounted for vital initiatives in Kosovo to increase women's participation in decision making and peace and security processes. Following the war in 1998-1999 between Serbia and Kosovo, where over 20 000 Kosovar women were subjected to sexual abuse as a weapon of war, Kosovo has had a strong commitment to the protection of women's right and security. The NAP on WPS is an instrumental tool in promoting women's active engagement and addressing gender-based violence. In the Parliament, quotas safeguard the participation of at least 30% women and political parties actively strive to ensure 50% representation of women on electoral lists.

The Law on Gender Equality and the Anti-Discrimination Law both adopted in 2024, as well as the Constitution protect the rights of women. Hence, to effectively combat gender-based violence and safeguard women's rights, it is crucial to incorporate gender perspectives into all aspects of legislation and initiatives, specifically on SALW control and in assessments on arms export.

Hon. Dina Al Bashir, Member of Parliament in Jordan expressed her sincere concerns about alarming reports of human rights violations and the suffering of civilians in Gaza, which are taking place despite the fundamental principles of applicable international treaties and resolutions, such as UNSCR 1325 on WPS regarding the protection of women and girls in situations of armed conflict. She further noted the urgent need for increased support from the international community to ensure an immediate ceasefire in the region. Jordan, while having scarce resources, has taken an active role in addressing regional crises through conflict resolution and supporting peace processes. The role of women in development processes is widely recognised in Jordan, and has paved the way for the adoption of a NAP on UNSCR 1325 in 2017. Currently, a new NAP is being formulated with expanded scope to include sectors such as justice and the diplomatic sector, climate change and emergencies.

Session III: The role of parliamentarians in reducing illicit arms flows: Breaking the myths and addressing roadblocks

Objective: To address misconceptions and demystify the ATT by strengthening the role of parliamentarians in broadening the reach and adoption of the ATT and fostering a collective parliamentary drive towards its universalization. The session focuses on enhancing parliament-wide capacities to combat illicit arms flows, critical to global peace and security. It also aims to provide Parliamentarians with a stronger understanding of the concept of Common Security and its relevance to Parliamentary work related to global and regional cooperation, multilateralism, the rule of law, strong limitations on conventional weapons and reduced military expenditure.

Mr. Philip Jennings, Co-President of the International Peace Bureau (IPB) presented the concept of common security by highlighting that no state can achieve security by itself, and that work must take place across borders as to ensure security for all. The doctrine of mutual deterrence must be replaced by international security norms resting on the foundation of joint action. The state of the world, with increased militarisation and military spending, armed conflicts and uncontrolled proliferation of SALW underlines the importance of parliamentarians situating their work for peace and security in the broader context of common security, including through parliamentary diplomacy and dialogue across borders.

In his intervention, **Mr. Jean-Victor Nduma Mbadinga, former Gabonese Senator** accounted for his dedicated efforts as a parliamentarian to promote the ratification of the ATT, ultimately resulting in Gabon successfully joining the Treaty in 2022. He observed that awareness raising targeting fellow parliamentarians and the Government was a vital tool in the process, ensuring the support of parliamentary colleagues and meeting with representatives of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs to clarify the benefits of the ATT. With universalisation of the Treaty being essential for regional security and the protection of human rights, he encouraged parliamentarians in countries which are not yet ATT States Parties to intensify their awareness raising efforts towards governments to accelerate the process of joining the Treaty.

Mr. Arthur Duforest, Peace and International Security Consultant at the IPU focused his presentation on the main roadblocks that parliaments encounter in the process of the ratification and implementation of the ATT. At the political level, concerns about jeopardising national political sovereignty to regulate arms as well as a fear of loss of strategic leverage may constitute roadblocks to

joining the ATT. There may also be concerns about the compatibility of the Treaty with existing national laws and regulations and possible infringement of constitutional rights. Moreover, countries may believe that the ATT would negatively impact on national arms industries, employment and competitiveness. Finally, the perceived lack of effectiveness of the ATT could also be a roadblock preventing States from joining. Hence, parliamentarians are vital in clarifying misconceptions regarding the ATT, including the fact that the Treaty has as purpose to ensure arms do not end up in the wrong hands and does not pose a limitation on legal trade with legitimate end users. Moreover, there is a force in numbers and with increased universalisation, the impact of the ATT will be strengthened.

In the open floor, discussions highlighted that while common security is an important concept, the trend globally is increasing armament with countries strengthening their national defences. Hence, the opportunities of promoting the concept were reviewed, and it was agreed that “champions”, that is dedicated advocates, such as parliamentarians or parliamentary networks, can play a leading role in countering the trend of increased armament. Moreover, the challenge of implementing the ATT in weak or failed States was also discussed, and participants proposed that the concept of common security could be a way of strengthening the implementation of the ATT in such countries by linking the topic to a broader security agenda of relevance for all parts of the society.

Session IV: National and regional instruments and legislative tools for preventing illicit SALW-proliferation – in relation to the ATT.

Objective: Examine the national and regional instruments and legislative tools available in the prevention of uncontrolled SALW-proliferation in the region.

Ms. Bojana Balon, Head of South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SEESAC) underlined that SALW trafficking is a regional and international problem which calls for the formulation of regional responses to enable information sharing and standardisation of efforts. She took the opportunity to present best practices from the Western Balkans where such regional coordination is taking place. In 2018, a joint regional Roadmap was adopted on the initiative of Governments to address the gaps in regional SALW-control. Through clearly defined targets and performance indicators in the Roadmap, and the submission of regular reports from Governments as well as annual meetings, progress towards the achievement of the Roadmap is closely monitored. She highlighted that the long-term approach in the Roadmap, together with strong regional ownership of behalf of authorities and coordination mechanisms to avoid duplication of efforts, are among the main success factors of the instrument. The role of parliamentarians in safeguarding a national legislative framework harmonised with international and regional instruments was also stressed, along with the key oversight role towards the executive powers.

Mr. Joseph Dube, representative of the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA) noted that Africa is severely affected by uncontrolled SALW. Through the African Union’s (AU) Agenda 2063 for economic and sustainable development and its flagship initiative on “Silencing the Guns” until 2030, Member States have committed to end armed violence and promote a peaceful continent. Africa’s Arms Amnesty Month is one initiative linked to Silencing the Guns, which every year contributes to the collection of a significant number of SALW from civilians through voluntary surrender as to prevent the uncontrolled circulation of these weapons. Mr. Dube then proceeded to observe the need for African initiatives on SALW-control to be fully aligned with the ATT and other relevant instruments such as the Firearms Protocol and the UN PoA. Parliamentarians are essential in such efforts by ensuring the translation of the regional and international commitments to the national implementation level. A vital opportunity in 2024 is for parliamentarians to use the AU’s Common

Position on RevCon4 on the UN PoA to further advance SALW-control initiatives nationally. Finally, he recommended that parliamentarians approach respective governments with encouragement to apply for funding from the ATT Voluntary Trust Fund as to enhance implementation of the ATT.

In her presentation, **Ms. Maria Pia Devoto, Director of Asociación para Políticas Públicas (APP) and Board Member of PFSALW**, underlined the importance of regional cooperation to tackle illicit SALW flows crossing borders. In LAC, bodies for such cooperation exist, such as Mercosur which is a trade block with mechanisms in place for exchange of information. Hence, the strengthening of coordination on SALW-control across existing networks is key. She highlighted a positive example where States in the region, in an initiative led by UNODC, realised a coordinated effort between police, customs and tolls to seize illicit SALW and ammunition as part of dismantling criminal groups. In LAC specifically, it is vital to recognise the nexus between illicit SALW flows and criminal groups engaged in drug- and human trafficking. She concluded by noting two important opportunities for parliamentary action on SALW-control in 2024, specifically the 10th Anniversary of the ATT and RevCon4 on the UN PoA that may provide momentum to efforts on armed violence prevention.

In a parliamentary response, **Hon. Mohamed Mechegueg, Member of Parliament in Algeria** presented the standpoint of his country regarding the ATT. While Algeria has not joined the Treaty, he highlighted that the country participated in the first ever State Party meeting on the ATT and as such has had an interest for the instrument. However, a key priority for Algeria is to address the illicit transfers of SALW and ammunition by non-state stakeholders, and the ATT does not adequately encompass such aspects in the view of Algeria. He concluded his intervention by expressing sincere concerns for the recent developments in the Middle East, specifically the conflict between Israel and Hamas and the extensive human suffering of Palestinians in Gaza.

Hon. Germán Cardoso, Member of Parliament in Uruguay informed that with approximately 85% of firearms in civilian hands, Uruguay is one of the countries in Latin America with the highest rate of civilian owned SALW. Despite the situation, the impact of civilian SALW ownership on levels of armed violence in the society has generally not been part of the political discourse. Hence, he expressed his commitment of bringing the conclusions from the seminar to his Parliament to bring increased awareness on the topic. Parliamentarians have extensive influence on the legislative framework through the legislative role, but less control in terms of the implementation as it is the responsibility of the executive powers. Therefore, to promote effective implementation of relevant laws, the commitment of parliamentarians must be strengthened and manifested through the oversight role.

Hon. Lenora S. Qereqeretabua, Member of Parliament in Fiji explained that her country has experienced few occurrences of mainly maritime illicit transfers of SALW and armed violence until date. The possession of SALW among the population is illegal with the exception of legal ownership for hunters. However, with a history of four coup d'états and high levels of uncontrolled SALW globally, it is vital for Fiji to apply a preventive approach to safeguard against armed violence. She then proceeded to highlight that only 5 out of 55 parliamentarians in the Fiji Parliament are women which is a challenge in the efforts to advance women's rights and equal representation in decision making processes, including on peace and security processes.

Hon. Lawrence Songa Biyika, Member of Parliament in Uganda underscored that peace is not the absence of war, it is to live in harmony with neighbours, the planet and having access to essential needs. With Africa serving as a battlefield for conflicts, it is vital to increase transparency and cooperation in initiatives to prevent illicit SALW trafficking across borders as to promote peace. While Uganda has not yet joined the ATT, a national focal point to review the ATT has been established. Moreover, all

firearms in the police force, and several firearms in the army, have been marked to prevent their diversion. Efforts are also being realised to disarm people owning illegal guns, especially in the northern part of the country, and until date 150 000 SALW have been destroyed. Finally, he concluded that a key challenge ahead is to identify and address the root causes for the illicit ownership and use of SALW.

Hon. Haki Abazi, Member of Parliament in Kosovo took the opportunity to highlight the committed efforts of his country to enhance harmonisation of national legislation on SALW control with the relevant EU regulatory framework. For example, in 2022, the Kosovo SALW Commission convened on multiple occasions in relation to the regional Roadmap for the Western Balkans to review the national legislative framework, which resulted in amendments to the existing Law on Weapons in 2023. He further noted that the country does not have a NAP on WPS, but that consideration to the WPS perspective is integrated into the Kosovo Gender Programme 2020-2024. Moreover, efforts are being realised to enhance women's political representation in the Parliament 36,7% of parliamentarians are women. However, at the local level women's representation remain limited, as well as in the security sector.

Session V: Roundtable/ focus group on the role of parliamentarians in peace processes, and inventory of tools

The session was introduced by **Ms. Laurence Marzal, Secretary of the Standing Committee on Peace and International Security at the IPU**, who presented an inventory of tools developed to assist parliamentarians in engaging in conflict prevention, specifically the concepts of common security and human security. She proceeded to invite **Mr. Sean Connors, Executive Director of the International Peace Bureau** to briefly explore the concept of common security. In this presentation, Mr. Connors noted that nations and populations can only feel safe when their counterparts in the form of other nations and populations, feel safe. Hence, reduction of arms is necessary for mutual security. Moreover, cooperation rather than competition between nations is needed to resolve global challenges of today. **Mr. Donato Kiniger-Passigli, Vice-President of World Academy of Art and Science (WAAS)** added to the previous presentation by defining the concept of human security, which interlinks people's safety, economic and social wellbeing, respect for human dignity and worth. The concept should be considered as a comprehensive approach which highlights the interdependence between peace, security, sustainable development and human rights.

Following the presentations, a digital questionnaire focusing on common security and human security was reviewed in plenary and subsequently discussed. The participants agreed that the principles of common and human security as holistic concepts are conducive to peace and sustainable solutions to security challenges, and should inform the work of parliamentarians in their respective contexts.

Session VI, working session 1: Exchange of parliamentary experiences on strengthening the WPS-perspective in relation to sustainable development, peace and security processes, in specific the ATT, based on the summary of the regional Parliamentary Action Plans approved in Asia in 2022, in Latin America and the Caribbean in 2022 and the Middle East and North Africa in 2019.

Objective: The purpose of the working session is to promote inter-regional exchanges on good practices based on the regional Parliamentary Action Plans in relation to actions taken thus far in respective

region. In groups share results, positive experiences and challenges of parliamentary action to implement the WPS Agenda linked to SALW-violence prevention and reduction, and the ATT.

All participants were divided into three groups according to language; English, French and Spanish. With the support of a facilitator in respective groups, discussions focused on results, positive experiences and challenges regarding parliamentary action to implement the WPS Agenda linked to SALW-violence prevention and reduction and the ATT. As basis for the discussions, the groups were instructed to relate to the regional PAPs and recommended actions, to share what parliamentary measures have been taken in their respective context and how key challenges and opportunities encountered have been addressed.

Group 1, consisting of parliamentarians from Côte D'Ivoire, Cambodia, Lebanon, Algeria and Cameroon, reviewed positive results achieved in respective countries. Achievements included the establishment of a Commission on SALW in Côte d'Ivoire and a Commission in Cambodia dedicated specifically to the collection of illicit SALW, including through awareness raising campaigns targeting the population; initiatives in Cameroon to reintegrate youth formerly involved in criminality and armed violence into the society; and the creation of a focal point in the Lebanese Army regarding the ATT as to enhance coordination on the implementation of the Treaty. As for Algeria, the country has not ratified the ATT based on the assessment that the country is not experiencing problems with armament. The group also highlighted challenges encountered, such as discrimination against women and lack of education opportunities for women and girls, and weak public institutions preventing effective implementation of policies. As for opportunities, the group noted strong political commitment in several countries, a mobilised civil society as well as regional and international forums such as PFSALW where parliamentarians can exchange good practices.

Group 2, which comprised of parliamentarians from Fiji, Jordan, Uganda, Malaysia, Kosovo, Trinidad and Tobago and Tanzania, shared successful actions taken, such as reform of electoral laws in Jordan requiring that women and youth are put on party lists as to increase representation, formation of women's networks in the Parliaments of Fiji and Tanzania to strengthen joint efforts as well as the formation of inter-regional parliamentary networks in Uganda for exchanges of information and knowledge. Challenges included the lack of priority on the ATT at the governmental level, limited budget availability for peace and security. Moreover, in Malaysia political instability caused by frequent changes of Government was noted. The group concluded by presenting opportunities identified, such inter-agency cooperation and political will among parliamentarians.

Group 3, highlighted parliamentary experiences from Costa Rica, Uruguay and Argentina and positive examples of actions on the ATT and WPS Agenda. Such actions included the creation of a questionnaire in Argentina to facilitate risk analysis in regards to article 7.4 of the ATT which requires exporting states to consider the risk of conventional arms facilitating acts of gender-based violence. Moreover, legislation has been put in place in Costa Rica prohibiting any person found guilty of acts of gender-based violence to possess or carry SALW. A few challenges were noted, including the lack of specific references to the ATT in NAPs on WPS in Uruguay, and lack of mechanisms to trace and mark imported SALW in Costa Rica, thereby increasing the risk for their diversion.

Session VII, working session 2: Exchange of parliamentary recommendations on future-orientated actions to strengthen the universalisation and implementation of the ATT and its links to the WPS Agenda, based on the follow-up review of the previous regional PAPs from Asia 2022, LAC 2023, MENA 2019.

Objective: 1) Based on working session 1 on previous experiences in relation to the regional PAPs, in groups discuss key priorities onwards to strengthen the universalisation and implementation of the ATT, linking to the WPS Agenda. 2) Review of the global key recommendations for future-orientated parliamentary actions on the ATT and WPS.

In the second working session, the participants resumed discussions in their groups. Building on the experiences shared in the first working session, the participants were tasked to identify what the current most prioritised parliamentary actions are from a global perspective to enhance the universalisation and implementation of the ATT, linking to WPS, as well as the specific actions that the parliamentarians are planning to undertake in the coming period.

Group 1, in terms of the most prioritised areas for parliamentary action, highlighted the need to advocate for ratification of the ATT targeting governments in countries not yet States Parties, including in Algeria, and by improving coordination with Heads of Committees, such as the Committee for Defence, to increase pressure on executive powers. Regarding the planned actions in the coming period, parliamentarians expressed commitment to approach parliamentary colleagues to rally support on the topic of ATT universalisation and implementation, sharing the report from the seminar with media and oversee national legislation to identify any need for amendments to improve harmonisation with relevant international treaties.

Group 2 presented the key areas for parliamentary actions identified in the discussions, such as continuous engagement in relevant international and regional policy forums, mobilisation of technical and financial resources to transform commitment into actions, enhance coordination between relevant stakeholders such as governments, parliaments, media and civil society, improving data analysis on the root causes for SALW ownership, and involvement of women at all levels in peace and security processes. Following the discussion on the prioritised areas, parliamentarians in the groups reflected on their planned actions in the coming period, such as ensuring gender sensitive budget allocation to peace and security, enhancing parliamentary mechanisms for greater transparency and accountability regarding ATT and WPS implementation, and awareness raising on the linkages between ATT and WPS.

Group 3 underscored the need for increased parliamentary actions globally to improve marking and tracing of SALW and ammunition as to avoid diversion and trafficking across borders. Enhanced understanding of when the legal chain is broken and when SALW enters the illicit market is needed, and requires increased coordination between manufacturers, importers, toll and tax agencies and other stakeholders. The group also identified the priority of forming regional inter-parliamentary networks to serve as platforms for parliamentary exchanges between neighbouring countries, which would enable coordination regarding regional harmonisation of national legislation. Based on the above, the parliamentarians in the groups shared their planned actions, including strengthening control and follow-up of legislation on SALW and ammunition to improve regulations on licencing, registration and disposal of weapons in civilian ownership. Members of the group also planned to ensure the

commitment of UNSCR 1325 becomes legislation as to enhance the implementation of the WPS Agenda.

Concluding remarks

In her concluding remarks, **Ms. Laurence Marzal, Secretary of the Standing Committee on Peace and International Security at the IPU** expressed appreciation to all participants in the seminar, noting with delight the strong parliamentary commitment to the ATT, WPS and disarmament. She further expressed that the work realised by the parliamentarians to prevent illicit SALW flows is vital for the constituencies and the security and wellbeing of the people that parliamentarians are representing. She also underlined that parliamentarians have the tools to contribute to positive changes in respective context. To conclude, she reminded that in 2024, the 10th Anniversary of the ATT is celebrated. With ten years since the entry into force of the Treaty, parliamentarians today are the new generation of champions for the Treaty. 2024 is an excellent year to accelerate efforts on ATT universalisation and implementation, and the IPU stands ready to provide support to parliamentarians as needed.

The seminar was concluded by **Hon. Dr Raphael Chegeni, Member of Parliament in Tanzania and President of PFSALW** who also expressed sincere gratitude for the dedication of all participants during the seminar and to the IPU for the fruitful collaboration. He reiterated that all have a shared responsibility to make the world a more peaceful place. As has been made clear during the seminar, the ATT and the WPS Agenda are vital instruments for the achievement of peace and sustainable development. Parliamentarians are vital in taking action, and play a key role in contributing to the implementation of the instruments. He concluded the seminar by inviting the participants to sign PFSALW's [Call for Action](#) which encourages the donor community to continue to invest in parliamentary organisations for the achievement of human security and sustainable development.



PARLIAMENTARY FORUM
ON SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS

Final report

**Launch event of the Spanish version of the Parliamentary Handbook
“Assuring Our Common Future”**

13 December 2023
Geneva, Switzerland



Executive summary

On December 13, 2023, the Parliamentary Forum on Small Arms and Light Weapons (PFSALW) in cooperation with the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) co-hosted the launch event of the Spanish version of the Parliamentary Handbook “Assuring Our Common Future”³, in support of the United Nations (UN) Secretary General’s Disarmament Agenda “Securing Our Common Future”. The launch event was realised in Geneva, Switzerland in hybrid modality. In total 55 participants attended the launch event, of which 43 parliamentarians from Africa, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), Asia and the Pacific and the Middle East and representatives from the diplomatic community, international organisations and the civil society participated in the event in-person⁴, and additional approximately 12 participants joined online⁵.

Based on an initiative by Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament (PNND), the Handbook was launched in English and French in November 2020, in a process that started already in 2019 with continuous implementation during 2021-2023 to promote the impact and dissemination of the publication. The initiative is led by PNND, with PFSALW as co-sponsor and co-publisher together with the IPU, Geneva Centre for Security Policy (GCSP), Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA) and World Future Council (WFC), and with the sponsorship of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA).

Mr. Alyn Ware, Global Coordinator at PNND introduced the Parliamentary Handbook and the initiative behind the publication. He noted that the UN Secretary General’s Disarmament Agenda which is targeting UN Member States is challenging for parliamentarians to operationalise into their vital work on disarmament. Therefore, the Handbook was elaborated to cater to the specific needs of parliamentarians. Each chapter of the Handbook includes an overview of relevant international and regional instruments as well as recommendations for parliamentary legislative, oversight and awareness raising actions and good practices from different countries to serve as a source of inspiration. Various topics are featured in the publication, including nuclear disarmament, de-militarisation of cyberspace, prevention of misuse of conventional weapons as well as the linkages between disarmament and topics such as climate change and pandemics. Specific efforts have been made to ensure the Handbook is easily accessible on smartphones, tablets and computers through an online platform that can be accessed anywhere. He concluded the presentation by expressing his appreciation for the Handbook now being launched in Spanish on the initiative of PFSALW, as it further contributes to the dissemination and accessibility of the Handbook among Spanish-speaking parliamentarians.

Ms. Maria Pia Devoto, Director of Asociación para Políticas Públicas (APP) and Board Member of PFSALW expressed her appreciation for the efforts on behalf of the co-publishers of the Handbook, highlighting it as a vital tool which both includes relevant background information on international and regional instruments while also being action-oriented. She proceeded to note that some of the examples of good practices in the publication dates several years back, which underlines the importance of renewing commitments to disarmament to strengthen momentum. In LAC specifically, there is the challenge of more voices advocating for liberalisation of access to firearms with the justification that possession and carrying of weapons is needed for personal defence in response to heightened levels of violence and criminality, based on the perception that the State is not capable of ensuring the security

³ Welcome to find the Handbook here: <https://disarmamenthandbook.org/es>.

⁴ 18 parliamentarians from Africa, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific and the Middle East participated in the event, together with 25 representatives of the diplomatic community, international organisations and civil society.

⁵ The number of virtual participants is an estimation as pre-registration was not required.

of citizens. However, studies clearly indicate that increased availability of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) in civilian hands is linked to rising numbers of firearms-related deaths. Hence, it is vital that parliamentarians intensify their commitments to disarmament and SALW-control in the region, for example through parliamentary diplomacy. She encouraged parliamentarians to actively participate in regional and sub-regional bodies to exchange information and strengthen cooperation, and to promote institutionalisation of parliamentary participation in international meetings and multilateral negotiations on disarmament and arms control.

Hon. Margarita Stolbizer, Member of Parliament in Argentina, Member of PFSALW and Member of the Committee on Peace and International Security of the IPU underlined the importance of applying a more comprehensive approach in disarmament efforts through the concept of common security. While the focus historically has been on the security of States, the concept of common security places the human perspective at the centre and recognises the need for access to food, livelihoods and respect for human dignity among others as vital for the security of persons. Hence, parliamentarians as the elected representatives of the citizens should consider security from a broad perspective. The Handbook is an important tool in this regard, exploring the linkages between disarmament and other topical issues, such as climate change. The parliamentary role also relates to raising awareness on the importance of disarmament, specifically SALW-control, among citizens as well as parliamentarians, and promoting the meaningful involvement of women in disarmament initiatives. She concluded by accounting for her active engagement in SALW-control efforts in Argentina, including in the initiative to promote voluntary surrender of weapons from the population as well as the legislative initiative to destroy weapons used in acts of gender-based violence.

Hon. Vincent de Paul Emah Etoundi, Member of Parliament in Cameroon and Board Member of PFSALW took the opportunity to share the perspective from West and Central Africa, noting that the subregions are heavily affected by uncontrolled flows of SALW resulting in increasing levels of violence and socio-political instability. Porous borders and lack of adequate border control are key factors facilitating the illicit trafficking of SALW in Africa. In several cases, States are not having bilateral dialogue regarding shared borders, and the lack of state presence is turning border areas into a free zone for criminal groups to traffic SALW. He further highlighted that important regional as well as sub-regional instruments have been put in place to tackle the problem of armed violence, such as the Kinshasa Convention and he underlined the importance of States Parties ensuring the full implementation of the instrument. Finally, he emphasised the vital role of parliamentarians in forming parliamentary networks on the topic of SALW-control, overseeing the actions of Governments in terms of SALW-control and ensuring inclusive peace and security processes where women and youth are involved. Youth are often highly represented among perpetrators and victims of SALW-violence, which further underscores the relevance of their role as actors in finding solutions to armed violence.

In the **open floor session**, the participants discussed the need to incorporate the private sector in disarmament initiatives to ensure that policies are being effective. The importance of initiatives for voluntary surrender of SALW was also highlighted, as fear of repercussions when approaching the Police authority with an unlicensed firearm otherwise prevents such surrenders. The discussion further elaborated on ways to strengthening the involvement of the civilian population in disarmament initiatives, including among youth groups engaged in violence. It was noted that the Handbook “Assuring Our Common Future” includes a specific section on the topic of engaging with youth in the chapter on partnerships, which provides valuable advice.

List of participants, international seminar 13-14 December 2023

Country	Name	Function/Committee/Organisation
Members of Parliament		
People's Republic of Algeria	Hon. Mohamed Mechegueg	Member of the Committee on Health and Information
Republic of Argentina	Hon. Margarita Stolbizer	Member of the Committees on Constitutional Issues and Foreign Relations
Kingdom of Cambodia	Hon. Kheng Samvada	Vice-Chairman of the Commission on Education, Youth, Sport, Cult, Religious Affairs, Culture and Tourism
Republic of Cameroon	Hon. Vincent de Paul Emah Etoundi	Member of the Constitutional Law Committee
Republic of Costa Rica	Hon. Gilberto Campos Cruz	Committee on Citizen Security
Republic of Côte d'Ivoire	Hon. Fobeh Soro	Member of the Committee on Security and Defence
Republic of Côte d'Ivoire	Hon. Madjara Coulibalyé Tiegbana	Member of the Committee on Security and Defence
Republic of Fiji	Hon. Lenora Qereqeretabua	Deputy Speaker and Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs
Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan	Hon. Dina Al Bashir	Member of the Committee on Foreign Affairs and the Legal Committee
Republic of Kosovo	Hon. Haki Abazi	Chair of the Committees on Foreign Affairs and Diaspora
	Hon. Hisen Berisha	Chairman of the Committee on Security and Defence

Republic of Lebanon	Hon. Elias Hankach	Member of the Committees on Youth, Sports, Information and Technology
	Hon. Halimeh Al Kaakour	Member of the Committees on Education and Justice
Malaysia	Hon. Mumtaz Binti Md Naw	Member of Parliament for Constituency of Tumpa
United Republic of Tanzania	Hon. Dr. Raphael Chegeni	Member of the Public Investment Committee
Republic of Trinidad and Tobago	Hon. Wade Mark	Member of the Committees on Business, Standing Orders and Public Administration and Appropriations
Republic of Uganda	Hon. Biyika Lawrence Songa	Member of the Committees on Climate Change, Environment, Natural Resources, Budget, Rules and Discipline, ICT, Science and Innovation
Oriental Republic of Uruguay	Hon. Germán Cardoso	Member of the Committees on Human Rights and Petitions, Security and Coexistence and Transportation, Communication and Public Works
Parliamentary staff		
Kingdom of Cambodia	Ms. Chanboramey Pong	Official at ASEAN-AIPA Office, International Relations Department, the Secretariat General of the National Assembly of Cambodia
Malaysia	Ms. Suraya Syazwani Binti Mohamad Yusof	Staff
Malaysia	Ahmad Fakhurrrazi Bin Yahaya	Staff
Malaysia	Dr. Nur Ilyani Binti Mohamed Nawawi	Staff

Malaysia	Muhammad Ammar Bin Mohd Sukiman	Staff
Malaysia	Mohd Sukiman Bin Yasin	Staff
Civil Society and Other Representatives		
Republic of Argentina	Ms. Maria Pia Devoto	Director, Asociación para Políticas Públicas (APP), Board Member of PFSALW
Swiss Confederation	Mr. Callum Watson	Gender Coordinator, Small Arms Survey
Swiss Confederation	Mr. Marc Finaud	Senior Advisor and Associate Fellow, Global Fellowship Initiative, Geneva Centre for Security Policy
Republic of Austria	Ms. Sara Pinheiro Stocker	Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Officer, UNODC
Republic of Serbia	Ms. Bojana Balon	Head, South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons
Republic of South Africa	Mr. Joseph Dube	Representative, International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA)
Gabonese Republic	Mr. Jean-Victor Nduma Mbadinga	Former Gabonese Senator
Swiss Confederation	Mr. Philip Jennings	Co-president of the International Peace Bureau (IPB)
Swiss Confederation	Mr. Sean Connors	Executive Director of the International Peace Bureau
Swiss Confederation	Mr. Donato Kiniger-Passigli	Vice-President of World Academy of Art and Science (WAAS)

Republic of South Sudan	Hon. Betty Achan Ogwaro	Member of the National Transitional Legislative Assembly of South Sudan, and representative of the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders
Diplomatic community representatives		
Republic of Costa Rica	H.E. Christian Guillermet	Ambassador
Republic of Costa Rica	Ms. Paula Peraza	Minister Counselor
Republic of Argentina	Mr. Angel Dalmazzo	Secretary of Embassy
IPU		
Swiss Confederation	Ms. Laurence Marzal	Secretary of the Standing Committee on Peace and International Security at the IPU
Swiss Confederation	Mr. Arthur Duforest	Peace and International Security Consultant at the IPU
Swiss Confederation	Ms. Anda Filip	Ambassador, Director for Member Parliaments and External Relations at the IPU
Secretariat of PFSALW		
Kingdom of Sweden	Ms. Karin Olofsson	Secretary General
Kingdom of Sweden	Ms. Emmanuelle Texier	Programme Officer
	Mr. Theodor Stensö	Programme Officer

List of participants, launch event of the Spanish version of the Parliamentary Handbook “Assuring Our Common Future”, 13 December

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Malaysia	Ahmad Fakhurrazi Bin Yahaya	Staff
Malaysia	Dr. Nur Ilyani Binti Mohamed Nawawi	Staff
Malaysia	Muhammad Ammar Bin Mohd Sukiman	Staff
Malaysia	Mohd Sukiman Bin Yasin	Staff
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Czech Republic	Mr. Alyn Ware	Global Coordinator, Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament (PNND)
Republic of South Africa	Mr. Joseph Dube	Representative, International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA)
Gabonese Republic	Mr. Jean-Victor Nduma Mbadinga	Former Gabonese Senator

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