



Regional Seminar for the MENA-region

“Reducing threats to international security: Mobilising parliamentarians from the Middle East to strengthen global parliamentary action for enhanced universalisation and implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty”

June 12-13, 2024

Generations for Peace, Amman, Jordan

PARLIAMENTARY ACTION PLAN

Introduction

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 most recent numbers, more than 1 billion of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) are circulating worldwide, 85% in the hands of civilians¹, causing the death of approximately 260 000 people every year.² Armed conflicts and violence, independent of the scale, are perpetuated by the availability of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW), increasing the need for concise and effective steps to tackle their uncontrolled proliferation.

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region is severely affected by armed violence, with some countries facing armed conflicts, terrorism, violent extremism and occupation. According to the Global Peace Index (GPI), MENA is the least peaceful region in the world for the eighth consecutive year.³ On the same note, among the 25 countries with the highest estimation of civilian-held legal and illicit firearms, six are located in the MENA region: Yemen, Iraq, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan and Egypt.⁴ Moreover, SALW trade transparency is weak in several countries⁵ as well

¹ Small Arms Survey (2018), *Estimating Global Civilian-held Firearms numbers*, available at:

<https://www.smallarmssurvey.org/sites/default/files/resources/SAS-BP-Civilian-Firearms-Numbers.pdf>

² Small Arms Survey (2023): *Global Violent Deaths in 2021*, available at: https://www.smallarmssurvey.org/sites/default/files/SAS-GVD-2023-update-FINAL_0.pdf

³ Institute for Economics & Peace (2023), *Global Peace Index 2023*, available at:

<https://www.economicsandpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/GPI-2023-Web.pdf>

⁴ Small Arms Survey (2018), *Estimating Global Civilian-held Firearms numbers*, available at:

<https://www.smallarmssurvey.org/sites/default/files/resources/SAS-BP-Civilian-Firearms-Numbers.pdf>

⁵ Small Arms Survey (2021), *The 2021 Small Arms Trade Transparency Barometer*, available at:

<https://smallarmssurvey.org/sites/default/files/resources/SAS-BP-TB21.pdf>

as the universalisation rate of the ATT. In the region, only three UN Member States are state parties to the Treaty: Afghanistan, Lebanon and Palestine.⁶ The high prevalence of SALW in combination with the lack of transparency, arms control and arms trade regulations results in severe consequences such as armed violence, armed conflicts, terrorism and violent extremism.⁷ Having stated this, the need for SALW control in the region is urgent as the present prevalence of SALW compromises the development of peaceful and sustainably developed societies. Parliamentarians are crucial actors in efforts to prevent SALW-related violence due to their legislative, oversight and awareness-raising functions. Given the complexity of the issues, parliamentarians are crucial actors in the prevention and reduction of uncontrolled SALW proliferation, through their legislative, oversight and awareness raising functions.

The objective of the regional 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, as well as to identify the most prioritised actions to take in respective country and compile in a regional Parliamentary Action Plan (PAP) specifically related to the topic on the ATT. The seminar was realised as part of a project financed by the Ministry of 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*”.

Based on the regional efforts within the project; the seminar held in Asia on 9-10 June 2022 with the ASEAN Inter Parliamentary Assembly (AIPA), and the seminar in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) on 30 June–1 July 2023 with the Latin American and Caribbean Parliament (PARLATINO)—PFSALW organised an international side event at the Ninth Conference of States Parties (CSP9) to the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) on 24 August 2023 where conclusions and recommendations from the aforementioned seminars were shared and discussed. Additionally, an international seminar was conducted on 13-14 December 2023 in collaboration with the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) in Geneva. In August 2024, PFSALW will participate in the Tenth Conference of States Parties (CSP10), marking the ATT’s 10th anniversary. During this milestone event, parliamentary actions on the reduction and prevention of SALW-related violence, informed by current recommendations, will be highlighted and discussed among parliamentarians, government officials, and civil society representatives. Conclusions and recommendations from the regional efforts will be compiled into a parliamentary policy publication, designed to serve as a roadmap for parliamentarians globally in advancing ATT implementation and addressing SALW-related violence.

The seminar engaged parliamentarians from several MENA countries as well as other relevant stakeholders in the MENA region. 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 present PAP is the result of the seminar discussions identifying main conclusions from the participants’ perspectives as well as needs for revisions based on the previously adopted PAP in 2019.

⁶ Arms Trade Treaty, *Treaty Status*, accessed 2024-10-21: <https://thearmstradetreaty.org/treaty-status.html?templateId=209883>

⁷ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) (2018), *Arms transfers and SALW controls in the Middle East and North Africa: Mapping capacity-building efforts*, available at: https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2018-11/bp_1811_att_mena_1.pdf

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

- Support the universalisation and effective implementation of the ATT and its links to the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda and other related instruments;
- Guide parliamentarians in their work related to the ATT and the WPS Agenda 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, especially women's and youth organisations 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

The present Action Plan will provide, from the parliamentary perspective in the MENA region, an input to the important international fora linked to the review of the above instruments e.g. Conferences of State Parties of the ATT, Biennial Meetings of States and Review Conferences of the UN PoA, as well as the Assemblies and meetings of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. This Action Plan is an important complement to the existing Action Plans approved at seminars in MENA, Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean, adopted 2019-2023.

Recommendations on Universalisation and Implementation of 2030 Agenda SDG 16, the ATT, the UN PoA and UNSCR 1325 and 2250

Parliamentary action is paramount to create the missing link between the local and national level related to the universalisation and implementation of the ATT and the WPS Agenda in relation to other relevant frameworks, such as SDG 16.4, the UN PoA and the UN SG Disarmament Agenda. Synergies among these instruments are fundamental to achieve change. Parliamentarians have an important role in identifying and highlighting best practices at the local level in order to inform national policies and legislation and to promote good practices internationally. Therefore, it is fundamental to support parliamentary action to connect the dots between different tools and decisively contribute to the prevention and reduction of SALW related violence.

In all efforts, it is fundamental to include the gender equality and youth perspective, the role of women and youth, as well as other relevant international instruments on conventional arms control. Three action areas have been identified by parliamentarians participating and are based on their three key roles of legislation, oversight and awareness raising, the main conclusions of each area are as follows;

1. Legislation

- 1.1. Ensure universalisation, domestication and implementation of SDG 16, ATT, UN PoA and UNSCRs 1325 and 2250, including different aspects ranging from drafting of legislation to budget allocations, and work towards that politically binding instruments and tools for arms control to be legally binding and mandatory for all UN member states.
- 1.2. Ensure that international and regional treaties and instruments related to the topic of SALW control are established, signed, ratified and implemented by governments in compliance with International Humanitarian Law.
- 1.3. Elaborate and establish National Action Plans specifically related to the topic of illicit SALW and the ATT and the WPS Agenda.
- 1.4. Elaborate and establish National SALW Commissions specifically related to the ATT and the WPS Agenda.
- 1.5. Support harmonisation of relevant legislation at the regional level, using available tools such as model legislations, e.g. UNODC⁸ model laws on Firearms, to identify areas of improvement as well as support the regional harmonisation of laws and common standards.
- 1.6. Promote the provision of gender disaggregated research and development of armed violence reduction programmes to support legislation, including systematised national data collection on firearm-related deaths and injuries to help inform armed violence prevention policies.
- 1.7. Include the gender equality and youth perspective when working with legislation regarding SALW control, both in terms of content in the legislation and promoting women's and youth's participation and leadership roles in the legislative process.
- 1.8. Make inter-committee work at the parliamentary level, and wider consultations with diplomatic representatives, government officials, civil society organisations, women's and youth organisations, a priority to enrich legislative work, especially during the discussions, evaluation and drafting of relevant SALW control legislation relating to SDG 16, ATT, UN PoA and UNSCRs 1325 and 2250.

2. Oversight

- 2.1. Prioritise oversight of the government by relevant parliamentary committees, including actions such as tabling questions, motions and interpellations to relevant government institutions and officials. For those countries where implementation and/or reporting are slow or delayed, parliamentarians should identify the reasons: e.g. lack of political will, administrative red tape, and lack of technical capacity / trained personnel to deal with reporting issues.

⁸ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Model Law against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition (2011)

- 2.2. Stay informed by seeking advice from civil society organisations and research institutes in the oversight tasks, as these can provide expertise, experiences and voice issues, as well as encouraging the active participation of parliamentarians in processes.
- 2.3. Ensure financial sustainability such as encouraging governments to secure sufficient funding for effective implementation through state budget or external sources e.g. the ATT Voluntary Trust Fund and/or secure the allocation of the necessary budgets to allow state agencies to collect statistics relevant that facilitates the evaluation of implementation.
- 2.4. As parliamentary participation can bridge the gap in universalisation, implementation and domestication of relevant international SALW control instruments, take measures to secure parliamentary inclusion in relevant UN processes, and insist on parliamentary participation as well as civil society representatives, together with relevant Ministries, as part of delegations to relevant meetings and conferences.
- 2.5. Promote and establish inter-agency coordination and cooperation, avoid duplication of efforts and harmonise with international efforts and hold regular meetings between cross-party groups of legislators and the ministers responsible.
- 2.6. Promote and implement systematised national, gender disaggregated data collection, conducted by government bodies as well as research institutes and civil society, on firearm-related deaths and injuries to help inform armed violence prevention policies.

3. Awareness-raising

- 3.1. Raise awareness on the negative socio-physiological effects of the irresponsible usage of SALW among civilian population, including women, youth and children.
- 3.2. Raise awareness on the negative impact on children and youth of the usage of violent media influences, such as games & films, including its integration in educational curriculums.
- 3.3. Raise awareness on DDR processes with specific focus on the reintegration of ex-combatants to eliminate stigmatization.
- 3.4. Raise awareness on the universalisation and implementation of SDG 16, ATT, UN PoA and UNSCRs 1325 and 2250 among fellow parliamentarians, both in relevant committees and in the plenary and include experts in the dialogue to underpin rationale.
- 3.5. Promote the development of formal or informal cross-party groups/networks in order to raise awareness on SALW-related violence and champion relevant instruments to curb the uncontrolled flow and use of illicit SALW.
- 3.6. Approach parliamentary leadership (Speakers, committee chairs, group leaders etc.) to include the issues related to implementation of the above instruments on the parliamentary agenda.

- 3.7. Table questions in parliaments to relevant government institutions: For those countries where ratification or implementation is slow or delayed, parliamentarians should identify the reasons: e.g. lack of political will, administrative red tape, lack of technical capacity/trained personnel etc.
- 3.8. Table motions in relation to relevant instruments to generate political interest.
- 3.9. Encourage stronger parliamentary action to promote the work and substantial participation of women parliamentarians in peace and security issues, especially facilitating their inclusion and access to decision making positions.
- 3.10. Join forces with young people, both as a target group but also as an ally in the implementation of SDG 16, ATT, UN PoA and UNSCRs 1325 and 2250 at the national, regional and international level.
- 3.11. Raise awareness among the population, as a better understanding of the provisions to national firearm control laws, SDG 16, ATT, UN PoA and UNSCRs 1325 and 2250 is necessary both for compliance but also to gather the political support needed to implement the above-mentioned instruments.
- 3.12. Link with civil society organisations, including at grass-root level, government agencies and constituencies for awareness raising initiatives aimed at sensitising the population on the consequences and costs of armed violence, in order to look for the necessary solutions.
- 3.13. Engage with traditional and social media to broaden support for and understanding of the SDG 16, ATT, UN PoA and UNSCRs 1325 and 2250.

Part 3 – Partnerships and resources⁹

The efforts of parliamentarians in promoting universalisation and implementation of the ATT and its links to the WPS Agenda can be multiplied if working in partnership with organisations with similar or overlapping interests. It is therefore recommended that PFSALW and its members seek partnerships and structured dialogue with a range of actors.

Parliamentary action constitutes unique efforts 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 \(IPU\)](#)

[The Arab Parliament](#)

[Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean](#)

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

[Parliamentarians for Global Action \(PGA\)](#)

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

⁹ 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.

Intergovernmental structures

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

[UNDP Arab States](#)

[League of Arab States](#)

[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 \(IPPNW\)](#)

[Women's International League for Peace and Freedom \(WILPF\)](#)

[United Network of Young Peacebuilders](#)

[Generations for Peace](#)

[Maat for Peace, Development and Human Rights](#)

[Solidarity is Global institute](#)

[All Girls For Development Yemen](#)

[Ruwwad Al-Tanmeya](#)

[Sister's Arab Forum for Human Rights](#)

[The Palestinian Centre for Democracy](#)

[West Asia-North Africa Institute \(WANA\)](#)

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 \(BICC\)](#)

[Stockholm International Peace Research Institute \(SIPRI\)](#)

[Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation – Africa Department](#)

[Middle East Institute \(MEI\)](#)

Other sources

[The Arms Trade Treaty](#)

[UNSCR 1325](#)

[2030 Agenda Sustainable Development Goal 16 - Promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies](#)

[The UN PoA](#)

[UNSCR 2250](#)

[UNCOMTRADE](#)

[NISAT](#)

[UNROCA](#)

[Firearms Protocol](#)

[UNODC Model Law against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition](#)