



PARLIAMENTARY FORUM
ON SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS

Overview: Status of compliance in Africa of international instruments related to Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW)- control

Africa in context

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.¹ The risk of gender-based violence (GBV) heightens in conflict situations and it is estimated that approximately 46 percent of African women have experienced GBV as a result of armed conflict, compared to 35 percent globally.²

This serious situation highlights the need for parliamentarians to use their legislative, oversight and awareness raising roles to prevent and reduce illicit SALW flows. Women parliamentarians in particular are vital actors, and enhancing their active participation in decision-making on relevant SALW-processes, mainstreaming the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda and the gender equality perspective in arms regulation policies, programmes and legislation 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 2020.³ Additionally, the importance of preventing SALW-related violence, and the crucial role of women in this process, has been acknowledged in the Pan-African Parliament (PAP).⁴ 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).

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 – a task where parliamentary oversight is vital – these transfers could be prevented.⁵ Additionally, progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda has been jeopardized due to the COVID-19 pandemic having slowed down socioeconomic development dramatically in addition to its negative impact on human lives and health.⁶ Political will, and hence parliamentary action, is crucial to fully implement the above-mentioned instruments for the benefit of the population.

¹ Oxfam (2017), THE HUMAN COST OF UNCONTROLLED ARMS IN AFRICA: Cross-national research on seven African countries. Last accessed 2021-06-16: https://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/file_attachments/rr-human-cost-uncontrolled-arms-africa-080317-en.pdf

² Ibid.

³ African Union (AU), (2020), AU Master Road Map of Practical Steps to Silencing the Guns in Africa. Last accessed 2021-06-16: <https://au.int/en/documents/20200331/au-master-road-map-practical-steps-silencing-guns-africa>

⁴ AU (2019), Press Release: Silencing the Guns in Africa to feature prominently in Pan-African Parliament's Peace Efforts and Interventions. Last accessed 2021-06-16: https://au.int/sites/default/files/pressreleases/37807-pr-press_release_on_pap_workshop_approved.pdf

⁵ Small Arms Survey (SAS), (2019), WEAPONS COMPASS: Mapping Illicit Small Arms Flows in Africa. Last accessed 2021-06-16: <http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/fileadmin/docs/U-Reports/SAS-AU-Weapons-Compass.pdf>

⁶ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), (2020), COVID-19 crisis threatens Sustainable Development Goals financing. Last accessed 2021-06-16: <https://www.oecd.org/newsroom/covid-19-crisis-threatens-sustainable-development-goals-financing.htm>



PARLIAMENTARY FORUM ON SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS

Summary of international regulatory initiatives and their respective status in the African region

The sections below outline the status and compliance in universalisation and reporting of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), the UN PoA, the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, their Parts and Components and Ammunition (Firearms Protocol), the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms (UNROCA), the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) on WPS and SDG 16.4.2 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Each section includes a brief text on the regional status of the aforementioned initiatives and a table detailing the status in the four focus countries of the current Parliamentary Forum on Small Arms and Light Weapons' (PFSALW) Connecting the Dots-project.⁷ The objective of the project is to increase parliamentary engagement, participation and action in the implementation of the UN PoA, in combination with advancing the implementation of UNSCRs on WPS and the 2030 Agenda for enhanced SALW control.

Importance of parliamentary action

The status of the different regulating initiatives highlighted below underpins the importance of parliamentary action on prevention and reduction of SALW-related violence.⁸ PFSALW regards parliamentarians' legislative, oversight and awareness-raising functions as key and strives to facilitate increased engagement and action in international processes. It is especially relevant that this engagement is retained given the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, as to support the building-back better efforts taking place in societies globally after the pandemic.

Arms Trade Treaty (ATT)

The ATT is a legally binding Treaty that regulates the international trade in conventional arms and seeks to prevent and eradicate illicit trade and diversion of conventional arms by establishing international standards governing arms transfers.⁹ Overall, Africa has achieved positive results in terms of universalisation and implementation of the ATT. African countries have championed the ATT since its conception with 40 out of 54 countries having signed the Treaty. Out of these 40 signatory countries, 28 have ratified, accepted, or approved the Treaty while 12 of the countries, most of them situated in West Africa and Southern Africa, have yet to do so.¹⁰ Hence, full universalisation and compliance with the Treaty is still a pending issue in the region. Furthermore, since 2017, 18 African countries have received support in their implementation of the Treaty by means of the ATT Voluntary Trust Fund, a mechanism aimed at providing specific assistance to countries managed by the ATT Secretariat.¹¹

Country	Signatory (2013-2021)	Ratification (2013-2021)	Initial Reports /Annual Reports (2013-2021)
Republic of Mali	Yes	Yes	2015
Democratic Republic of Congo	No	No	-
Republic of Niger	Yes	Yes	-
United Republic of Tanzania	Yes	No	-

For the full list of country signatory and ratification-status, please see [here](#).

⁷ The 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 is implemented 2020 – 2021 and is supported by the United Nations Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation (UNSCAR).

⁸ United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA), (2020), Small Arms and Light Weapons. Last accessed 2021-06-16: <https://www.un.org/disarmament/convarms/salw/>

⁹ Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), (2020). Last accessed 2021-06-16: <https://www.thearmstradetreaty.org/>

¹⁰ ATT (2020), Treaty Status. Last accessed 2021-06-16: <https://thearmstradetreaty.org/treaty-status.html?templateId=209883>

¹¹ ATT (2020), Voluntary Trust Fund (VTF). Last accessed 2021-06-16: <https://thearmstradetreaty.org/voluntary.html>



PARLIAMENTARY FORUM ON SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16.4.2 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

As promoting sustainable development is a priority for the AU, evident by the AU's Agenda 2063 and its link to the 2030 Agenda of the United Nations (UN), it is key to consider the reduction in illicit flow of SALW and its role within the SDGs and Agenda 2063 goals connected to peace and stability.¹² Although African countries have made important progress towards sustainable development in the last decade, progress has been uneven and several challenges remain in achieving the 2030 Agenda, including persisting inequalities, widespread poverty and armed conflicts.¹³ This uneven progress can be seen in North Africa where major advances have been made, while Central Africa has achieved the least advancements towards the 2030 Agenda. Target 16.4, "By 2030, significantly reduce illicit financial and arms flows, strengthen the recovery and return of stolen assets and combat all forms of organized crime", is intrinsically connected to peace and reduction of uncontrolled SALW flows by its indicator 16.4.2 "Proportion of seized, found or surrendered arms whose illicit origin or context has been traced or established by a competent authority in line with international instruments".¹⁴ Yet, there is a lack of data on this indicator. Only 14 states worldwide have reported on indicator 16.4.2 and only one of them is an African state.¹⁵ Furthermore, the reallocation of resources to COVID-19 responses has slowed down sustainable development rates and lack of funding and resources remain a vital aspect hindering effective SDG implementation and monitoring in several countries.¹⁶ This underlines the need for continued determined work towards achieving more effective SDG implementation.

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)

Under the UN PoA, a politically binding instrument, governments agree to improve national SALW laws, import/export controls, and stockpile management – and to engage in cooperation and assistance.¹⁷ In 2020, 25 out of the 44 countries that provided a national UN PoA report were African.¹⁸ This reporting, and the 34 African countries that requested any type of international assistance to support their implementation of the program, gives an important indication of an existing political will that is vital when implementing this framework.

Country	National Reports on the UN Programme of Action (2002-2020)
Republic of Mali	2003, 2005, 2008, 2010, 2012, 2014, 2016, 2018, 2020
Democratic Republic of Congo	2003, 2010, 2012, 2016, 2018, 2020
Republic of Niger	2003, 2005, 2006, 2008, 2010, 2012, 2018
United Republic of Tanzania	2006, 2008, 2010, 2012, 2014, 2018, 2020

For the full list of country reports, please see [here](#).

¹² AU, Linking Agenda 2063 and the SDGs. Last accessed 2021-06-16: <https://au.int/en/agenda2063/sdgs>

¹³ United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), OUR FOCUS: Sustainable development. Last accessed 2021-06-16: <https://www.africa.undp.org/content/rba/en/home/sustainable-development.html>

¹⁴ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Goal 16. Last accessed 2021-06-16: <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal16>

¹⁵ United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD), (2021). Last accessed 2021-06-16: <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/database/>

¹⁶ SDG Knowledge Hub (2021), Africa SDG Report Adds Index on Leaving No One Behind. Last accessed 2021-06-16:

<https://sdg.iisd.org/news/africa-sdg-report-adds-index-on-leaving-no-one-behind/>

¹⁷ UNODA (2021), Programme of Action on small arms and its International Tracing Instrument. Last accessed 2021-06-16:

<https://www.un.org/disarmament/convarms/salw/programme-of-action/>

¹⁸ 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), (2020), National reports. Last accessed 2021-06-16: <https://smallarms.un-arm.org/national-reports/>



PARLIAMENTARY FORUM
ON SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS

The Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, their Parts and Components and Ammunition (Firearms Protocol)

The Firearms Protocol is the only legally binding instrument to counter the illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms, their parts and components and ammunition at the global level.¹⁹ More than half of all countries in Africa, 36 to be specific, has either signed or ratified the Firearms Protocol. In each of the five African sub-regions more than half of the countries have signed or ratified the Protocol. The regions with the lowest proportion of ratification and/or signing of the Firearms Protocol are East, Central and Southern Africa where the proportions are 55 percent, 57 percent, and 60 percent of countries, respectively. Northern and West Africa has a signing and/or ratification rate of 71 percent and 81 percent respectively.²⁰

Country	Signature (2001-2021)	Ratification/Acceptance/Approval Accession/Succession (2001-2021)
Republic of Mali	Yes	Yes
Democratic Republic of Congo	No	Yes
Republic of Niger	No	No
United Republic of Tanzania	No	Yes

For the full list of country signatory and ratification-status, please see [here](#).

United Nations Register of Conventional Arms (UNROCA)

UNROCA is a non-binding reporting mechanism where countries are requested to report on their export and imports, this mechanism captures a majority of official arms transfers, according to the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA).²¹ However, the UNROCA reporting has been low for African states since the establishment of the register and has declined further since the mid-2010s.²² In total, 38 African countries have reported their arms exports and imports to the UNROCA during some point since 1992, yet no country has submitted a report since 2018.²³

Country	Conventional Arms Register (1992-2020)
Republic of Mali	2006
Democratic Republic of Congo	2002, 2004
Republic of Niger	1992, 1993, 1994, 1997, 2000, 2001, 2005
United Republic of Tanzania	1992, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005

For the full list of country reports, please see [here](#).

National Action Plans for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (WPS)

UNSCR 1325 on WPS seeks to address the disproportionate and unique impact of conflicts on women and girls by encouraging member states of the UN to involve women and their perspectives in peace as well as security processes to promote and maintain peace and security.²⁴

¹⁹ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), (2021), The Firearms Protocol. Last accessed 2021-06-16: <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/firearms-protocol/the-firearms-protocol.html>

²⁰ United Nations Treaty Collection (2021), Status of Treaties. Last accessed 2021-06-16: https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=XVIII-12-c&chapter=18&clang=en

²¹ United Nations Register of Conventional Arms (UNROCA), (2020). Last accessed 2021-06-16: <https://www.unroca.org/>

²² Stockholm International Peace Research institute (SIPRI), (2019), REPORTING TO THE UNITED NATIONS REGISTER OF CONVENTIONAL ARMS FOR 2017. Last accessed 2021-06-16: https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2019-06/bp_1906_unroca.pdf

²³ UNROCA (2020). Last accessed 2021-06-16: <https://www.unroca.org/>

²⁴ United Nations Security Council (UNSC), (2000), UN Security Council resolution 1325 on women and peace and security. Last accessed 2021-06-16: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/docs/2000/10/un-security-council-resolution-1325>



PARLIAMENTARY FORUM ON SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS

Since the implementation of UNSCR 1325 is related to mainstreaming various vital concepts related to the topic, it is complex to measure and report its implementation. The elaboration and implementation of National Action Plans (NAPs) is one adequate way to work towards and measure the national implementation of UNSCR 1325 and the WPS agenda, an important goal as emphasised during the 987th AU Peace and Security Council meeting.²⁵ Since the development of the first NAP in 2005, 25 African countries have developed at least one Plan connected to the UNSCR 1325 on WPS.²⁶ Worth noting however, is that despite the continued unique impacts of conflict on women and girls, only 11 African countries, approximately, have an active NAP in June 2021.²⁷

Country	National Action Plans (2005-2020)
Republic of Mali	2012, 2015, 2019
Democratic Republic of Congo	2010, 2019
Republic of Niger	2016
United Republic of Tanzania	-

For the full list of National Action Plans, please see [here](#).

²⁵ AU (2021), COMMUNIQUE: PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL 987TH MEETING. Last accessed 2021-06-16: <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/eng-communicue-for-the-psc-987th-meeting-open-session-22-march-2021.pdf>

²⁶ PeaceWomen (2021), NATIONAL ACTION PLANS BY REGION. Last accessed 2021-06-16:

<http://1325naps.peacewomen.org/index.php/nap-overview/>

²⁷ Note that the 11 African countries include countries that have adopted Plans without a set end date.