

Project

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

Tuesday, March 16 2021

Webinar preparatory step to the UN PoA BMS 7, July 2021

Concept Note

Executive Summary

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 civilians¹, causing the death of approximately 223 300 people every year². The number of forcibly displaced people due to conflict, violence and persecution has reached over 79 million, the highest number since the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees records began.³ 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 IHL. Civilians are the main victims of violations of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) in armed conflicts.⁴

The ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly

The ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (AIPA) was established as a regional parliamentary organisation on 2 September 1977. It was initially called AIPO and later renamed as ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (AIPA), which is the sole parliamentary organisation officially associated with the ASEAN. Its membership includes all ten parliaments of ASEAN Member States (Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Viet Nam).

The main goal of AIPA recently is to contribute significantly through inter-parliamentary cooperation in the attainment of the goals and priorities of ASEAN. One of the aims and purposes of ASEAN, as set out

¹ Small Arms Survey, Estimating Global Civilian-held firearms numbers, last accessed in December 2019, <http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/weapons-and-markets/tools/global-firearms-holdings.html>

² Small Arms Survey (2020), Global Violent Deaths in 2018, <http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/fileadmin/docs/W-Infographics/SAS-GVD-March-2020-update.pdf>

³ <https://www.unhcr.org/figures-at-a-glance.html> last accessed in November 2020,

⁴ <https://www.icrc.org/en/document/contemporary-challenges-ihl>

in its Declaration is “to promote regional peace and stability through abiding respect for justice and the rule of law in the relationship among countries of the region and adherence to the principles of the United Nations Charter.”⁵ In order to move forward and to achieve this goal, AIPA has been cooperating with different organizations in order to enhance its secretariat’s internal capacity, and engage in various capacity building initiatives to better equip its main stakeholder – the parliamentarians of ASEAN – in contributing towards the region’s integration process. In light of all these, since 2018 AIPA has been collaborating with the PFSALW in order to provide a forum for promoting relevant actions with parliamentarians exchanging on policy tools and knowledge that can allow them to engage at the national, regional and international level, which will ultimately increase AIPA’s relevance in the region.

The Parliamentary Forum on Small Arms and Light Weapons

The Parliamentary Forum on Small Arms and Light Weapons (PFSALW) is the only membership-based organisation gathering parliamentarians globally across party-political lines, specifically related to the reduction and prevention of SALW-related violence. It is an organisation constituted by parliamentarians, for parliamentarians working for sustainable development, human security and peace-building. Constituted in the Spanish Congress in 2002, PFSALW today gathers approximately 295 members in over 100 countries across Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Middle East. The Theory of Change of PFSALW is to contribute to the achievement of more peaceful and sustainably developed societies by enhancing parliamentary action in the implementation and universalisation of international frameworks relevant to the prevention and reduction of SALW-related violence through three mutually reinforcing methodological pillars: capacity-building, policy-shaping and awareness-raising. The points of departure for these pillars are hence the three key roles of a parliamentarian; the legislative, oversight and awareness-raising functions.

Since its foundation in 2002, the Forum has enjoyed a limited but fruitful cooperation with parliaments and parliamentarians from Asia, by participation in different seminars and providing its members with capacity-building and policy-building support and tools towards armed violence reduction and prevention. This initiative provides a relevant opportunity for the Forum to further strengthen and consolidate its relationship with its membership in Asia and relevant stakeholders such as the ASEAN Inter-parliamentary Assembly. It is also an opportunity for parliamentarians in the region to take part in an initiative that will develop their capacities on the issue of prevention and reduction of SALW related violence, and decisively support their political efforts on the issue.

Objective

Following the first AIPA-PFSALW seminar titled “*Connecting the Dots: Supporting the 2030 Agenda, the Arms Trade Treaty and the United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms implementation through increased parliamentary engagement and action in international processes*” in May 2018, this webinar aims 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 2030 Agenda in relation to the United Nations Security Council resolutions (UNSCRs) on Women, Peace and Security (WPS). Parliamentarians, especially women parliamentarians, are targeted as vital actors given their legislative, oversight and awareness raising roles, but that to date are invisible in UNSCR WPS

⁵ <https://asean.org/asean/about-asean/>

resolutions. The objective is to enhance implementation by parliamentary action through capacity-building, policy-shaping and awareness-raising. It seeks to enhance women as active agents and increase their participation in decision-making on relevant Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) processes, mainstreaming WPS and gender in arms regulation policies, programmes and legislation.

The webinar is the first step in a chain of seminars and webinars, part of a project financed by the United Nations Office on Disarmament Affairs (UNODA), specifically the Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation (UNSCAR). The project aims to engage parliamentarians as part of the run-up and preparation for the UN PoA Seventh Biennial Meeting of States (BMS 7) in July 2021.

The webinar has an Asian focus and will gather key parliamentarians from all Member Parliaments of the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (AIPA). It will serve as starting point and preparation to identify parliamentary recommendations on actions and perspectives to the BMS 7 and to prepare for the realisation of a physical seminar in the region which is planned to be held in 2021.

At the physical seminar, the first one to be realised for Southeast Asia, and the other to be realised in Africa, parliamentary priorities and recommendations will be identified, based on PFSALW's previously elaborated Parliamentary Action Plans (PAPs), with updates on contextual aspects and in relation to WPS. The current Parliamentary Action Plans available for Southeast Asia and Africa will be updated and provide input to and underpin the impact of the results of the BMS 7 and related processes.

The low level of parliamentary involvement in the above-mentioned processes underlines the relevance of the efforts to improve parliamentary engagement, understanding and ownership of the international conventional arms control framework. Political will is crucial for the implementation of WPS, and to identify synergies with global arms regulation instruments.

The involvement of the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly will allow participants, parliamentarians and other stakeholders, to reach a wider parliamentary audience, providing relevant thematic policy knowledge and a sound institutional platform for universalisation and implementations efforts in the region.

Background – armed violence in Asia

In 2018, 596,000 persons died of lethal violence, including 93,700 women and girls, and millions more were affected by armed violence.⁶ Globally, firearms were used in about 38% of all violent deaths in 2018, which resulted in 223,300 deaths. Alone in Asia in 2017, in almost 50% of the homicides a firearm was used.⁷ Apart from causing injury and loss of life, armed violence has severe effects on sustainable development, good governance and contributes to the persistence of armed conflict. Further, it facilitates violations of human rights, gender-based violence and impedes economic investment, having a negative impact on public health systems and productivity levels by draining public resources away from education and socio-economic development.

⁶ Small Arms Survey, "Global Violent Deaths in 2018": <http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/fileadmin/docs/W-Infographics/SAS-GVD-March-2020-update.pdf>

⁷ UNODC, Global Study on Homicide 2019 (Vienna, 2019): <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/global-study-on-homicide.html>

Globally, between 2012 and 2016, occurred around 1 million firearms related deaths, whereas 44% of the homicides were committed with firearms during 2016.⁸ The sub-regions most affected by lethal violence by firearms are—in decreasing order between 2012 and 2016—South America (with a rate of violent 18 deaths per 100,000 population), Central America (16), the Caribbean (8), and Southern Africa (6).⁹ The change between 2016-2017 in terms of homicide and direct conflict death amounted to 11, 500 more homicides in Central America and 8, 200 more homicides in South America, whilst South-eastern Asia experienced a rise in conflict related deaths amounting to 3,600.¹⁰

In Southeast Asia, countries are severely affected by the uncontrolled proliferation and trafficking of illicit SALW. The region is a crossroads for arms smuggling, trafficking, illicit craft production, drug-trafficking and the countries extensive maritime borders.¹¹ This, combined by the challenges posed by the current COVID-19 pandemic, underscore the need of concerted efforts in the prevention and reduction of SALW related violence.

Given the complexity of these issues, parliamentarians are crucial actors in the prevention and reduction of illicit SALW proliferation, through their legislative, over-sight and awareness-raising functions.

Suggested profile of the participants

- Member of a committee relevant to the implementation of the UN PoA, the 2030 and WPS agendas
- Willingness/readiness to have an active role in relation to the topics of the seminar, e.g. contacting the government, speaking in the parliament, raising awareness, tabling questions to ministries
- Readiness/willingness to liaise with the Forum to further discuss actions, follow up and evaluation steps, support and achievements related to the common objectives of armed violence prevention and reduction
- The gender equality perspective will be considered to the extent possible, putting focus on the expertise related to the advancement of the WPS agenda.

Implementation, results and impact

The webinar aims at promoting relevant actions with parliamentarians exchanging on policy tools and knowledge (a Parliamentary Action Plan and thematic sessions) that can allow them to engage at the national, regional and international level to advance the UN PoA, the 2030 and the WPS Agendas¹². It will also support the process of including a parliamentary component and recommendations to be presented at the BSM 7. In addition, the results of the webinar and the conclusions from the BSM 7 will set the stage for a physical two-day seminar, in which the previously approved Parliamentary Action Plan will be followed up on and updated.

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

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ Small Arms Survey, “Darkening Horizons, Global Violent Deaths Scenarios, 2018-30”: <http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/fileadmin/docs/T-Briefing-Papers/SAS-BP-Violent-Deaths-Scenarios.pdf>

¹² Consider the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, their Parts and Components and Ammunition ([Firearms Protocol](#)), supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime, given its legally binding nature.



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This can support parliamentarians follow up with their governments, facilitate their participation as part of their government delegations in international meetings related to these instruments, and serve as a platform for parliamentary action at the national, regional and international policy level. Finally, the webinar also provides an excellent opportunity for all stakeholders, parliamentarians, civil society organisations, government representatives and diplomats to exchange views, discuss and carry on with a constructive dialogue concerning the implementation of the UN PoA, of the 2030 and WPS Agendas, during times where physical interaction are limited by the COVID-19 pandemic.

In sum, parliamentarians will gain access to policy relevant tools and a specialised political platform, allowing them to take an active role in relation to the seminars, both at the national and regional level, and take advantage of the policy knowledge, the momentum and the support that the Forum can provide during and after the webinars. Therefore, it is expected that the participants take action at their national parliaments, at the regional and international level, in form of speeches, media interventions, tabling questions to different authorities, as well as other means of parliamentary action.