



PARLIAMENTARY FORUM
ON SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS



Regional seminar in East 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”

6 – 7 June, 2024

Kampala, Uganda

Preparatory step to the Fourth Review Conference (RevCon4) of the UN PoA Side-event hosted by the Parliamentary Forum on Small Arms and Light Weapons (PFSALW) in collaboration with the Gender Equality Network for Small Arms Control (GENSAC) as well as the Government of Chile, taking place on June 20, 2024.

PARLIAMENTARY ACTION PLAN¹

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 civilians², causing the death of approximately 260 000 people every year³ in 2021 and injuring many more. The situation is severe, in general, and in specific as the figure represents a [significant increase of 6% in global firearms related deaths](#) compared to the death of 211, 000 persons in 2020. The number of forcibly displaced people due to conflict, violence and persecution has reached over 100 million, the highest number since the United Nations High

¹ Based on the previous regional PAP for Africa adopted at a regional seminar realised by PFSALW in collaboration with, and at the venue of the National Assembly of Cameroon in Yaoundé, Cameroon on June 21-22, 2022, the present PAP has been revised and approved in updated version at the regional seminar for Africa, implemented in collaboration with the Parliament of Uganda on June 6 – 7, 2024. 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).

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

³Small Arms Survey, 2023, Global Violent Deaths in 2021, https://www.smallarmssurvey.org/sites/default/files/SAS-GVD-2023-update-FINAL_0.pdf

Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) records began.⁴ 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 (IHL). Civilians are the main victims of violations of IHL in armed conflicts.⁵

Uncontrolled Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) as well as their illicit acquisition and transfer is a recurring security dilemma in Africa. Most of Africa's estimated 100 million uncontrolled SALW can be found in crisis zones and other security-challenged environments, exacerbating and prolonging conflicts.⁶ 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.⁷

The serious situation underlines the need for parliamentarians to prevent and reduce uncontrolled SALW flows through their legislative, oversight and awareness raising functions. Parliamentarians, in particular women parliamentarians, are vital actors. Hence enhancing their active participation in decision-making on relevant SALW-processes by mainstreaming the gender equality perspective, including the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda, in arms regulation processes, is key for the achievement of more peaceful and sustainably developed societies.

Regionally, the African Union (AU) has taken several steps to prevent the illicit transfer of SALW, including developing and adopting the Master Roadmap (AUMR) of Practical Steps for Silencing the Guns in Africa by the year 2020, now with a prolonged commitment until year 2030.⁸ Additionally, the importance of preventing SALW-related violence, and the crucial role of women in peace and security processes, has been acknowledged in the Pan-African Parliament (PAP).⁹ Aforementioned efforts can be enhanced by the implementation of international SALW control 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), the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goal 16.4 on significantly reducing illicit arms flows and the Arms Trade Treaty among other conflicts in Africa increasingly involve SALW that have been illicitly acquired through embargo-breaking SALW transfers. By ensuring the effective implementation of instruments such as the UN PoA

⁴ UNHCR (2023): Press Release 2023, available at: <https://www.unhcr.org/news/unhcr-forced-displacement-continues-grow-conflicts-escalate>

⁵ International Committee of the Red Cross, 2013, Contemporary challenges for IHL, <https://www.icrc.org/en/document/contemporary-challenges-ihl>

⁶ Small Arms Survey, https://www.smallarmssurvey.org/sites/default/files/SAS-GVD-2023-update-FINAL_0.pdf

⁷ Small Arms Survey, 2023, Global Violent Deaths in 2021, https://www.smallarmssurvey.org/sites/default/files/SAS-GVD-2023-update-FINAL_0.pdf

⁸ Oxfam. 2017. The Human Cost of Uncontrolled Arms in Africa. https://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/file_attachments/rr-human-cost-uncontrolled-arms-africa-080317-en.pdf

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ African Union (AU), (2020), AU Master Road Map of Practical Steps to Silencing the Guns in Africa. Last accessed 2022-06-01: <https://au.int/en/documents/20200331/au-master-road-map-practical-steps-silencing-guns-africa>

⁹ AU (2019), Press Release: Silencing the Guns in Africa to feature prominently in Pan-African Parliament's

Peace Efforts and Interventions. Last accessed 2022-06-01: https://au.int/sites/default/files/pressreleases/37807-pr-press_release_on_pap_workshop_approved.pdf

– a task where parliamentary oversight is vital – aforementioned transfers could be prevented.¹⁰ Additionally, progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda is being jeopardized by ongoing conflicts that have dramatically slowed down socioeconomic development, in addition to its negative impact on human lives. Political will, and hence parliamentary action, is crucial for recovering and fully implementing the above-mentioned instruments for the benefit of the population.

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), and the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda as well as synergies to other relevant international conventional arms control frameworks. The intended outcome was to enhance parliamentary capacity, action and leverage in the implementation of the UN PoA and the WPS agenda. In the seminar, the Parliamentary Forum on Small Arms and Light Weapons' (PFSALW's) and the Parliament of Cameroon's previously elaborated regional Parliamentary Action Plan (PAP) from 2022 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 the UN PoA and the WPS Agenda at the national and regional level in the upcoming period.

The seminar targeted parliamentarians from East Africa, including the project's focus countries Comoros, Madagascar, Rwanda, Uganda and Tanzania, as part of the run-up and preparation for the Fourth Review Conference (RevCon4) on the UN PoA, taking place between 17-28 June 2024 at the UN in New York, United States. 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 the RevCon4 on June 20, 2024.

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 parliamentary capacity and action in East Africa for advanced 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) and the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda*". The seminar built on the previous efforts realised within the thematic scope.

The present PAP has been revised and adopted in its amended version, based on the PAP adopted in the Parliament of Cameroon in June 2022. 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.

¹⁰ Small Arms Survey (SAS), (2019), WEAPONS COMPASS: Mapping Illicit Small Arms Flows in Africa. Last accessed 2022-06-01: <http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/fileadmin/docs/U-Reports/SAS-AU-Weapons-Compass.pdf>

- 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;
- 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 SDG5 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, and take advantage of existing lobby groups in relation to foreign actors to agree on workable best practices.

Part 3 – Partnerships and resources¹¹

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](#)

¹¹ 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.

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