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General and complete disarmament

Assistance to States for curbing the illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons and collecting them and the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted in response to two requests of the General Assembly, contained in resolution [76/32](#) on assistance to States for curbing the illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons and collecting them; and resolution [76/232](#) on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects.

Activities carried out by the United Nations to implement these resolutions are also set out in the report. They include the work of the Coordinating Action on Small Arms mechanism, the further development of the Modular Small-arms-control Implementation Compendium, the implementation of the Secretary-General's agenda for disarmament and follow-up action on other initiatives, such as the support of the United Nations for the Silencing the Guns by 2030 initiative of the African Union, gender-responsive arms control policies, programmes and initiatives and updates on major small arms and light weapons programmes undertaken by other United Nations entities.

Activities on the control of small arms and light weapons undertaken by other entities are also examined in the report. These include the efforts of the Security Council, the Arms Trade Treaty and the Commission on Narcotic Drugs.

In line with resolution [76/232](#), the report presents recommendations for consideration by Member States at the Eighth Biennial Meeting of States to Consider 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 and the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons for enhancing international cooperation and assistance modalities and procedures in the framework. These recommendations are based on the views received from Member States, international and regional organizations and other stakeholders.

* [A/77/50](#).



I. Introduction

1. In its resolution [76/232](#) on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to seek the views of Member States, international and regional organizations and other stakeholders for enhancing international cooperation and assistance modalities and procedures in the framework of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons (International Tracing Instrument), taking into account good practice and lessons learned, and to present recommendations for consideration by Member States at the Eighth Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action.
2. Resolution [76/232](#) included a request to the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly at its seventy-seventh session on the implementation of that resolution. In the same resolution, the Assembly emphasized that international cooperation and assistance remained essential to the full and effective implementation of the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument.
3. In its resolution [76/32](#) on assistance to States for curbing the illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons and collecting them, the General Assembly invited the Secretary-General and those States and organizations that were in a position to do so to continue to provide assistance to States for curbing the illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons and collecting them. In the same resolution, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to continue to consider the matter and to report to the Assembly at its seventy-seventh session on the implementation of the resolution.
4. With a view to ensuring a coherent and consistent approach to overlapping and mutually reinforcing issues, and in keeping with previous practice of rationalizing resources, the above-mentioned requests are addressed in the present consolidated report.

II. Activities carried out by the United Nations for the implementation of resolutions [76/32](#) and [76/232](#)

5. The United Nations continues to support States, at their request, in their efforts to implement the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument, in line with resolutions [76/32](#) and [76/232](#). Activities undertaken by the regional centres for peace and disarmament of the Office for Disarmament Affairs are described in separate reports.

A. Coordinating Action on Small Arms mechanism

6. The Coordinating Action on Small Arms mechanism has been functioning as the United Nations system-wide inter-agency coordination forum on efforts to deal with the negative impact of the illicit trade in and misuse of small arms and light weapons, ammunition stockpile management and the arms trade. Twenty-four United Nations

entities¹ continued to provide coherent and high-quality small arms control-related assistance to States with a wide spectrum of their expertise such as arms regulation, reduction of armed violence, economic development, human rights, countering terrorism and organized crime, peacekeeping and peacebuilding, gender equality and humanitarian aid.

7. The Executive Committee identified the mechanism, in its decision 2020/28 as a critical common platform for United Nations efforts on small arms and light weapons, constituting a key component of the prevention agenda launched by the Secretary-General. In this vein, the mechanism has updated its terms of reference to support country-level approaches to integrating national arms control measures into national development frameworks. These approaches are reinforced by the guiding principle of “ensuring national ownership”.

8. The mechanism has contributed to enhanced harmonized action by the United Nations system in areas such as weapons and ammunition management in peace operations, capacity-building for Central Asian States to prevent terrorists from acquiring weapons and United Nations support for the African Union initiative to silence the guns by 2030.

9. The mechanism has continued to serve as a vehicle to oversee the development and utilization of the Modular Small-arms-control Implementation Compendium; to consult on the operations of the United Nations Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation; and to exchange information in relation to the Saving Lives Entity fund, as well as being involved in promoting initiatives related to small arms and light weapons under the auspices of the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Human Rights Council.

B. Modular Small-arms-control Implementation Compendium

10. The Modular Small-arms-control Implementation Compendium consists of 21 publicly available guidance modules containing practical advice for small arms control measures. During the course of 2021, three additional modules were developed: on the deactivation of small arms and light weapons; on gun-free zones; and on criminal justice response to the illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

11. In order to increase the use of the Compendium, additional work was carried out to translate the modules. During 2021, an additional 13 modules were translated into Spanish and 3 more into French. As a result, all completed Compendium modules are now available in English, French and Spanish.

¹ Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Department of Global Communications, Department of Peace Operations, Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, International Civil Aviation Organization, Mine Action Service, Office for Disarmament Affairs, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Office of Counter-Terrorism, Office of the Special Adviser on Africa, Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide, Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, United Nations Children's Fund, United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), United Nations Environment Programme, United Nations Human Settlements Programme, United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), UNODC, World Health Organization.

C. Agenda for disarmament

12. The United Nations and its partners continued efforts in support of the implementation of the Secretary-General's proposals contained in his report, *Securing Our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament*, launched in 2018. This includes various actions related to small arms and light weapons under the "Disarmament that saves lives" pillar of the agenda.

Saving Lives Entity fund

13. The Saving Lives Entity, first envisioned as part of the Secretary-General's 2018 agenda for disarmament, has continued its efforts to provide a vehicle for a more comprehensive and sustainable system-wide response to preventing, combating and eradicating armed violence and the illicit flows and misuse of small arms and light weapons.

14. In 2021, three pilot countries were selected in close coordination with respective United Nations country teams: Cameroon, Jamaica and South Sudan. Scoping missions were conducted with the aim of assessing the context and needs, identifying entry points for activities and strengthening national ownership and partnership of Entity-supported initiatives. The administrative aspects of the proposals for Entity-funded projects have been finalized in order for work on the ground to begin. It should be noted that proposals for Entity support must be put forward by at least two United Nations entities, in coordination with the Resident Coordinator and with the full consent and leadership of the host Government so as to ensure national ownership and sustainability of project impacts.

Conflict prevention and management

15. In action 21 of the *Agenda for Disarmament*, the Secretary-General calls for the integration of conventional arms and ammunition control into the United Nations conflict prevention and management activities. In support of this action, the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) has released the Arms-Related Risk Analysis Toolkit, providing practical guidance to identify and integrate conventional arms and ammunition-related risks into conflict analysis and conflict prevention, management and resolution strategies.² An expert community of practice workshop in December 2021 concluded that the Toolkit can support the design and development of assistance projects to address arms and ammunition-related risks in fragile and conflict-affected contexts, as well as provide a framework for monitoring the effectiveness and sustainability of these projects.

Securing excessive and poorly maintained stockpiles

16. In his agenda for disarmament, specifically action 22, the Secretary-General committed the United Nations to supporting more effective State and regional action on addressing excessive and inadequately managed stockpiles.

17. Support in the management of stockpiles was provided in various contexts. The Mine Action Service continued to provide technical and policy support to the national authorities and peacekeeping operations in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia and South Sudan through activities such as specialized training, the installation and upgrading of weapons and ammunition storage, the disposal of unserviceable ammunition, assessments of ammunition storage areas and the development of mitigation measures to reduce risk to

² UNIDIR, *The Arms-Related Risk Analysis Toolkit: Practical Guidance for Integrating Conventional Arms-Related Risks into Conflict Analysis and Prevention* (2021). Available at <https://unidir.org/publication/arms-related-risk-analysis-toolkit>.

populations and key infrastructure. In addition, the Ammunition Management Advisory Team, established in 2019 as a joint initiative of the Office for Disarmament Affairs and the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining, continued in 2021 to provide relevant technical advice and assistance in accordance with the International Ammunition Technical Guidelines. The Advisory Team supported several States – including Equatorial Guinea, Kosovo,³ Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Peru and Togo – in countering accidental explosions and enhancing capacities to improve the safety and security of ammunition stockpiles.

18. Since 2021, a national weapons and ammunition management baseline assessment has been conducted in Benin, the Central African Republic, El Salvador and Togo, with a view to assisting these States in their efforts to comprehensively and systematically assess national institutions, policies, processes, capacities and responsibilities in the weapons and ammunition management life cycle, in line with international, regional and subregional obligations and commitments, as well as relevant international standards and technical guidelines. Since 2015, a total of 14 States have undertaken such baseline assessments. UNIDIR continued to provide guidance and support to interested parties on the use and application of its Reference Methodology for National Weapons and Ammunition Management Baseline Assessments, released in 2021 and available in English, French and Spanish.

19. Efforts continued to strengthen weapons and ammunition management in peace operation contexts, notably through a strategic study on ammunition management included in the contingent-owned equipment of troop- and police-contributing countries in field missions. In line with the study's findings, the United Nations developed a dedicated training course for United Nations personnel and troop- and police-contributing countries to effectively implement the 2019 policy on weapons and ammunition management and the 2020 *United Nations Manual on Ammunition Management*.

20. Promoting cross-sector collaboration, the Department of Peace Operations and the Office for Disarmament Affairs continued a joint initiative on effective weapons and ammunition management in a changing disarmament, demobilization and reintegration context. These efforts led to the release, in partnership with the Department of Operational Support, of a standard operating procedure on weapons and ammunition management in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes. This guidance document is aimed not only at enhancing the safety and security of disarmament-related activities in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes, but at leveraging the opportunity presented by transitional weapons and ammunition management as a disarmament, demobilization and reintegration tool. Moreover, a study on weapons and ammunition management in the context of regional stabilization efforts in the Lake Chad Basin has been developed in partnership with the Lake Chad Basin Commission. This study and its recommendations underscore the ways in which such joint initiatives can harness opportunities inherent to the intersection between weapons and ammunition management and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, including through the promotion of engagement with regional and subregional organizations.

21. Through the SaferGuard Programme, the United Nations continued its efforts to promote the application of the International Ammunition Technical Guidelines to enhance the safety and security of ammunition stockpiles. Version 3 of the Guidelines, released in 2021, was amended to ensure the full integration of gender considerations, specifically by incorporating gender-inclusive language, as well as general

³ References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

considerations and principles related to gender.⁴ The United Nations also continued to build a diverse roster of ammunition management experts who possess knowledge and skills compatible with the Guidelines, through a dedicated validation process, thereby enhancing the ability of the SaferGuard Programme to respond to requests from States for assistance related to ammunition stockpile management.

D. United Nations Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation

22. Since its inception in 2013, the United Nations Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation has funded 104 projects on a cumulative budget of \$13.5 million, benefiting 145 States. With contributions from 15 donor countries,⁵ the Trust Facility supported small-scale, short-term, quick-impact projects, mainly implemented by civil society organizations.

23. During the 2021–2022 funding cycle, the Trust Facility received 36 applications, of which 10 proposals were selected for implementation in 2022. All projects are fully aligned with the promotion of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, relevant international standards and guidelines, the Secretary-General's agenda for disarmament, gender-responsive approaches and the guiding principle of assuring national ownership.

E. United Nations support for Africa Amnesty Month

24. The Office for Disarmament Affairs, with the financial contributions from Germany, continued to implement a joint United Nations-African Union project aimed at supporting Africa Amnesty Month. The project, initiated in 2020, is part of the United Nations broader support for the African Union Silencing the Guns by 2030 flagship initiative, under Security Council resolution [2457 \(2019\)](#).⁶

25. For the 2021 Amnesty Month campaign, the Office for Disarmament Affairs, with the technical assistance of the Regional Centre on Small Arms in the Great Lakes Region, the Horn of Africa and Bordering States, supported Madagascar, the Niger and Uganda. Participating States organized broad campaigns to raise awareness of the dangers and risks of illegal gun ownership and illicit flows of small arms and light weapons; collected and publicly destroyed the weapons voluntarily surrendered by civilians; and enhanced their capacities in stockpile management and community-based policing.

F. Supporting gender-responsive arms control policies, programmes and actions

26. The Office for Disarmament Affairs, with financial contributions from the European Union, continued to implement a multi-year project launched in 2019 to mainstream gender policies, programmes and action into combating trafficking in and the misuse of small arms, in line with the women and peace and security agenda.

⁴ See <https://unsafeguard.org/un-safeguard/guide-lines>.

⁵ In the current cycle, contributions were provided by Australia, Czechia, Finland, Germany and Slovakia.

⁶ Africa Amnesty Month was adopted in 2017 through decision 645 (XXIX) of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union, in which it declared the month of September Africa Amnesty Month for the surrender and collection of illicit arms and light weapons and called for the voluntary surrender of firearms owned illegally by citizens.

27. During the reporting period, the project continued to support States in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean and Asia and the Pacific through knowledge-sharing and training workshops, webinars and research in their implementation of their global commitment on gender-responsive small arms control. Those include a dedicated webinar series for staff members from regional and subregional organizations to share experiences and enhance their capacity to integrate gender elements into their small arms control work and, on the other hand, include arms control in implementation efforts of the women and peace and security agenda. National support was provided to States in their efforts to mainstream gender considerations in their national small arms and light weapons action plans, as well as small arms control policies and programmes, and to conduct small arms criminal investigations from a gender perspective. Publications looked specifically at the linkages between violence against women and small arms control and regulation, inter alia, in the context of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and national response mechanisms to the health crisis.⁷ In November 2021, the Office for Disarmament Affairs joined the international social media campaign, 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence, to increase awareness, promote advocacy efforts and share knowledge and innovative approaches to preventing and eliminating armed gender-based violence.⁸

G. Crime prevention and criminal justice

28. By assisting States in the implementation of the Firearms Protocol and other small arms and light weapons instruments, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) continued to support preventive measures to curb the illicit trade in small arms, in particular through the strengthening of institutional capacities and criminal justice responses. In that regard, UNODC continued to provide support to 26 States in Africa, Latin America, Central Asia and South-Eastern and Eastern Europe through activities such as updating legislation related to trafficking in firearms, capacity-building on investigating and prosecuting firearms trafficking and related forms of crime, provision of firearm marking machines and related training, and promotion of regular exchanges among firearms control and criminal justice practitioners. UNODC expanded its regional scope and started a new project in support of the implementation of the criminal justice component of the Roadmap for Implementing the Caribbean Priority Actions on the Illicit Proliferation of Firearms and Ammunition across the Caribbean in a Sustainable Manner by 2030.

29. UNODC further continued to develop an integrated firearms registry system, a record-keeping application that will help States to track firearms throughout their life cycle, in line with their commitments under the Firearms Protocol, the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument.

H. Counter-terrorism

30. The United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre of the Office of Counter-Terrorism, jointly with the UNODC, and in cooperation with the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate and the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs continued to support countries in Central Asia, through an inter-agency project on addressing the terrorism-arms-crime nexus: preventing and combating the illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons and their illicit supply to terrorists. These

⁷ See www.un.org/disarmament/gender-and-small-arms-control and www.un.org/disarmament/gender-salw-project.

⁸ See www.un.org/disarmament/update/unoda-participates-in-16-days-of-activism-against-gender-based-violence.

efforts contributed to the enhancement of States' national legislative, strategic and operational capacities to prevent, detect and counter firearms trafficking and consequently the associated activities of terrorism and organized crime, through national training, regional conferences and legislative assessments.

31. The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact and its thematic working groups have served as a platform to exchange information, research findings, develop guidelines and mobilize joint efforts to help Member States strengthen their capacities related to preventing terrorist access to small arms and light weapons. Within the framework of its Working Group on Border Management and Law Enforcement relating to Counter-Terrorism, the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre of the Office of Counter-Terrorism, the Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate, acting as chair of the working group, and UNIDIR jointly developed technical guidelines to facilitate the implementation of Security Council resolution [2370 \(2017\)](#) on preventing terrorists from acquiring weapons.⁹ The technical guidelines are aimed at contributing to the enhancement of Member States' legislative, strategic and operational capacities to prevent, detect and counter the acquisition, illicit trafficking and use of different weapons, systems and components, including small arms and light weapons, improvised explosive devices and uncrewed aircraft systems.

III. Activities of relevant bodies with regard to small arms and light weapons

A. Security Council

32. The Security Council has remained actively seized of the challenges posed by conventional weapons, in particular the impact of the misuse, illicit trade and destabilizing accumulation of small arms and light weapons on situations of armed conflict. During the reporting period, the Security Council had continued to address weapons and ammunition-related issues across its agenda, from security sector reform, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration to arms embargoes to counter-terrorism and sustaining peace, while also dealing with these matters in country-specific and regionally focused contexts.

33. Focused discussions on small arms and light weapons were held by the Security Council in September, October and November 2021, concentrating on the threat posed by illicit arms flows on peace and security, including in the context of peace operations and arms embargoes. During the discussions, Member States also emphasized the nexus between the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, terrorism and transnational organized crime.

34. In December 2021, the Security Council adopted resolution [2616 \(2021\)](#), focusing on the illicit transfer, destabilizing accumulation and diversion of arms and related materiel in violation of Council-mandated arms embargoes. By that resolution, the Security Council expressed grave concern that the illicit transfer, destabilizing accumulation and misuse of small arms and light weapons in many regions of the world continued to pose threats to international peace and security. The Council urged for the full and effective implementation of the Programme of Action. The Security Council also resolved that, in considering whether to adopt or renew mandates for peace operations, the Council would examine whether and how those operations could

⁹ Available at https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/ctc/sites/www.un.org.securitycouncil.ctc/files/files/documents/2022/Mar/technical_guidelines_to_facilitate_the_implementation_of_security_council_resolution_2370_2017_and_related_international_standards_and_good_practices_on_preventing_terrorists_from_acquiring_weapons.pdf.

support national authorities in combating the illicit transfer and diversion of weapons in violation of United Nations arms embargoes.

35. The Security Council has continued to integrate weapons and ammunition management into the work of peace operations, including the mandates of special political missions. In 2022, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan was mandated to support regional and international efforts to prevent and address the illicit trade in and destabilizing accumulation of small arms and light weapons and their diversion in Afghanistan and the region (resolution 2626 (2022), para. 5 (j)). In the context of other country-specific situations on its agenda, the Council addressed issues regarding weapons and ammunition in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti, Libya, Mali, Somalia and the Sudan. The increasing number of arms-related provisions has underscored the key role of weapons and ammunition management in peace operations and other activities of the Council to address conflict-affected situations and the activities of armed groups.

B. Arms Trade Treaty

36. The Arms Trade Treaty was created to establish common standards for the international trade in conventional arms and to eradicate the illicit trade in conventional weapons. It entered into force on 24 December 2014.¹⁰

37. At the Seventh Conference of States Parties to the Treaty, in 2021, discussions were focused on strengthening efforts to eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and ensuring efficient stockpile management. In this regard, the Conference decided on possible areas for further exchange or longer-term implementation by States parties, including the mapping and better utilization of existing guidance and tools developed under relevant international and regional instruments on preventing the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and on strengthening stockpile management and security in order to prevent diversion so as to strengthen Treaty implementation. Furthermore, it agreed that States parties should share, as appropriate, information on effective and innovative stockpile management programmes. States parties were also encouraged to provide information on their national practices relating to “mitigating measures” in the context of article 7 (4) on gender-based violence prevention, including related stockpile security. In addition, the Conference continued to consider the issue of diversion and examine progress with respect to various aspects of the Treaty’s general implementation, transparency and reporting, universalization and financial matters.

C. Commission on Narcotic Drugs

38. The Commission on Narcotic Drugs, established by the Economic and Social Council, at its sixty-fifth session, adopted resolution 65/4, entitled “Strengthening international cooperation to address the links between illicit drug trafficking and illicit firearms trafficking”. With reference to the Programme of Action, the Commission expressed concern about drug-traffickers heavily arming themselves with illicitly trafficked firearms. Against this backdrop, the Commission underlined the importance of addressing the global challenge posed by the multifaceted links between illicit drug and firearms trafficking in an integral manner. It further invited States to take full advantage of international and regional drug control conventions and policy documents, as well as instruments addressing illicit trafficking in firearms.

¹⁰ For the text of the Treaty and adherence status, see the UNODA Disarmament Treaties Database. Available at <https://treaties.unoda.org/t/att>.

39. The resolution also contains concrete commitments on addressing the links between illicit drugs and firearms trafficking, including the adoption and strengthening of coordinated border management strategies, increased capacities of border control and law enforcement agencies, enhanced operational cooperation and information exchange. The Commission further underlined the value of complementing efforts against drug trafficking with training in combating illicit firearms trafficking for law enforcement personnel responsible for investigating such activities.

IV. Recommendations for enhancing international cooperation and assistance modalities and procedures in the framework of the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument

40. States at the Seventh Biennial Meeting of States on the Programme of Action on Small Arms and light Weapons, held in July 2021, agreed that the Eighth Biennial Meeting of States, to be convened in 2022, would be focused on means of enhancing modalities and procedures for international cooperation and assistance in the implementation of the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument (see [A/CONF.192/BMS/2021/1](#)). In accordance with this mandate, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General, in resolution [76/232](#), to seek the views of Member States, international and regional organizations and other stakeholders on this issue and to present recommendations for consideration by Member States at the Eighth Biennial Meeting of States. The good practices and recommendations outlined in this section have been drafted on the basis of the submissions received.

Matching needs with expertise and resources

41. The Programme of Action has long lacked a steady mechanism to finance projects and activities in support of its implementation. The adoption of the International Tracing Instrument also did not lead to the establishment of a dedicated funding mechanism, despite the emphasis on the importance of international cooperation and assistance. In 2013, in response to States' call to address this gap and to establish a sustainable funding mechanism to support the implementation of activities under the Programme of Action and other related instruments, the United Nations Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation was established to provide funding to projects implemented by civil society organizations, international and regional organizations and United Nations entities. The Strategic Planning Group of the Trust Facility, comprised of donor countries, discusses and decides annual thematic and geographical priorities for projects to be funded, in coordination with other funding mechanisms, policy frameworks and outcomes of small arms conferences and meetings. States are encouraged to contribute to the Trust Facility, and to participate in the strategic discussions in prioritizing and selecting proposals to strengthen the implementation of the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument.

42. As part of their national reports, States can submit national needs and requests for international assistance for the implementation of the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument. These are presented in the Programme of Action online reporting database. Funding decisions by participating States under the United Nations Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation take into account needs and requests for assistance included in national reports.

43. States in need of international assistance are encouraged to submit their national reports, with a view to communicating relevant assistance requests to potential donors and implementing partners. In turn, States and implementing partners are encouraged to make use of the information in national reports when planning and providing

international cooperation and assistance with a view to promoting national ownership of assistance initiatives.

44. At the Eighth Biennial Meeting of States, States could explore increased support and contributions to existing mechanisms aimed at matching needs with expertise and resources. In addition, it is recommended that States propose additional actions for increased use of national reports to communicate assistance requests, as well as for the planning and delivery of international cooperation and assistance.

Comprehensive action framework

45. Recognizing small arms and light weapons as a cross-cutting issue for the promotion of peace, security and sustainable development, the Secretary-General has called for the establishment of United Nations system-wide country-level approaches to predictably and consistently integrate national small arms control considerations into common country analyses and national development frameworks. In response to a growing need to create strong national programmes, the facilitation of national ownership should be the guiding principle for the development and implementation of such comprehensive country-level assistance initiatives on small arms and light weapons.

46. As envisaged in action 20 of the Secretary-General's agenda for disarmament, the Saving Lives Entity was established to promote a comprehensive and sustainable system-wide response to the challenge of illicit small arms and light weapons at the country level. The importance of the sustainability of international assistance, requiring a long-term perspective and a holistic approach, has been recognized. Accordingly, the Entity offers the international community a vehicle for sustained and coherent funding for international assistance for small arms control measures. By supporting catalytic activities to mainstream small arms control in both development and security efforts, the Entity responds to the multifaceted nature of the illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons. In line with the outcome document of the Seventh Biennial Meeting of States, States in a position to do so are encouraged to contribute to the Entity.¹¹

47. States could propose additional actions aimed at furthering the integration of small arms control considerations into the wider security and development frameworks. Particular attention could be given to those frameworks at the global, national and regional levels that would most benefit from international cooperation and assistance. In addition, it is recommended that States explore increased support and contributions to the Saving Lives Entity to promote long-term, comprehensive programming of assistance initiatives at the country level grounded in the principle of national ownership.

Voluntary target-setting

48. States' agreement to consider the establishment of voluntary national and regional targets is expected to strengthen national ownership and measurability in the implementation of the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument. The development of measurable voluntary targets and the identification of related actions contributes to the development of strategic partnerships for international cooperation and assistance among donor States and receiving States, as well as United Nations entities and regional and subregional organizations and civil society.

49. International cooperation and assistance should promote the development of voluntary targets and respond to the needs and implementation priorities identified through this process. Where applicable, the development of voluntary

¹¹ See [A/CONF.192/BMS/2021/1](#), annex, para. 118.

targets could draw on existing national action plans, regional road maps and assessments on small arms and light weapons to avoid duplication.

Baseline assessments

50. Comprehensive weapons and ammunition management baseline assessments facilitate the effective functioning of national institutions and coordination mechanisms, including national commissions on small arms and light weapons, to combat the illicit proliferation of weapons and ammunition. In turn, such entities can identify priority areas for action and clearly articulate requests for international assistance and cooperation to address gaps in national systems and enhance national capacities. In addition, the results of completed baseline assessments provide for more coherent international cooperation and assistance efforts, helping to identify appropriate operational partners to support the implementation of measures to strengthen small arms and light weapons management and control.

51. States could explore the role of baseline assessments as a modality to ensure a comprehensive approach in the provision of international cooperation and assistance. The systematic use of such assessments in response to assistance requests under the Programme of Action could also be considered in this regard.

International guidance

52. To be adequate, effective and sustainable, assistance efforts should be conducted in line with international guidance that are based on good practices. International guidance, such as the Modular Small-arms-control Implementation Compendium and International Ammunition Technical Guidelines, have become a central element in the provision of international cooperation and assistance in this field. To ensure that international guidance is of the highest technical quality and reflects evolving norms, practices and requirements, regular reviews and adaptations have proven valuable. Lessons learned from implementation should be reflected in such guidance updates.

53. States could consider further involvement in the governance of the Modular Small-arms-control Implementation Compendium, including through the establishment of a periodic review process of the modules with contributions from States.

Coordination of international cooperation and assistance

54. International efforts to support the control of small arms and light weapons have intensified in recent years. In the light of this increased engagement, there is a need for strengthened coordination of international cooperation and assistance among donors, project implementers and recipients to avoid duplication, to effectively match needs with resources and to maximize impact. Enhanced coordination at the global and regional level would also support a geographically balanced provision of international cooperation and assistance between countries and regions, contributing to broader approaches to conflict prevention. Ensuring international assistance in those regions most affected by armed violence, including those affected by armed conflict, as well as those impacted by other types of violence, is of particular importance in this regard.

55. States could explore increased use and rationalization of existing funding mechanisms to improve coordination among donors, project implementers and recipients, thereby strengthening the delivery and use of international cooperation and assistance between countries and regions.

Cooperation and information exchange

56. The need for strengthened international cooperation and increased information exchange continues to be highlighted. The Programme of Action requires States to cooperate at the bilateral, regional and international levels to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

57. The United Nations regularly fosters international cooperation through regional, subregional and cross-regional meetings among national authorities. Regular and direct contact among national authorities increase the level of mutual trust and confidence that is required for the exchange of relevant information. Such mechanisms present good opportunities for sharing and discussing experiences, expertise, good practices and challenges and foster peer-to-peer exchanges.

58. Reinforced judicial and law enforcement cooperation between States with regard to operational activities targeting illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons is essential to facilitate criminal investigations and criminal justice response. Good practices in this regard include the establishment of joint investigative teams and joint operations, as well as the exchange of personnel and experts and posting of liaison officers.

59. States are encouraged to make use of and strengthen cooperation and information-sharing mechanisms at the international, regional and subregional level to share information, experiences, guidelines and good practices between law enforcement agencies, customs and export and import licensing authorities.

Regional cooperation

60. Regional and subregional instruments and mechanisms complement the global process and harmonize national actions in support of the full and effective implementation of the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument. The adoption and implementation of regional road maps on small arms and light weapons have proven valuable for enhanced regional cooperation. Such road maps include goals, targets, measurable objectives and concrete indicators to address the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in a comprehensive, sustainable and coordinated manner at the regional level. The establishment of regional action plans, including regional road maps, are a suitable mechanism to ensure that national and regional ownership and priorities underpin resource mobilization, assistance requests and assistance programmes.

61. Regional and subregional organizations have an important role in enhancing and fostering the development and implementation of tailored regional approaches and policy frameworks, as well as in strengthening cooperation at the subregional, regional and cross-regional level. However, regional and subregional organizations often face capacity and resource-related challenges limiting their ability to provide support to States on small arms and light weapons issues. International cooperation and assistance efforts should therefore strengthen the capacity of regional and subregional organizations, in accordance with regional priorities.

62. States could consider measures aimed at enhancing the capacity of regional and subregional organizations for the provision of tailored policy and operational support and assistance to States in tackling illicit small arms and light weapons. Cooperation at the regional level could further be strengthened by bringing national small arms control structures together for sharing experience and delineating areas of joint action and cooperation on the implementation of the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument at the regional and subregional levels. Such joint action and cooperation would also be valuable among the law enforcement, customs and arms transfer licensing authorities of the various countries in the region or subregion.

Capacity-building

63. Enhanced international cooperation and assistance in the framework of the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument requires prioritization of sustainable capacity-building initiatives in the areas of border control, stockpile management, destruction, marking, record-keeping and tracing of small arms and light weapons. To ensure sustainability, institutional capacity-building of relevant national authorities involved in the implementation of the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument remains crucial, supporting the effective functioning of institutions over the longer term. Sustainable efforts to strengthen capacities necessitate, among other things, long-term donor support, sustainable budgeting for human resources, adequate resources and the effective coordination of resources and programmes.

64. Collaboration should be further strengthened in building capacity of States to address the opportunities and challenges related to recent developments in small arms and light weapons manufacturing, technology and design, in particular polymer and modular weapons. To increase technological capacities of States, technical, financial and other assistance could integrate the use of technologies, especially in areas of border control, stockpile management, destruction, transit and transportation, marking, record-keeping, identification and arms tracing.

65. Further efforts are also required in strengthening the capacity of national authorities and regional and subregional organizations in the collection, compilation and analysis of data related to the implementation of the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument, as well as in the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular Sustainable Development Goal 16.

66. The decision by States to consider the establishment of a fellowship training programme for small arms practitioners at the Eighth Biennial Meeting of States is welcome. Such an initiative would increase the technical knowledge and expertise of national practitioners, with a view to strengthening national capacity for the full and effective implementation of the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument, particularly in developing countries.

United Nations peace operations

67. United Nations peace operations are providing support to host States and competent national authorities in countering the proliferation of and trafficking in small arms and light weapons by assisting them in the area of weapons and ammunition management. This includes assistance activities relating to security sector reform, as well as disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and community violence reduction. The Security Council has been encouraged to include, whenever relevant, mandates for small arms control in the peace operations that it establishes, provide the necessary resources and expertise for their implementation, and monitor such implementation.¹² In this context, the Council could consider a broad range of preventive and control measures to be supported by peace operations to address illicit small arms and light weapons, such as legislation, institutional architecture, border control, export and import control systems, physical security and stockpile management, marking and tracing, technology development and effective criminal justice responses.

68. United Nations peace operations also play an important role in the monitoring of illicit arms flows in conflict zones. Enhancing institutional capacities inside and outside peace operation missions to collect, analyse, report and share information about illicit arms flows can enhance civilian protection and reduce attacks on

¹² See [S/2019/1011](#); [S/2021/839](#).

peacekeepers. Credible information on illicit arms flows can also provide a reliable mechanism for the design of national and international law enforcement and customs operations to disrupt these flows.

69. States could consider the need for enhanced international cooperation and assistance related to the implementation of the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument in the context of United Nations peace operations. States could consider actions to promote the sustained and systematic integration of small arms control into the work of the United Nations on peace and security, including when mandating peace operations.

Gender and youth considerations

70. At the Seventh Biennial Meeting of States on the Programme of Action, States recognized the need for the equal, full and effective participation of women in all decision-making and implementation processes of the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument. They encouraged the mainstreaming of gender perspectives into implementation efforts in order to address the differential impact of the illicit trade in and misuse of small arms and light weapons on women, men, girls and boys. The positive contributions that youth can bring to the implementation of the Programme of Action was also underlined.¹³ The increased inclusion of gender and youth consideration in all aspects of the implementation of the Programme of Action is a welcome development. In support of this progress, international cooperation and assistance initiatives should be gender-sensitive and transformative. This can be promoted through dedicated funding mechanisms. For instance, the Saving Lives Entity places special emphasis on gender transformative approaches, requiring a minimum of 30 per cent of its total programme budget to be allocated to gender-specific activities. The inclusion of gender considerations in project design is also a requirement for funding under the United Nations Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Reduction.

71. Discussions on enhancing international cooperation and assistance could involve the sharing of good practices and lessons learned of modalities and procedures to target and further promote the mainstreaming of gender and youth considerations in the implementation of the Programme of Action.

Multi-stakeholder engagement

72. The important role of civil society in supporting States' efforts for the full and effective implementation of the Programme of Action was recognized at the Seventh Biennial Meeting of States of the Programme of Action.¹⁴ The United Nations Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation responds to the need for direct financial support for civil society efforts on small arms control. An inclusive, consultative and participatory approach to small arms control, including the involvement of community-level stakeholders and civil society, and the integration of gender and youth considerations are essential for the effective and sustainable implementation of the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument.

73. States could consider the best ways and means to strengthen engagement with community-level stakeholders and civil society on small arms-related assistance. A widened stakeholder involvement and cooperation can facilitate information-sharing on existing assistance gaps, priorities and resources available.

¹³ [A/CONF.192/BMS/2021/1](#), annex, paras. 10 and 11.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, para. 11.