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General and complete disarmament

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

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report provides an overview of United Nations activities in support of implementation of resolutions [73/69](#) on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects and [73/52](#) on assistance to States for curbing the illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons and collecting them.

As requested by the General Assembly, it includes an assessment of national implementation trends and recommendations on how States could further strengthen the small-arms process in order to enhance 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.

Pursuant to paragraph 24 of resolution [73/69](#), the report also contains recommendations on ways of addressing recent developments in small arms and light weapons manufacturing, technology and design. To that end, possible elements for inclusion in a supplementary annex to the International Tracing Instrument are outlined.

* [A/74/50](#).



I. Introduction

1. In its resolution [73/69](#) on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to the Assembly at its seventy-fourth session on the implementation of the resolution. In the same resolution, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to take into account the views of Member States with regard to the recent developments in small arms and light weapons manufacturing, technology and design, in particular polymer and modular weapons,¹ including on their associated opportunities and challenges, as well as their impact on the effective implementation of the International Tracing Instrument, and to make recommendations on ways of addressing them.

2. In its resolution [73/52](#) 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-fourth session on the implementation of the resolution.

3. With a view to ensuring a coherent and consistent approach to overlapping and mutually reinforcing issues, and in keeping with previous practice, the above-mentioned requests are addressed in the present consolidated report.

II. United Nations activities on the implementation of resolutions [73/69](#) and [73/52](#)

4. The Secretariat continues to support States in their efforts to implement 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, in line with resolutions [73/69](#) and [73/52](#). Activities undertaken by regional centres for peace and disarmament of the Office for Disarmament Affairs are described in separate reports.

A. The initiative of the Secretary-General, *Securing Our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament*

5. In *Securing Our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament*, the Secretary-General recognizes that any programmatic solutions to address the illicit trade in small arms and its associated problems must be both multidimensional and integrated into wider development plans.

6. The Secretary-General notes the efforts made to promote more effective State and regional action on excessive and poorly maintained stockpiles, under action 22 in the *Agenda for Disarmament*. In particular, United Nations efforts to enhance weapons and ammunition management in peace operation contexts, specifically disarmament, demobilization and reintegration activities, are welcomed.²

¹ The views of Member States are available at www.un.org/disarmament/salw.

² See *Effective Weapons and Ammunition Management in a Changing Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Context: A Handbook for United Nations DDR Practitioners*, January 2018.

7. In addition, the Secretary-General is establishing the Saving Lives Entity fund (SALIENT) as part of his agenda. The fund complements the United Nations Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation (see section D below), which has been – and will continue to be – a successful vehicle for funding short-term, limited-budget projects with an immediate impact. The fund is aimed at ensuring sustained financing for coordinated, integrated small arms control measures in most-affected countries. It is being established further to resolution 73/69, in which the General 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 and welcomed the initiative to establish a multi-partner trust facility within the Peacebuilding Fund, which became the Saving Lives Entity fund.

8. In line with the outcome document of the Third United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, which was endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 73/69, the Secretary-General encourages States in a position to do so to make voluntary financial contributions to the fund to allow the facility to provide sustainable, cross-sectional, multi-year programming focused on eradicating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in settings of conflict and pervasive crime.

B. Coordinating action on small arms

9. Since 1998, the Office for Disarmament Affairs, as the Organization’s focal point for small arms, convenes the Coordinating Action on Small Arms, a consultative coordination mechanism on small arms control within the United Nations system.

10. The Coordinating Action on Small Arms is aimed at ensuring that the United Nations system addresses the challenges posed by small arms and light weapons in a comprehensive, coordinated and coherent fashion. Taking stock of diverse and specialized expertise, 24 partners are now coordinating their activities with regard to small arms control and the arms trade. In 2018, the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism joined the Coordinating Action on Small Arms.

11. It plays a significant role in the implementation of the *Agenda for Disarmament*, including the establishment of the fund.

12. It also continues to work on streamlining data collection pertaining to indicator 16.4.2 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.³

13. The Coordinating Action on Small Arms continues to develop and approve new modules for the Modular Small-arms-control Implementation Compendium.

C. Modular Small-arms-control Implementation Compendium

14. The United Nations Modular Small-arms-control Implementation Compendium (MOSAIC),⁴ formerly known as International Small Arms Control Standards, is a result of the coordinated work of the Coordinating Action on Small Arms in response to increasing requests to the United Nations to provide expert advice and support on

³ Indicator 16.4.2 reads “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”.

⁴ See www.un.org/disarmament/mosaic.

issues related to small arms and light weapons control, including on legislative, programmatic and operational matters.

15. The Compendium currently comprises 18 modules. Additional modules are being developed.

16. The Compendium comprises a set of voluntary, practical guidance notes on establishing national controls on manufacturing, international transfers, end user and end use, and on national regulation of civilian access. It includes modules on the establishment of national coordinating mechanisms and the design of national action plans, and awareness-raising about community safety. Several modules provide operational support, including on stockpile management, marking, record-keeping, tracing, the collection and destruction of small arms and light weapons and border controls. Cross-cutting issues are covered in the respective modules on the themes “Women, men and the gendered nature of small arms and light weapons” and “Children, adolescents, youth and small arms and light weapons”.

17. National authorities are increasingly using the modules, with over 110 countries having reported to have applied the modules in their work to improve their small arms control measures. In 2018, the General Assembly noted in its resolution 73/69 that web-based tools developed by the Secretariat, including its searchable database and the Modular Small-arms-control Implementation Compendium, and the tools developed by Member States could be used to assess progress made in the implementation of the Programme of Action. That resolution is the first to contain mention of the Compendium.

D. United Nations Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation

18. The Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument have long lacked a dedicated funding mechanism for implementation. The United Nations Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation was established in 2013 in response to calls by States for an accessible funding mechanism to catalyse the matching of assistance needs with available resources.

19. Since its inception, a total of 80 projects on an aggregated budget of \$11 million have been implemented. To date, over 140 States have benefited directly or indirectly from the activities funded by the Facility. A total of 13 donors⁵ have provided financial support to the Facility since 2013.

20. In partnership with civil society and States, the Facility focuses on priorities agreed to at the Third Review Conference. For the 2020 implementation cycle of funded projects, the Facility required that its implementing partners ensure the integration of arms control efforts into national development agendas, in line with the 2030 Agenda. All applications were also required to specify aims, measures and outcomes to mainstream gender considerations into small arms and light weapons policies and programmes.

21. During the reporting period, funded projects included support for urgent removal of ammunition depots from populated areas; guiding craft gunsmiths towards alternative livelihoods through vocational training; capacity-building of national authorities and civil society organizations; utilization of implementation tools and guides; and action-oriented research, including in reply to the emphasis of the Third Review Conference on the importance of sex- and age-disaggregated data.

⁵ Australia, Canada, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Japan, Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

22. Supporting the implementation of resolution 73/52, in which the General Assembly encouraged the international community to support the implementation of the Economic Community of West African States Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and Other Related Materials, the Facility currently provides funding to the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to enable the implementation of global arms regulation instruments at the subregional level in West Africa. Under the project, the Commission of the Economic Community of West African States ECOWAS will develop an arms transfer database and related technical solutions in line with article 10 of the ECOWAS Convention, which will enable the Commission to manage the exemptions process for arms transfers – a key provision of the Convention. As such, it will improve transparency and support reporting activities for international agreements.

23. Funding is also provided to enhance tracing capacities in the ECOWAS subregion. Conflict armament research, as an implementing partner of the Facility, has developed tools and procedures allowing ECOWAS members to identify, document and trace small arms and light weapons in Burkina Faso (2018),⁶ Nigeria (2018–2019) and Niger (2019). The project will contribute to the submission of comprehensive reports under target 16.4.2 of the 2030 Agenda.

24. In addition, funding has been made available in 2019 to the United Nations Development Programme in Ghana to provide nationwide marking and record-keeping of Ghanaian police service weapons. The project is aimed at enhancing weapon stockpiles and inventory management to comply with international standards for weapons marking in accordance with the Compendium and to contribute to the implementation of the ECOWAS Convention and other global instruments.

25. The Facility launched a call in June 2019 for proposals to be implemented in 2020.

E. Support for the African Union initiative on Silencing the Guns in Africa by 2020

26. Reference is made to resolution 73/52, in which the Assembly encouraged the Secretary-General to pursue close cooperation with the African Union and encouraged the international community to support the implementation of the ECOWAS Convention and the countries of the Sahelo-Saharan subregion to facilitate the effective functioning of national commissions to combat the illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

27. In line with resolution 73/52, the United Nations is committed to supporting the African Union in efforts to implement Agenda 2063, an agenda detailing a continental blueprint for prosperity, peace and sustainable development. Specific to small arms and light weapons control, the United Nations is supporting the African Union in one of the 12 flagship initiatives of Agenda 2063, Silencing the Guns by 2020. The Office for Disarmament Affairs, in coordination with relevant United Nations entities, is prioritizing work with the African Union and its Member States within the peace and security cluster of activities. In support of the African Union Commission's implementation strategy for fast-tracking progress with regard to the initiative, the Office for Disarmament Affairs will enhance support to States members of the African Union in the area of physical security and stockpile management. Such support is consistent with the highest international standards and guidelines and in accordance

⁶ Under the Facility-funded project, a full national inventory of seized small arms (over 1,700 record entries) and ammunition was created and operationalized by Burkinabe authorities with technical support provided by the Central African Republic during 2018.

with relevant international and regional commitments. In addition, the Office for Disarmament Affairs, together with United Nations partners, will support Africa Amnesty Month, an African Union initiative to curb civilian ownership of illicit small arms.⁷

III. National reports, implementation trends and strengthening of the Programme of Action process

28. In the outcome document (A/CONF.192/2018/RC/3) of the Third Review Conference, States noted that important progress had been made in implementing the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument but stressed that the implementation remained uneven and that challenges and obstacles still stood in the way of the full and effective implementation of both instruments, including a lack of resources and differing capacities in many States.

29. Since 2002, 171 States have submitted national reports to the Secretariat on the implementation of the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument. In 2018, the number of submitted national reports reached 120, the highest ever in a single reporting period.

30. While the number of reporting States is encouraging, it should be noted that the collection, harmonization and reporting of national data remains challenging and that sex- and age-disaggregated data, in particular, are not commonly available.

31. The Secretary-General continues to encourage States to make use of their national reports as a baseline for assessing the status and measuring progress of the implementation of the instruments and as a mechanism for promoting transparency, the exchange of information and coordination. In addition, national reports should continue to serve as a tool for communicating assistance needs and the resources and mechanisms available to address such needs.

National points of contact

32. On the basis of the information formally provided to the Secretary-General, 172 States have designated a national point of contact but the frequent rotation of contact points challenges the up-keep of an accurate list of such contacts. States are encouraged to update their national points of contact, as needed and to institutionalize such contacts whenever possible, in order to ensure continuity and consistency in national reporting and implementation.

National legislation

33. Progress has been made on the establishment of legal and regulatory frameworks on international small arms and light weapons transfers, with 111 reporting States now requiring licences for transfers. However, continued assistance is required for strengthened frameworks, with 47 States requesting assistance on this topic in the 2018 national reports.

⁷ See Assembly/AU/Dec. 645(XXXIX).

Brokering

34. States reiterated in resolution [73/69](#) that illicit brokering in small arms and light weapons was a serious problem that the international community should address urgently. In the resolution, the General Assembly encouraged States to consider further steps to enhance international cooperation in preventing, combating and eradicating illicit brokering in small-arms. Information submitted as part of national reports illustrates an encouraging trend, with 97 States having regulations on arms brokering in place. Nevertheless, 37 States reported that they still lacked the legislative framework to address the challenge.

Weapons marking, tracing

35. The Secretary-General notes the growing number of States with the capacity to mark State-owned weapons, a prerequisite for effective cross-border cooperation on weapons tracing. More assistance for the effective implementation of the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument is strongly encouraged.

Gender

36. In its resolution [73/69](#), the General Assembly reaffirmed the need for States to mainstream gender dimensions in their implementation efforts and recognized the need for strengthened participation of women in decision-making and implementation processes relating to the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument. The online reporting template for national reporting included gender considerations for the first time in 2018. A total of 48 States reported that they take gender considerations into account, including 17 States reporting that they collect gender-disaggregated data.

Aligning regional and global-level action

37. Some States and subregional organizations continue to approach the Secretariat with regard to possibilities to align the global and regional reporting requirements many States face and to coordinate operation of reporting systems. With the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, an aligned reporting system on small arms is in place. Such alignments can only be established if States from a region take the lead.

38. In addition, several regional arrangements took action to align their regional meetings on small arms with the global cycle of meetings on the Programme of Action, thus ensuring more effective coordination, synergy and follow-up between what States from a given region aim for at the regional and global levels.

Assistance and cooperation

39. In line with resolution [73/69](#), the Secretary-General continues to encourage States to make increasing use of their national reports as a tool for communicating assistance needs. National reports should also serve as a source of information on the resources and mechanisms available to address such needs.

40. Clearly, endeavours towards implementation could be strengthened. States are cognizant of this, as is evident from the recurrent formal request to the Secretariat for an analysis on implementation trends, challenges and opportunities relating to the

Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument, including needs for cooperation and assistance. In 2018, the Secretariat's analysis included an informal paper that was distributed in October 2018 to the First Committee of the General Assembly.⁸

41. Subsequently, open-ended, informal consultations to discuss ideas contained in the paper were held on 18 February 2019 in New York and 11 March 2019 in Geneva. France and Jamaica chaired the respective consultations, continuing their role as chairs of the past two meetings on the Programme of Action. Many States suggested to consider the topic of strengthening the meetings on the Programme of Action in the preparations for the upcoming Seventh 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, scheduled to be held from 15 to 19 June 2020.

Strengthened approach to meetings on the Programme of Action

42. Until recently, meetings on the Programme of Action have been primarily platforms for the exchange of information on good practices and for negotiating substantive global progress.

43. Under the proposed strengthened approach, the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument would remain the guiding normative frameworks, while national, regional and global approaches would also be retained. However, the meetings on the Programme of Action could be organized in such a way that they would serve the broadest interest most effectively and their outcomes would add measurable value. Such efforts can be undertaken in the context of the current agenda of the meetings.

Meetings with a focus on voluntary, measurable implementation

44. The small-arms issue manifests itself in vastly different ways around the world. Unlike, for example, multilateral agreements on nuclear non-proliferation, the law of the sea, diplomatic practice, customs cooperation or the weaponization of space, the small arms issue has mainly incomparable national characteristics. The challenges faced at the national level with regard to the circulation of illicit small arms and light weapons reflect unique combinations of circumstances and contexts, including: rampant armed violence, absence of military surplus identification procedures, purchase of arms through illicit online sales, lack of adequate storage of arms in inner-city police stations, craft production, inadequate regulation of private security companies, crumbling military depots, terrorism, maritime smuggling, limited capacity to monitor the transit trade, ubiquitous availability of weapons in post-conflict situations, domestic violence, illicit reactivation of deactivated weapons, piracy, election violence and absence of marking machines.

45. Therefore, an argument could be made that in the field of small arms, progress in implementation can only to a limited extent be a concerted, globally coordinated effort. The Programme of Action should remain the normative framework document providing the broad standards for what needs to be achieved, but national implementation should drive progress – as underlined in the Programme of Action. .

46. The emphasis in meetings on the Programme of Action therefore could be focused more on acknowledging national progress and matching needs with resources

⁸ Available at <https://s3.amazonaws.com/unoda-web/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/2018-10-23-SALW-PoA-process-Secretariat-food-for-thought.pdf>.

to achieve improved implementation, not necessarily on reaching an agreed outcome every two years on detailed substantive ideas that need a global consensus.

47. The approach of focusing the global-level meetings process more on nationally set goals, and less on further elaborating global norms, will also introduce more measurability, in line with the desire to that end formulated by States in previous outcome documents under the Programme of Action.

48. New developments in multilateralism may be inspirational in adapting the Programme of Action process to further focus on measurable implementation. Most internationally agreed documents – treaties, politically binding agreements – revolve around a set of internationally negotiated commitments covering all States, more relevant for some than for others, and with an expectation that these would be duly implemented nationally. The current Programme of Action process is an example of such an approach.

49. In contrast, goal-oriented multilateralism increasingly takes as a point of departure nationally determined voluntary targets that are communicated to an international secretariat and are reported on and presented in global meetings. The Sustainable Development Goals, with their emphasis on national ownership regarding data collection, and the Paris Agreement on climate change, with the “intended nationally determined contributions” at its core, are good examples.

Elaborating the concept

50. Within the Programme of Action process, States could agree that each State commits to making national progress on small arms control. Each Government would determine the type of contribution that it would undertake to combat the illicit trade in small arms and would submit this commitment to the United Nations Secretariat. Ambition levels would be set in capitals, not by an international forum or organization. Because the urgency and the character of the small arms issue is so diverse around the world, there can be no “right” or “wrong” national ambition level.

51. Starting with the current six-year meeting cycle:

(a) States could commit to formulating a national target (or targets) for the next Review Conference, to be held in 2024;

(b) Countries could, where relevant, cooperate and pool their nationally determined targets, for example, at the bilateral or subregional level;

(c) The biennial meetings of States would take stock of and celebrate the concrete national contributions to the common goals formulated in the Programme of Action;

(d) National reports would become more functional vehicles for improving implementation. No enforcement mechanism would be necessary;

(e) The biennial meetings of States would also focus on matching national needs with available resources. The topic of assistance would allow for greater focus, as not-yet-reached national targets would direct discussions.

52. Where there would be interest from affected States, informal country-specific committees could support resource mobilization and project coordination. The establishment of a platform for partnership could be explored, which could be modelled after the existing format under the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their

Destruction.⁹ Such a platform could enable States to exchange information on the complete range of assistance and expertise available to further enhance partnerships and support national endeavours.

53. The biennial meetings of States would not require a negotiated substantive outcome. After six years, the currently-planned Fourth Review Conference could focus on trends in implementation, on the basis of national data provided by States in their national reports, focusing on implications and developments at the global level.

Way forward

54. A multilateral approach that acknowledges the primacy of domestic decision-making in small arms control (as already formulated in the Programme of Action) and allows countries to set their own levels of ambition and focus on attaining them, could energize national action in a stimulating, goal-oriented multilateral environment aimed at organizing cooperation and assistance.

55. Opportunities for international assistance and cooperation would increase, owing to the expectedly more specific character of the requests for assistance. An element of reflection on regional implementation could be added to the process. Most importantly, States would experience full national autonomy on the sensitive issue of small arms control, leading to stronger feelings of ownership of the Programme of Action process as a whole.

56. Nothing would prevent the major characteristics of the current Programme of Action process from remaining intact. This includes:

(a) Maintaining the Programme of Action as the key framework document for the process;

(b) Continuing the possibility to negotiate additional agreements, such as the International Tracing Instrument, at global meetings;

(c) Maintaining the six-year cycle of two biennial meetings followed by a review conference;

(d) Maintaining the annual “omnibus resolution” on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons as the main vehicle for driving the process;

(e) Continuing to seek politically binding consensus in the context of the Programme of Action;

(f) Continue to value the principle of making every effort to reach consensus.

57. Realistically, the concept could first be discussed in the run-up to seventh Biennial Meeting of States, to be held in 2020. It could be piloted in the biennium 2020–2022 and fine-tuned in the biennium 2022–2024.

58. Subsequently, during the six-year cycle 2024–2030 – the end of which will coincide with the conclusion of the 2015–2030 for the 2030 Agenda – States would be able to show sustained, measurable, self-guided progress, with or without international assistance, on the implementation of both the Programme of Action and the 2030 Agenda.

59. The proposed national target-setting could address one of the shortcomings of the Programme of Action – its lack of measurability of progress – by introducing the possibility for explicit national benchmarks to measure progress. It would also implement paragraph 51 of the outcome document of the sixth Biennial Meeting of

⁹ www.apminebanconvention.org/platform-for-partnerships.

States ([A/CONF.192/BMS/2016/2](#)), which calls for the identification of opportunities to strengthening the measurement of progress in national implementation of the Programme of Action.

60. Targets should relate to actions set out in national action plans on small arms and light weapons and should be measurable. National targets could also be aligned with the Goals and targets agreed in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. They could also be aligned with the United Nations Development Assistance Framework and national action plans on women, peace and security and on youth, peace and security, where they exist.

61. It goes without saying that it would be up to each State to develop its own preferred target or targets. Upon request during the informal consultations mentioned above, the Secretariat has included in the annex to the present report a non-exhaustive illustrative list of possible national targets.

62. For further guidance in this regard, States may also wish to make use of the Compendium modules, which provide practical advice on the full range of small-arms control measures.

Communicating targets

63. States could communicate their targets as part of the submission of their national reports under the Programme of Action, starting in 2020, ahead of the seventh Biennial Meeting of States, if they chose to pilot the new approach.

64. Progress on the implementation of those targets could be reported through the existing system of national reports every two years.

65. In addition, States could also report and discuss at the global meetings progress made on the implementation of their targets.

66. For a subsequent new six-year-cycle under the Programme of Action (2024-2030), States could formulate and submit their target or targets for two-, four- or six-year period. Again, progress reports on the implementation of the national target or targets could be submitted every two years, ahead of the biennial meetings.

67. States could strengthen or add additional targets at any time.

68. In line with resolution [73/69](#) and as agreed in outcome document of the Third Review Conference, the proposal on the establishment of a dedicated fellowship training programme on small arms and light weapons in particular for developing countries, could also be discussed in such frameworks.

IV. Recent developments in small-arms and light-weapons manufacturing, technology and design and ways of addressing them

69. In paragraph 24 of its resolution [73/69](#), the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to take into account in his report on the implementation of the resolution the views of Member States and to make recommendations on ways of addressing associated challenges and opportunities presented by recent developments in small arms and light weapons manufacturing, technology and design. Pursuant to that request, the section IV of the present report concerns related discussions that have taken place in the framework of the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument and contains recommendations on a way forward to advance

collective State action to ensure the effectiveness and applicability of the Instrument in the light of new developments.

70. Since the adoption of the International Tracing Instrument in 2005, weapon design and production methods have emerged that have consequences for international efforts to address the illicit trade in small arms, particularly with regard to weapons marking, tracing and record-keeping. Non-traditional materials, such as polymers, and modularity in weapon design have the potential to alter the way weapons are marked and traced as well as how records are kept.

71. At the technical level, the challenges and opportunities posed by new technologies have been discussed at length in the framework of the meetings associated with the International Tracing Instrument, beginning in 2011. At the first meeting of governmental experts, the attention of States was drawn to the difficulty of durably marking polymer-frame firearms and the challenges for marking posed by modular design.

72. At the second meeting of governmental experts, held in 2015, discussions were expanded to address three-dimensional printing and to potential opportunities offered by new technologies for enhanced small arms and light weapons control. The Chair's summaries of the two meetings reflect important observations of States on the implications of these technologies for the International Tracing Instrument.

73. Pursuant to a request from Member States,¹⁰ the Secretary-General submitted a report to the fifth Biennial Meeting of States in 2014¹¹ on implications of recent developments in small arms and light weapons technology, including for implementation of the International Tracing Instrument. The report provides a comprehensive review of new developments vis-a-vis weapons tracing requirements under the Instrument. It addresses materials, design and production techniques as well as new technology applications such as lasers, microstamping, radio-frequency identification and barcoding.

74. The report contains recommendations with a view to ensuring the applicability and effectiveness of the International Tracing Instrument. The Secretary-General invited States to discuss the possibility of a document supplementary to the Instrument, such as an annex, which could reflect the implications of recent technical developments in marking, record-keeping and tracing and ensure the continued relevance of the Instrument. The Secretary-General noted that the agreed schedule of meetings on the Programme of Action could guide such discussions.

75. Further to the recommendation by the Secretary-General made in 2014 and to the discussions held at the 2018 Third Review Conference and on the International Tracing Instrument, many States expressed a wish to undertake focused deliberations on a supplementary annex to the Instrument in the light of new developments in manufacturing, technology and design, in particular polymer and modular weapons. The Secretariat was requested to provide elements for such deliberations.

76. States could consider making use of the forthcoming seventh Biennial Meeting of States in 2020 to conclude their considerations in that regard. On the basis of the previous discussions, the non-exhaustive list of elements set out below could be taken as a basis for such a supplementary annex, without prejudice to any future deliberations on the issue

¹⁰ [A/CONF.192/2012/RC/4](#), annex II, para. 3 (g) (i).

¹¹ [A/CONF.192/BMS/2014/1](#).

A. General considerations

77. General considerations could include the following:

(a) The purpose of the annex would be to preserve and enhance the functionality of the International Tracing Instrument in the light of relevant technological developments, in order to enable and help States to continue to identify and trace, in a timely and reliable manner, illicit small arms and light weapons;

(b) All provisions of the Instrument would remain valid and applicable, including those related to cooperation in tracing and tracing requests, and international cooperation and assistance under sections III and IV of the Instrument;

(c) States, in line with section VI of the Instrument, could continue to commit to cooperating with the United Nations and the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) to support the effective implementation of the annex;

(d) States could commit to cooperating with manufacturers and producers, where appropriate and to the greatest extent possible, in ensuring the provisions outlined were implemented;

(e) The annex could be aimed at not restricting the right of States to acquire, manufacture, transfer and retain small arms and light weapons for their self-defence and security needs, as well as for their capacity to participate in peacekeeping operations, in a manner consistent with the Charter of the United Nations;

(f) States should be highly encouraged to provide INTERPOL with information on national marking practices, in line with the outcome of the 2018 Third Review Conference and the Instrument;¹²

(g) The purpose of the annex would not be to place any additional, undue burden on States or contribute to a technical divide among countries.

B. Definitions

78. All definitions detailed in section II of the International Tracing Instrument would remain valid and applicable to the annex.

79. Additional definitions that could be applied in the context of the annex include:

(a) **Receiver/Frame.** This is the part of a weapon that houses its operating parts or components, including bolt, trigger group and magazine port;

(b) **Barrel.** This is the tube through which a controlled deflagration is released in order to propel a shot, bullet or projectile out of the end at a high velocity, connected to the receiver of a firearm;

(c) **“Essential or structural” parts and components.** This refers to any element or replacement element specifically designed for a weapon and essential to its operation, including a barrel, receiver/frame, slide or cylinder, bolt or breech block;

(d) **Accessory.** This refers to an item that physically attaches to the weapon and increases its effectiveness or usefulness but, generally speaking, is not essential for the basic intended use of the weapon;

(e) **Modular weapon.** This is a weapon that consists of an essential “control component” to which other “essential modular components” are affixed and can be

¹² [A/CONF.192/2018/RC/3](#), annex, section III.E, para. 20.

reconfigured to alter the weapon's functions to suit differing operational contexts. This is achieved primarily through changing calibres (by changing receivers in whole or in part) and by exchanging barrels of differing types;

(f) **Secondary component.** This refers to any element or replacement element specifically designed for changing the configuration of a modular weapon and that could be changed by the manufacturer, in an armoury workshop or on the field by a user (with or without specific tools);

(g) **Metallic insert.** This is a metallic plate that cannot be removed without rendering the weapon permanently unusable or unusable in the long-term.

C. Modular weapons and polymer frames: marking and record-keeping

80. States could ensure that all marks required under section III of the International Tracing Instrument are duly undertaken regardless of design or material employed for manufacture.

Modular weapons

81. With regard to modular weapons:

(a) In accordance with the requirements under section III, paragraphs 8 and 10 of the International Tracing Instrument, at the time of manufacture, a single "essential or structural component" – hereinafter the "control component" – of the weapon could be identified for the purposes of unique marking. Future manufacture of the same weapon model would need to abide by the same designation;

(b) To avoid inconsistencies during a weapon's life cycle, the visible marks required, including serial number, manufacturer and country of manufacture, could be applied to the "control component" of the weapon;

(c) Information on the designation of the "control component" of specific weapon designs could be communicated to INTERPOL for inclusion in the INTERPOL Firearms Reference Table. Information on the designation of the essential component could also be included in biennial national reporting to the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument.

(d) The markings on the "control component" should form the basis of the record associated with the weapon and held for tracing purposes.

Polymer frames

82. With regard to polymer frames:

(a) The unique marking on polymer frames could be done by methods that will ensure that alteration or removal of the marking is impossible, as far as is technically possible. In accordance with section III, paragraph 10 of the International Tracing Instrument, markings should be done on the "essential or structural component" of the weapon;

(b) The unique marking on polymer frames would be done by methods that will ensure that alteration or removal of the marking is impossible, as far as is technically possible. In accordance with section III, paragraph 10, of the International Tracing Instrument, markings should be done on the "essential or structural component" of the weapon;

(c) To the greatest extent possible, durable marking of information identifying the country of import and the year of the transfer should be undertaken in the exporting State when such information is known at the time of manufacture. Where

applicable, manufacturers could be encouraged to leave adequate space on a metal insert or window to the metal frame to enable the importer to also include markings;

(d) National marking practices for polymer weapons could be communicated to INTERPOL for inclusion in the INTERPOL Firearms Reference Table;

(e) States could also consider the further development of techniques for the recovery of markings on polymer weapons that have been removed or altered;

(f) States could, to the greatest extent possible, include the method of marking when creating the record associated with the polymer weapon.

D. Follow-up

83. With regard to follow-up:

(a) When submitting their biennial national reports on the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument, States could include, where relevant, the annex in their considerations, including, where appropriate, national experiences in marking, recording and tracing modular weapons and polymer frames, as well as measures taken in the field of international cooperation and assistance in this regard;

(b) States could commit to reviewing the implementation and future development of the annex within the framework of meetings to consider and review the implementation of the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument. States may also consider engaging relevant industry stakeholders with a view to responding effectively to future technological developments.

Annex

Non-exhaustive list of examples of national targets on small-arms control

Strengthening 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

1. A range of factors drive the illicit trade, destabilizing accumulation and misuse of small arms and light weapons. National contexts are complex and distinct, thus necessitating varying priorities. The setting of voluntary national targets would be a concrete step towards stemming the illicit flow of weapons in a nationally driven and measurable manner, in line with the outcome document of the Third United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, by which States resolved to undertake measures to achieve the full and effective implementation of the Programme of Action over the period 2018–2024, including “to strengthen coordinated national approaches for the implementation of the [Programme of Action].”¹

2. Listed below are examples of national targets, arranged on the basis of the existing Programme of Action reporting framework. Customized to States’ needs, implementing any of the targets below would contribute towards the full and effective implementation of the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument.

3. The list is neither exhaustive nor representative of the full range of possible national priorities. It is intended to guide officials interested in determining how different activities on small-arms control could be formulated in a measurable way. States should feel encouraged to develop entirely new targets or tailor the example targets provided below to their national situation.

4. For States wishing to make use of the Modular Small-arms-control Implementation Compendium (MOSAIC), which provides practical advice on small arms control measures, reference to the respective modules for further guidance has been included.

Examples by thematic area

National action plan² (see MOSAIC 04.10)

- Develop a national action plan on small arms by [year]
- Include [specific] small arms initiatives within the national development plan, as applicable, by [year]
- Conduct a small arms and light weapons survey by [year] (see MOSAIC 05.10)

¹ In line with the outcome document of the Third Review Conference, section II.A, para. 2, as annexed to [A/CONF.192/2018/RC/3](#).

² In line with the outcome document of the Third Review Conference, section II.B, para. 5, as annexed to [A/CONF.192/2018/RC/3](#).

National coordinating mechanisms³ (see *MOSAIC 03.40*)

- Establish a national coordination body on small arms by [year]
- Have the national coordination body engage with non-governmental stakeholders providing political, operational, financial and technical support by [year], holding at least [number] of meetings with those stakeholders

Manufacture⁴ (see *MOSAIC 03.10*)

- Have in place legislation, administrative procedures, and licensing processes for the manufacture of small arms and light weapons by [year]
- Make illicit manufacture of small arms and light weapons a legal criminal offence by [year]
- Create standard operating procedures for marking at manufacture by [year] (see *MOSAIC 05.30*)

International transfers⁵ (see *MOSAIC 03.20*)

- Have in place laws and regulations to exercise effective control over export, import, transit and retransfer of small arms and light weapons by [year]

Brokering⁶ (see *MOSAIC 03.20*)

- Put in place legislation requiring small arms and light weapons brokers to register with the Government to request authorization for each brokering activity by [year]
- Train [number] relevant law enforcement officials on enforcement of brokering legislation by [year]

Stockpile management⁷ (see *MOSAIC 05.20*)

- Have in place standard operating procedures for management and security of State-owned small arms and light weapons by [year]
- Carry out risk assessments of [number] facilities in which small arms and light weapons are stockpiled by [year]
- Improve physical security infrastructure for [number] buildings/ structures by [year]
- Improve physical security infrastructure for the perimeter of [number] weapons depots by [year]
- Improve physical security infrastructure of ports of entry, including [number] harbours/airports by [year]
- Have in place procedures for determining surplus stocks of small arms and light weapons by [year]

³ In line with the Programme of Action; see [A/CONF.192/15](#), chapter IV, section II, para. 4.

⁴ In line with the Programme of Action ([A/CONF.192/15](#)), chapter IV, section II, paras. 2–4, 6–9 and 26, as well as the International Tracing Instrument (decision 60/519; and [A/60/88](#) and [A/60/88/Corr.2](#), annex), para. 8 (a).

⁵ In line with the Programme of Action ([A/CONF.192/15](#)), chapter IV, section II, paras. 2, 6, 8, 9, 11–13 and 26.

⁶ In line with the Programme of Action ([A/CONF.192/15](#)), chapter IV, section II, paras. 4, 14 and 39.

⁷ In line with the Programme of Action ([A/CONF.192/15](#)), chapter IV, section II, paras. 17, 18 and 29, and section III, paras. 6 and 8.

Collection⁸ (*see MOSAIC 05.31*), **deactivation**,⁹ **destruction**¹⁰ (*see MOSAIC 05.50*)

- Have in place procedures for collection of non-State-owned small arms and light weapons by [year]
- Have in place incentive options for collection of non-State-owned weapons by [year]
- Have in place procedures for the destruction/deactivation of collected weapons by [year]
- Have in place provisions for the marking and certification of deactivated small arms and light weapons by [year]
- Conduct [number] inspections and produce a certificate to establish that deactivation has been undertaken according to the correct standards
- Commit to destruction as the nationally preferred option for dealing with collected/surplus weapons by [year]
- Have in place standard operating procedures for destruction activities, including pre-processing operations, transport, weapons accounting, and physical destruction by [year]
- Destroy [number] percent of identified surplus of small arms and light weapons by [year]

Marking and record-keeping¹¹ (*see MOSAIC 05.30*)

- Mark [number] percent of military-use of small arms and light weapons by [year]
- Mark [number] percent of police-use of small arms and light weapons by [year]
- Mark [number] percent of other law enforcement-use of small arms and light weapons by [year]
- Build capacity for marking at the time of import by [year]
- Have in place procedures for marking State-owned small arms and light weapons on transfer from government stocks by [year]
- Maintain up-to-date records of the markings on confiscated weapons for 20 years
- Have in place adequate procedures to keep records of all marked small arms and light weapons in the territory by [year]

⁸ In line with the Programme of Action ([A/CONF.192/15](#)), chapter IV, section II, paras. 4, 16 and 21.

⁹ In line with the outcome document of the third Review Conference, section II.A, paras. 46–50, as annexed to [A/CONF.192/2018/RC/3](#). No MOSAIC module is currently available for this thematic area. For more information on adopting national measures on the deactivation of small arms and light weapons, see the handbook of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe entitled “Best practice guide: minimum standards for national procedures for the deactivation of small arms and light weapons”.

¹⁰ In line with the Programme of Action ([A/CONF.192/15](#)), chapter IV, section II, paras. 18–21, and section III, paras. 6 and 14.

¹¹ In line with the marking requirements in the Programme of Action ([A/CONF.192/15](#)), chapter IV, section II, para. 7 and the International Tracing Instrument (decision 60/519; and [A/60/88](#) and [A/60/88/Corr.2](#), annex), paras. 8 (a) and 10 (a); and the record-keeping requirements agreed in the Programme of Action ([A/CONF.192/15](#)), chapter IV, section II, para. 9, and the International Tracing Instrument (decision 60/519; and [A/60/88](#) and [A/60/88/Corr.2](#), annex), paras. 11 and 12 (a).

Tracing¹² (*see MOSAIC 05.31*)

- Have in place procedures to trace small arms and light weapons by [year]
- Trace or establish illicit origin or context of [number] percent of seized, found, or surrendered arms in line with international instruments by [year] (*see SDG Indicator 16.4.2*)
- Coordinate with national statistical commission for data collection on tracing by [year]
- Successfully follow-up on [number] per cent of tracing requests received by [year]
- Train [number] of relevant law enforcement officials on placing and following up on tracing requests by [year]

International assistance¹³

- Provide international assistance for [number] of projects by [year]
- Provide [amount] in international assistance by [year]

Gender considerations¹⁴ (*see MOSAIC 06.10*)

- Formally commit to promoting meaningful participation of women in policymaking, planning and implementation processes related to the Programme of Action in a quantifiable manner by [year]
- Develop procedures for mainstreaming gender considerations into small arms policies and programmes, including in the areas of programme design, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation by [year]
- Increase the number of women included in United Nations meetings/conferences on small arms by [year] to [number] per cent
- Reach gender parity in a national coordinating body by [year]
- Begin collecting sex- and age-disaggregated data on the impact of small arms by [year]
- Incorporate collected sex-disaggregated data into existing databases, such as a national database on violence against women or a national firearm licences database, by [year]
- Create a programme or programmes to provide alternative livelihoods for former gang members or those working in craft production by [year]

¹² In line with the Programme of Action ([A/CONF.192/15](#)), chapter IV, section II, paras. 4, 10 and 36, and section III, paras. 6, 10 and 11, and the provisions agreed in the International Tracing Instrument.

¹³ In line with the Programme of Action ([A/CONF.192/15](#)), chapter IV, section III.

¹⁴ In line with the outcome document of the Third Review Conference, section II, paras. 73–76, as annexed to [A/CONF.192/2018/RC/3](#).