



“Connecting the Dots: Advancing the implementation of UN PoA and WPS Agenda by enhancing parliamentary capacity, action, and civil society engagement in East Africa, Latin America, and Asia”

Side event on the Fourth United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in all its Aspects (RevCon4)

**New York, USA
20 June 2024**

Executive summary

The side event took place within the Parliamentary Forum on Small Arms and Light Weapons (PFSALW's) project *“Connecting the Dots: Advancing 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 & Security Agenda (WPS) by enhancing parliamentary capacity and action in East Africa and Asia”*, funded by the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs' (UNODA's) UN Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation (UNSCAR).

The project activities included a regional seminar in Southeast Asia in collaboration with the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (AIPA) on October 4-5 2023, and a regional seminar in East Africa in collaboration with the Parliament of Uganda on 6-7 June 2024. In the seminars, previously adopted regional Parliamentary Action Plans (PAPs) were reviewed and approved in revised versions, as to ensure their continued relevance in guiding further parliamentary action in respective regions. The seminars were part of the run-up and preparation for the Fourth Review Conference (RevCon4) 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), and built on PFSALW's previous “Connecting the Dots” projects from 2017, 2018, 2021, 2022 and 2023 in Africa, Southeast Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as the Western Balkans. The conclusions from the regional seminars were presented at PFSALW's international side-event on 20 June 2024 at the RevCon4 on the UN PoA, which took place between 17-28 June 2024 at the UN in New York, United States.

The side-event aimed to strengthen parliamentary leverage on the UN PoA and WPS agenda at the international, regional and national level, and thus enhance parliamentary influence on the aforementioned instruments, with a specific emphasis on the involvement of women

members of parliament (MPs). Co-hosted with the Gender Equality Network for Small Arms Control (GENSAC), and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Chile, the side-event brought together an esteemed panel of experts and a diverse audience of approximately 35 participants to discuss the intersection of arms control and gender equality.

Ms. Karin Olofsson, Secretary General of PFSALW, opened the side event by welcoming participants and expressing gratitude to the distinguished panellists for sharing their insights, to UNSCAR for their continued support to PFSALW, as well as to GENSAC and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Chile for sponsoring the event. She emphasised that the side event was part of a series of seminars within PFSALW's project, aimed at engaging parliamentarians in identifying actionable recommendations leading up to the RevCon4. The discussions centred on conclusions drawn from regional seminars held in Southeast Asia and East Africa, where revised Parliamentary Action Plans (PAP) were adopted, as well as additional insights from Latin America and civil society perspectives from the GENSAC Network's work. Ms. Olofsson also highlighted that the event built on previous successful efforts and provided an overview of the recommendations for enhancing the implementation of arms control instruments, particularly the UN PoA and the WPS Agenda.

H.E. Ambassador Paula Narváez, Permanent Representative of Chile to the United Nations, underscored Chile's commitment to a Feminist Foreign Policy, ensuring the inclusion of a gender perspective in arms control discussions. She highlighted the adverse effects of firearms on women and the necessity of integrating gender considerations into all arms control measures. Ambassador Narváez pointed out that comprehensive efforts to prevent gender-based violence are crucial for achieving long-term peace and security.

Hon. Dr. Raphael Chegeni, Member of Parliament, Tanzania, and President of PFSALW Hon. Chegeni elaborated on the legislative, oversight and awareness-raising roles of parliamentarians in regulating small arms acquisition and transfer. He detailed recent key actions recommended in the Parliamentary Action Plans adopted in East Africa and Asia, including the need for robust national and regional implementation mechanisms under the WPS agenda; cooperation between neighbouring countries and voluntary arms surrender programs, to mitigate SALW-related violence. Furthermore, the importance of increasing awareness of transnational crime and ensuring sufficient budgetary resources for these initiatives was stressed.

Hon. Margarita Stolbizer, Member of Parliament from Argentina, provided a compelling account of the impact of firearms on vulnerable groups, particularly LGBTQ communities and women. She shared alarming statistics from Argentina, where femicides involving firearms predominantly affected women who knew their assailants. Hon. Stolbizer advocated for stringent regulations to reduce armed violence and highlighted the critical role of civil society in promoting national cooperation for peace and security.

Ms. Isabel Sarasin, Deputy Head of Division, Conventional Arms Control & CSBM, German Federal Foreign Office, who participated virtually, underscored Germany's support for the GENSAC Network as part of Germany's commitment to their Feminist Foreign Policy. She emphasized the need for incorporating a gender perspective in small arms control efforts and noted that women are disproportionately affected by domestic violence involving firearms. Ms. Sarasin stressed the importance of integrating gender considerations into the WPS agenda and called for reflective strategies to enhance the effectiveness of arms control within this framework.

Ms. Maria Pia Devoto, Director of Asociación para Políticas Públicas (APP) and GENSAC Member, linked the UN PoA to the gendered impacts of arms and the crucial role of parliamentary action. She highlighted the necessity of modernising laws to address new challenges and shared success stories from Latin America, where GENSAC has worked with parliamentarians to support them effectively utilize their diplomatic and legislative powers to prevent gender-based violence. Ms. Devoto underscored the importance of mainstreaming gender considerations in governance and promoting civil society participation. She cited the annual Arms and Gender convening in South America, supported by GENSAC and Small Arms Survey, as an example of how efforts to connect civil society and parliamentarians can propel positive collaboration and make strides towards more gender-responsive legislation to reduce violence.

H.E. Izumi Nakamitsu, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, emphasised that the impact of SALW is far from insignificant, highlighting their severe human cost and underscoring the key role of parliamentarians and the critical need for robust regulatory frameworks to address these challenges. H.E. Izumi Nakamitsu's also called for the full inclusion of women and youth, which was reflected in the emphasis on intergenerational dialogue as a key factor in tackling complex issues related to disarmament.

In the open floor discussion, moderated by Mr. Daniel Friedman of the GENSAC Secretariat, attention was given to gender equality and youth perspectives on the significant human costs associated with SALW, particularly the rising death rates among women due to armed violence.

In addition, the discussion stressed the importance of including women and youth in disarmament negotiations, recognising their perspectives as essential for developing effective solutions. Discussants addressed the urgent need to focus on violence affecting young people, whether as victims or perpetrators. Participants called for a re-evaluation of violence prevention programs to better include youth, with preparation for young professionals' leadership roles and securing funding for youth engagement highlighted as important priorities.

Moreover, the role of civil society was highlighted as crucial for ensuring effective law implementation, holding governments accountable, and fostering political will. In conclusion, the discussion called for actions across sectors to promote gender-responsive SALW control and integrate the WPS agenda with the UN PoA. Emphasis was placed on the vital importance of parliamentary action, gender equality, youth involvement, and civil society participation in addressing SALW-related challenges to advance global peace and security.