



# Security Council

Seventy-eighth year

*Provisional*

**9509**<sup>th</sup> meeting

Friday, 15 December 2023, 10 a.m.

New York

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*President:* Ms. Sommerfeld/Mr. Montalvo Sosa . . . . . (Ecuador)

*Members:*

Albania . . . . .	Mr. Hasani
Brazil . . . . .	Mr. França Danese
China . . . . .	Mr. Zhang Jun
France . . . . .	Mr. Olmedo
Gabon . . . . .	Mr. Biang
Ghana . . . . .	Mr. Agyeman
Japan . . . . .	Mrs. Shino
Malta . . . . .	Mrs. Frazier
Mozambique . . . . .	Mr. Afonso
Russian Federation . . . . .	Mr. Polyanskiy
Switzerland . . . . .	Mrs. Baeriswyl
United Arab Emirates . . . . .	Mr. Alkaabi
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Mr. Kariuki
United States of America . . . . .	Mr. Wood

## Agenda

### Small arms

Addressing the threat posed by diversion, illicit trafficking and misuse of small arms and light weapons and their ammunition to peace and security

Report of the Secretary-General on Small arms and light weapons (S/2023/823)

Letter dated 4 December 2023 from the Permanent Representative of Ecuador to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2023/954)

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*The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.*

### **Adoption of the agenda**

*The agenda was adopted.*

### **Small arms**

**Addressing the threat posed by diversion, illicit trafficking and misuse of small arms and light weapons and their ammunition to peace and security**

**Report of the Secretary-General on Small arms and light weapons (S/2023/823)**

**Letter dated 4 December 2023 from the Permanent Representative of Ecuador to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2023/954)**

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to warmly welcome the ministers and other high-level representatives. Their presence today underscores the importance of the subject matter under discussion.

In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Algeria, Australia, Austria, Bahrain, Belgium, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Guyana, India, Indonesia, Iraq, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Israel, Italy, Jordan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Mauritania, Mexico, Morocco, Myanmar, Nigeria, Pakistan, Paraguay, Peru, the Philippines, Poland, Portugal, the Republic of Korea, Romania, Sierra Leone, Slovenia, South Africa, Türkiye and Ukraine to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs. Cécile Aptel, Deputy Director of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research; and Ms. Folade Mutota, Executive Director, Women's Institute for Alternative Development.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I also invite the following to participate in this meeting: Her Excellency Mrs. Hedda Samson, Chargée d'affaires a.i. of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations; and Ms. Laetitia Courtois, Permanent Observer and

Head of Delegation of the International Committee of the Red Cross to the United Nations.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2023/823, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on small arms and light weapons, and to document S/2023/954, which contains the text of a letter dated 4 December 2023 from the Permanent Representative of Ecuador to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, transmitting a concept noted on the item under consideration.

I now give the floor to Mrs. Nakamitsu.

**Mrs. Nakamitsu:** Allow me to express my gratitude to Ecuador for convening this very important meeting and for giving me the opportunity to brief on the Secretary-General's biennial report (S/2023/823) on small arms and light weapons, which was released last month.

I applaud the Security Council's commitment to addressing the issue of small arms and light weapons on a regular basis. The biennial consideration of small arms began more than 15 years ago with a 2007 presidential statement (S/PRST/2007/24). Since then, the Council has continued to recognize that the illicit transfer, destabilizing accumulation and misuse of small arms and light weapons constitute a threat to international peace and security. Small arms and light weapons are the weapons of choice in initiating, sustaining and exacerbating conflict, armed violence, terrorism and other forms of organized crime. Their misuse facilitates human rights violations and gender-based violence. According to the latest figures, 260,000 people were killed by small arms in 2021 alone, amounting to 45 per cent of all violent deaths — more than 700 people daily, or one person dying from small arms every two minutes.

In view of the gravity of the issue, the Security Council requested the Secretary-General to report on small arms on a biennial basis beginning in 2008. Since that request, there have been eight reports of the Secretary-General on this topic. Let me highlight a few points from his most recent report, which provides an overview of significant trends and developments over the past two years. In it, the Secretary-General laments the deteriorating security environment, the escalation in armed conflicts and the related surge in civilian casualties. In addition, we have seen a

continued rise in global military expenditure and the costs of small arms and light weapons for peace, security and sustainable development. Notably, in his policy brief on a New Agenda for Peace, the Secretary-General not only identified arms regulation and control measures as critical for preventing conflict and violence and sustaining peace, but also called for actions to reduce the human cost of weapons, including through greater control of small arms and light weapons and ammunition.

Considerable efforts have been undertaken at the global, regional, subregional and national levels in support of small arms and light weapons control. They include work 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 its International Tracing Instrument, the Firearms Protocol to the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Arms Trade Treaty. The United Nations continues to advocate for the universalization of, and compliance with, relevant legally binding arms control instruments and for the full and effective implementation of political instruments. Let me take this opportunity to highlight the successful adoption of the new Global Framework for Through-life Conventional Ammunition Management (General Assembly resolution 78/47), a remarkable achievement by Member States to reduce the risks of illicit trafficking and diversion of conventional ammunition, as well as to prevent and mitigate unplanned explosions at munitions sites.

While existing regulatory frameworks have enabled great strides, implementation continues to be uneven and challenges persist. In his New Agenda for Peace, the Secretary-General put forward three recommendations to advance comprehensive approaches for small arms and light weapons control, which the Security Council could consider in addressing the threat posed by their diversion, illicit trafficking and misuse.

The first is the development and strengthening of national and regional instruments and action plans to address challenges related to diversion, proliferation and misuse. Global commitments must be translated into tailored action at the national and regional levels. I welcome the progress made in developing and implementing regional and subregional policy frameworks and strategies on small arms and light weapons, among them the ones in the Western Balkans and in the Caribbean, as well as the one currently being

developed in Central America. Those mechanisms reflect the unique realities, priorities, challenges and ownership of each region, while continuing to reinforce and enhance coordination in the area of small arms and light weapons control.

The second is the setting of voluntary national and regional targets and measuring progress through data collection and monitoring. Good practices and lessons learned from successful regional initiatives demonstrate the importance of robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks to measure progress in implementation and to inform further programming and policymaking. At the national level, voluntary target-setting promotes the development of nationally owned and led approaches, based on a State's needs, capacities and priorities.

The third is the pursuit of whole-of-Government approaches that integrate small arms and light weapons control into development, prevention and peacebuilding initiatives. Linkages between arms control and peace and development have been long recognized, including through Goal 16 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Adequate small arms control is a critical means of reducing armed violence, preventing conflict and building peaceful and inclusive societies, without which sustainable development cannot happen. At the same time, sustainable development can help reduce the demand for small arms by addressing the inequalities and enabling factors that perpetuate their illicit trafficking.

This integration of small arms and light weapons considerations into development efforts also requires comprehensive and multidisciplinary approaches for the control of small arms, while also addressing the political, socioeconomic and cultural drivers of supply and demand for these weapons. The United Nations has established the Saving Lives Entity, a global funding facility within the Peacebuilding Fund, which continues to support United Nations country teams in beneficiary countries through such transformative and comprehensive programmes on small arms and light weapons control and armed violence reduction.

Due to the cross-cutting and multidimensional impact of small arms and light weapons, the Secretary-General has consistently encouraged the Security Council to consider small arms and light weapons and their ammunition in the context of country-specific and thematic agenda items and discussions. That includes addressing small arms and light weapons as they relate to the protection of civilians, human rights, women

and peace and security, children and armed conflict and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, as well as linkages to transnational organized crime and terrorism.

On the latter, in his reports to the Council, the Secretary-General has repeatedly underscored the challenges posed by arms acquisition by non-State actors, including transnational organized criminal groups and, of course, terrorist groups. He has encouraged further consideration by the Council of the nexus between terrorism, organized crime and small arms and light weapons as interrelated and multifaceted security threats that require complementary approaches and responses.

Small arms control measures have proven themselves to be effective tools to disrupt the supply of illicit small arms and light weapons to terrorist and criminal groups. Such measures include robust transfer controls, border security strategies, safe and secure stockpile management, comprehensive marking, tracing and record-keeping and the collection and analysis of data on diversion, as well as investigations and prosecutions of firearms trafficking offences.

Thematic discussions on the women and peace and security agenda are also important opportunities to consider the connection and points of intersection with small arms-related issues within the framework of the Security Council's agenda. The Council has paid increasing attention to the gendered aspects of small arms and light weapons control, including the full and effective participation of women in arms control policy and practice, as well as the differentiated impacts of illicit arms on women, men, girls and boys. Of particular concern to international peace and security is the role played by the proliferation and illicit circulation of small arms in facilitating and perpetrating gender-based violence, including conflict-related sexual violence.

I would like to underscore the need for the collection and analysis of gender- and age-disaggregated data on the impact of small arms and light weapons. That forms the basis for the development of evidence-based prevention and protection strategies and for gender-responsive policymaking and programming on small arms and light weapons. Accordingly, the Security Council is encouraged to mandate United Nations entities to systematically collect such data, including when recording casualties and monitoring incidents of conflict-related sexual violence.

Small arms and light weapons control efforts play a crucial role in advancing the women and peace and security agenda. We need to further strengthen those linkages, including by greater harmonization between national strategies and actions plans for implementing the women and peace and security agenda and those regulating small arms and light weapons, as well as greater coordination and exchanges between national and regional women and peace and security focal points and small arms control focal points.

More needs to be done to foster women's full and meaningful participation in arms control at the international, regional and national levels. I note the Secretary-General's recommendation to identify good practices through a report on gender equality in national, regional and international institutions and organizations working on conventional arms control and disarmament.

The Security Council has considered the negative impacts of small arms and light weapons in relevant country and regional contexts that are experiencing armed conflict and high-levels of armed violence. I commend the Council's increasing consideration of the issue of small arms, including the integration of weapons-related provisions into its resolutions on Afghanistan, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti, Libya, Mali, Somalia, South Sudan, the Sudan and Yemen.

Weapons and ammunition management also continues to be integrated into the work and mandates of peace operations. To adequately address challenges related to small arms and light weapons in peace operation contexts, the Security Council is encouraged to ensure that missions are consistently and appropriately mandated to assist States in the effective, safe and secure management of weapons and ammunition.

It is likewise crucial that peace operations do not inadvertently contribute to risks of diversion and unplanned explosions at munitions sites. I welcome the continued work to strengthen weapons and ammunition management by troop- and police-contributing countries. Concerted and coordinated efforts are needed by those countries and field missions to effectively implement relevant policies and international guidelines and to ensure the safety, accountability and security of their weapons and ammunition.

I encourage the Security Council to also incorporate weapons and ammunition considerations in its work

on the protection of civilians and conflict prevention. When mandating United Nations peace operations, the Security Council could assess the potential contribution of conventional arms control and integrate related mandates into protection-of-civilian efforts. Integrating arms-related risks in conflict analysis and protection risk assessments makes it possible to identify and address arms-related threats, including as part of conflict prevention, management and resolution efforts. The collection and analysis of arms-related information as part of civilian casualty recording and human rights monitoring is also an important practical step to address concerns related to conventional weapons and ammunition.

The illicit flows of arms and ammunition in violation of arms embargoes remain a matter of grave concern. I welcome the action taken by the Council through the adoption of resolution 2616 (2021) on combating the illicit transfer, destabilizing accumulation and diversion of arms and related materiel in violation of arms embargoes which has been crucial in addressing that serious threat to international peace and security.

However, illicit arms trafficking and diversion, in violation of Security Council-mandated arms embargoes, continue to be documented. That demonstrates the ongoing need to improve national and regional implementation and enforcement of arms embargoes. At the same time, panels of experts across many arms embargo regimes continue to face challenges in identifying the origin and supply chain of seized weapons and ammunition.

In his report, the Secretary-General offers a number of recommendations on this matter that can be considered by the Security Council. In particular, the Council is encouraged to continue to seek reports from Member States on the steps that they have taken to implement arms embargoes and on their efforts to cooperate and share information with the panels of experts.

I would like to conclude my briefing by stressing the need to fully integrate small arms and light weapons considerations throughout the Security Council's work. Whether addressing geographic contexts or thematic issues, the widespread availability and illicit proliferation of those weapons and their associated ammunition serve as key drivers and enablers of conflict, terrorism, violence and crisis. To effectively address threats to international peace and security, it is imperative that small arms and light weapons be

consistently and comprehensively considered. That involves not only strict control over their supply but also addressing the underlying factors that contribute to their demand.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mrs. Nakamitsu for the information she has provided.

I now give the floor to Ms. Aptel.

**Ms. Aptel:** It is a great honour to address the Security Council, and I would like to express my most sincere gratitude to Ecuador for this invitation.

The diversion, illicit trafficking and misuse of small arms and light weapons and their ammunition pose serious threats to international peace and security. Every year, at least a quarter of a million people are killed around the world by small arms and light weapons, as the High Representative just indicated. Since 2021, an increase in conflict-related deaths has contributed to a worrisome upwards trend, while small arms and light weapons were the second most prevalent cause of conflict-related civilian deaths.

New technologies and innovation in the production and transfer of small arms and light weapons contribute to their illicit proliferation and destabilizing accumulation around the globe, as evidenced by the ongoing research of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) into developments in craft production, 3D printing and the illicit conversion of blank-firing and deactivated weapons.

The risks and impacts caused by illicit small arms and light weapons are multi-faceted, multidimensional and context specific.

For the past 10 years, the Security Council has increasingly included provisions for weapons and ammunition management in mandates for United Nations peace operations and special political missions, as well as in resolutions relating to sanctions, including arms embargoes. During this decade, UNIDIR has contributed towards the evolution of the United Nations comprehensive approach to weapons and ammunition management, and we welcome the inclusion of a new emphasis on weapons and ammunition management in the Secretary-General's report on small arms (S/2023/823).

UNIDIR's recent research finds that United Nations peace operations and special political missions continue to face challenges in addressing arms-related risks. They need to be better equipped to monitor illicit



arms flows and determine the source of small arms, light weapons, ammunition and explosives used to attack mission forces and convoys. The results of such analysis could be used by national authorities to act against those involved in illicit trade, thus ensuring accountability when civilians' and peacekeepers' lives are at stake.

An area in which we see progress is United Nations support for national weapons and ammunition management baseline assessments and weapons and ammunition management benchmarking assessments in countries subject to United Nations embargoes. UNIDIR found that aligning national weapons and ammunition management policy and practices with States' obligations and commitments under international and regional small arms and light weapons-control instruments helps to enhance national control. Now is an opportune moment to gather lessons learned on the use of weapons and ammunition management benchmarks for strengthening national weapons and ammunition management frameworks and capacities. A New Agenda for Peace provides a renewed impetus for increasing United Nations support to States seeking to strengthen through-life weapons and ammunition management as part of their broader efforts to deliver inclusive peace and security.

The diversion, illicit trafficking and misuse of small arms, light weapons and ammunition have significant gendered, age-related and context-specific negative impacts. Most weapon-related incidents are perpetrated by men; and men, especially young men, constitute most of the victims of armed violence. As for women and girls, they suffer disproportionately from specific forms of armed violence, including conflict-related sexual violence and sexual crimes. A recent UNIDIR study revealed that between 70 and 90 per cent of conflict-related sexual violence incidents involved small arms. Weapons are used by perpetrators to commit sexual crimes and threaten and coerce victims. The mere presence of a weapon is a visible threat, creating coercive circumstances that nullify any claim of alleged consent. The Secretary-General's New Agenda for Peace recognizes that

"Misogyny, offline and online, fuels gender-based and sexual violence in all parts of the world, but in conflict settings the added challenges of institutional weakness, impunity and the spread of arms predominantly borne by men massively aggravate the risks."

It is therefore crucial that United Nations peacekeeping operations, special political missions and entities consider arms-related risks and impacts in protection risk assessments and conflict-prevention activities.

In order to support evidence-based prevention strategies and responses to conflict-related sexual violence, the collection of data disaggregated by gender and age must be strengthened, and data on the weapons present during an incident should also be collected. Systematic data collection combining information about casualties and arms flows could support early warnings of conflict-related sexual violence and inform actions by the Council in areas such as sanctions and arms embargoes. Gender shapes the way that armed violence and the impact of weapons are experienced. It also influences access to decision-making in arms control. In resolution 2122 (2013), the Council calls for women's full and meaningful participation at all levels of decision-making on arms control, and resolution 2242 (2015) encourages their participation in the design and implementation of such efforts. Yet our research shows that women still account for only a very small percentage of people working in technical roles involving weapons and ammunition management. And in most disarmament forums, including those related to small arms and light weapons, men largely outnumber women. Targeted efforts are needed to ensure women's full and meaningful participation in international security and to change perceptions of whose expertise is recognized. In that regard, UNIDIR would like to commend Ecuador's initiative regarding its invitations to today's meeting.

*(spoke in French)*

More than 20 years after the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), the links between the women and peace and security agenda and the risks posed by the diversion, illicit trafficking and misuse of small arms can and must be further explored. Gender perspectives must be further taken into account in formulating policies and programmes on the control of small arms and light weapons in order to better protect women, girls and, ultimately, everyone from all forms of violence, including sexual and gender-based violence. That will also help reaffirm that the goals of disarmament and arms control transcend mere improvements in arms control, because this is also a matter of reducing the damage they cause, supporting victims, restoring their dignity and autonomy, prosecuting those responsible and delivering justice so that we can ultimately do a

better job of restoring and maintaining peace and security and fostering sustainable development.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Ms. Aptel for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Mutota.

**Ms. Mutota:** Addressing the threat that the misuse of conventional arms poses to peace and security should be a priority of the Security Council, as the effects become more apparent in States engaged in armed conflict or armed violence and in the resulting human suffering. The Council's mandate, enshrined in the Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, is the promotion of international peace, and it is therefore incumbent on it to come up with new decisions and resolutions or to implement existing ones relating to the prevention of violence against non-combatants in conflict zones such as Gaza, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ukraine, the Sudan, Yemen and various other parts of the world where it is evident that women and children feature too heavily in the fatalities, casualties and general human suffering resulting from the use of conventional weapons, including small arms and light weapons and their ammunition.

The resolutions of the Security Council have the force of law and are legally binding. However, it seems at times that the Council is oblivious to its own resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security. When we as women are seeing fatalities of women and girls who are non-combatants, as well as women's exclusion from the decision-making processes that determine and affect their lived reality, it therefore raises the question of whether the Security Council is failing to get Member States to implement its own resolutions. The Security Council must execute its mandate and lead by example in calling on States to recognize, not breach, international human rights law and international humanitarian law regarding the targeting of civilian infrastructure, the destruction of which militates against international peace and security, as well as States' ability to achieve the aims of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Such misuse of conventional weapons undermines the right of the communities affected to development, since hospitals, schools and power and water systems, which provide essential services to the civilian population, come under attack and consequently increase vulnerability.

Addressing 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 is a matter of urgency, as too many States have inadequate legislation, or none at all, regulating small arms and light weapons. The politically binding instrument that is the Programme of Action requires systematic and rigorous follow-up on domesticating its provisions and therefore represents an opportunity for the Security Council to encourage States to provide relevant and timely legislation on the protection of all as well as diligent reporting on its implementation.

The Global Framework for Through-life Conventional Ammunition Management is a global response to managing the central role of ammunition in human suffering, and the Security Council should consider the risk of diverted ammunition being used to perpetrate gender-based violence and acknowledge the differentiated impacts of diverted ammunition on diverse genders by expressing strong support for the Framework and for timely, gender-responsive follow-up action. As the first international arms-control instrument to directly address the link between conventional weapons and gender-based violence, the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) encourages exploring how the implementation of the ATT can prevent such violence, and makes it imperative that the Security Council accelerate its strong support for implementing all of the ATT's provisions at the national level in legislation, policy and programming, urging dualist States such as those of the Caribbean Community to implement the Treaty as law and put in place administrative measures to prevent diversion, increase international cooperation beyond bilateral commitments, advance the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and pursue intergenerational equity so as to leave no one behind.

Resolution 1325 (2000) and the women and peace and security agenda remain a hallmark for women's full, equal and effective participation in decision-making, and the General Assembly resolution on women, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control (General Assembly resolution 77/55) provides relevant, actionable pathways to women's inclusion. The Council should encourage States to develop national action plans, which serve as a mutually beneficial tool for coordinating, implementing, monitoring and evaluating arms control measures.

In keeping with the spirit, if not the letter, of the Charter of the United Nations, the Women's Institute for Alternative Development calls for collaboration — if it does not already exist — between the Security Council

and the General Assembly in the absence of the decades-old quest for Security Council reform. Collaboration is essential in reducing the scourge that is the proliferation and misuse of illicit small arms and their ammunition and the consequential impact on the economic potential of small island developing States, such as in my region of the Caribbean Community. Such collaboration also relates to the need for capacity strengthening and the transfer of technology to aid developing countries in the implementation of, for example, the provisions of the ATT.

The Women's Institute for Alternative Development is of the view that if the Security Council diligently carries out its mandate without selective application, it then becomes easier for the General Assembly to do its work. It is our hope that such collaboration will recognize that developing countries sometimes suffer from treaty fatigue due to onerous reporting obligations and sometimes question if their membership is beneficial.

Finally, I would just like to say that women have a fundamental right to, and interest in, participating in decision-making that affects them and the future of their countries. However, if women are not accepted as key stakeholders, including women survivors, then women will not be included in efforts towards resolution, peacemaking or peacebuilding. Exclusion increases vulnerability. The Security Council must therefore take all reasonable measures to ensure States' implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) through the development of national action plans and capacity-strengthening measures through international cooperation, because, I would like to reiterate, exclusion increases vulnerability.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Ms. Mutota for her briefing.

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as Minister for Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility of Ecuador.

I thank the Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu, the Deputy Director of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, Ms. Cécile Aptel, and the representative of civil society, Ms. Folade Mutota, for their valuable briefings.

As the President of the Republic of Ecuador, Daniel Noboa Azín, mentioned some weeks ago in this same Chamber (see S/PV.9497), wars, conflict

and transnational organized crime share a common ingredient: weapons. In fact, one of Ecuador's five priorities in the Security Council indeed relates to combating illicit arms trafficking. In today's debate, I will focus on three central points.

The first regards implementation. To face those challenges, there must be synergy between the system's bodies. On 4 December, the General Assembly adopted the Global Framework for Through-life Conventional Ammunition Management (see General Assembly resolution 78/47). There is also a need for close cooperation between, and support for existing mechanisms, including the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, the fourth Review Conference of which will be held in just six months' time.

The Council must of course do its part, and we are not starting from scratch. Ten years ago, the Council adopted its first thematic resolution on the illicit transfer, destabilizing accumulation and misuse of small arms and light weapons (resolution 2117 (2013)). Since then, it has adopted four other resolutions, including 2457 (2019), dedicated to the African Union's emblematic initiative, Silencing the Guns in Africa. Today we have a robust framework, but greater efforts are needed to implement it around the world. Which Council agenda item does not involve weapons? What greater aim does the Council have than peace and security or the protection of civilians? How better to commemorate, in 2024, the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Geneva Conventions, than by strengthening arms control work?

Resolution 2700 (2023) expanded the arms embargo in Haiti to prevent illicit trafficking and diversion towards unauthorized actors, which is a concrete example of the Council's direct role. Also, through the presidential statement contained in document S/PRST/2023/6, which we adopted recently, the Council expressed its grave concern at the illicit transfer, destabilizing accumulation and misuse of small arms and light weapons, which pose threats to peace, cause losses of human life and contribute to instability and insecurity.

Furthermore, the Council has encouraged international cooperation and assistance for States that request it in order to strengthen their judicial, implementation and border control capacities in order to ensure the adoption of national, regional and international measures aimed at avoiding the illicit



trafficking of weapons to transnational organized crime organizations. Ecuador is concerned about the threats to peace, security and stability posed by the large-scale influx of arms and munitions into any conflict situation. That is why we should encourage higher standards in the marking, registration and traceability of weapons and ammunition, which leads me to my second point.

It is crucial for the Council to address the impact of new technologies on the illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons. As reflected in the Secretary-General's most recent report (S/2023/823), illicit production has made use of various methods, such as additive manufacturing, through 3D printing or reverse engineering processes. The same thing happens with parts and components produced through prefabricated kits that allow for home manufacturing and pose a greater challenge for national security bodies in their detection, registration and tracing efforts. In the context of rapid technological change, it is forecast that the threat will continue to grow exponentially and take on unpredictable proportions, undermining international peace and security. To overcome that, close cooperation among States is required, through information exchanges and capacity-building. The challenges posed by emerging technologies can be overcome with more, not less, technology. Smart stockpile management systems, weapons and ammunition marking, and identification and tracing in contexts of conflict and crime can also contribute as long as they are universally accessible and are aimed at protecting people, above the interests of production.

This brings me to my third and final point: the leadership of women and the differential impact of weapons on women and girls. Today Ecuador is in mourning because of firearms. Five months old, three years old, five years old and seven years old — those are the ages of four children who were murdered in cowardly attacks with firearms. According to the *Global Study on Homicide 2023*, homicides have claimed a higher number of lives than conflict-related killings in recent years. The Study also highlighted that more than 70 per cent of homicides in South America were carried out with small arms or light weapons. This is not merely a theoretical issue. The challenges are real. The aim of achieving more just and inclusive societies is being threatened by the destabilizing accumulation and unrestricted flow of firearms.

Small arms are used as a primary tool in the smuggling of migrants, making those migrants,

especially women and girls, extremely vulnerable to high-risk situations. Illegal arms trafficking has a major impact on women and girls, including through the sexual violence perpetrated against them. Between 70 and 90 per cent of cases of conflict-related sexual violence involve the use of small arms, as we know from the information provided in the Secretary-General's report on sexual violence in armed conflict (S/2023/413). It is therefore essential that the Council include provisions on the prevention of sexual violence in its various mandates. Resolution 2699 (2023), which authorized the deployment of the Multinational Security Support Mission to Haiti, is a good example of such provisions, which must be implemented.

We should integrate a gender perspective into every stage of decision-making related to disarmament and security. 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, States recognized the need for the full and meaningful participation of women in all decision-making processes related to the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument. The General Assembly has recognized women's valuable contribution to arms-control decision-making, policy and practice, as well as the need to strengthen their participation in those processes, and the Council has also called for women's full and effective participation in arms control. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development calls for women's full and effective inclusion, and Sustainable Development Goal target 16.4 calls for effectiveness in combating arms trafficking and all forms of organized crime. As a signatory to our shared commitments on women and peace and security, we support such participation. Security cannot be not achieved through the stockpiling of arms. On the contrary, it depends on ensuring the implementation of our arms-control architecture.

In conclusion, I urge that the knotted gun we see here at Headquarters serve not only as an iconic sculpture but also as a guide for the Council's efforts to curb the stockpiling and diversion of weapons with a view to silencing the guns.

I resume my functions as President of the Council.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements.

I call on the Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs of Albania.

**Mr. Hasani** (Albania): Let me start by thanking the Ecuadorian presidency and you, Madam, for convening today's open debate. As we heard from the briefers, whom I thank for their presentations, this is an important topic with a broad geographic and sectoral impact.

Our world is experiencing substantial and rapid transformations. While progress has accelerated, conflicts and wars have not receded, and new emerging threats and trends pose serious challenges. Conflicts and threats to security in various regions of the world have led to an increase in militarized approaches to peace. We concur with the findings in the Secretary-General's most recent report on small arms and light weapons (S/2023/823) that the misuse, illicit transfer and destabilizing accumulation of small arms and light weapons and their ammunitions have persisted and have continued to undermine peace and security at the national, regional and global levels, derailing States from their paths towards sustainable development.

According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, global military expenditures in 2022 reached a record high of \$2.24 trillion, which represents an increase of 19 per cent over the past 10 years. That has increased the trade in arms and at the same time the possibility for their diversion, illicit trafficking and misuse, which in turn are undermining peace and security in many parts of the world. Experience has shown that the proliferation and diversion of small arms and light weapons affect the lives and security of people in conflict and post-conflict areas long after the hostilities end. They can fuel and prolong armed violence and support illegal activities and the emergence of violent groups that have destabilizing effects on social, societal and economic development, representing major challenges to regional and national security.

As has been highlighted in various Security Council debates — including, I have been told, last week's debate on transnational organized crime (see S/PV.9497) — access to illicit weapons contributes to the development of terrorism, organized crime, human trafficking, gender violence and piracy, while the diversion of weapons is closely linked to corruption and poor management practices. Beyond the human tragedy they can cause, they can also overload local and national health services, reduce the available workforce and disrupt social and societal structures.

Several reports have confirmed the links between the proliferation and illicit circulation of small arms and conflict-related sexual violence. We call for the meaningful participation of women in arms control and at all levels of decision-making, and we encourage empowering them to participate in the design and implementation of such efforts. A strong women and peace and security agenda in conflict and post-conflict zones can help prevent widespread and systematic conflict-related sexual violence. Children in particular continue to be disproportionately affected by armed conflict, experiencing a persistently high number of grave violations. They are recruited and used as soldiers. They are killed, maimed, abducted and subjected to rape and other forms of sexual violence. Their schools and hospitals are attacked and they are denied humanitarian access. That is why, in full awareness of such threats, it is important to emphasize that the right to individual and collective self-defence, as recognized in Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, and the legitimate security demands of all countries, should be fully considered. In that context, small arms and light weapons should be manufactured, traded and retained by States for their legitimate security in line with international standards and rules, and the normative frameworks and mechanisms in place should be fully used for that purpose.

The Secretary-General's policy brief on a New Agenda for Peace, issued in July, provides an opportunity for renewed action on the control of small arms and light weapons. In line with that document, we fully encourage the development and implementation of regional and subregional instruments, road maps and action plans to address region-specific challenges in the area, in accordance with international arms-control treaties and political frameworks. That goal remains one of the commitments of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Albania complies with all of its international obligations regarding international arms-control, non-proliferation and disarmament agreements, including the establishment of confidence-building and security measures to address the illicit transfer, destabilizing accumulation and diversion of arms and related materials in violation of Council-mandated arms embargoes. We remain firmly committed to enforcing the international standards with regard to combating trafficking in small arms and light weapons and their ammunition as another part of our efforts to fight organized crime.

In all of those efforts, regional cooperation is of paramount importance. In our region, the Western Balkans, special attention is paid to cooperation, coordination and joint actions on the part of all countries, the relevant local agencies and the international community through the South-Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons. In that context, I would like to mention the Franco-German initiative on small arms and light weapons within the framework of the Berlin process as part of joint efforts to solve the small-arms problem in the Western Balkans by the end of next year. A road map for sustainable solutions to arms control in the Western Balkans by 2024 has been developed, and it is incorporated by the European Commission in its 2020–2025 action plan on firearms trafficking.

Let me conclude by reiterating that only strong cooperation among different actors at the national and regional levels can help to properly address threats arising from the misuse, illicit transfer and destabilizing accumulation of small arms and light weapons.

**Mr. Alkaabi** (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank you, Madam President, for presiding over this meeting, and we congratulate Ecuador on its successful presidency of the Council this month. We also thank Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu, Under-Secretary-General, Ms. Cécile Aptel and Ms. Folade Mutota for their valuable briefings.

The issue of the diversion, illicit trafficking and misuse of small arms and light weapons remains one of the most critical global challenges affecting international peace and security. They exacerbate armed conflicts, violence, crime and terrorism. According to the Secretary-General, small arms and light weapons and their ammunition are the main cause of violent deaths around the world, in both conflict situations and stable regions.

The situation is all the more alarming given that more than 1 billion small arms and light weapons are in circulation today, not to mention the approximately 8 million new weapons that are being manufactured each year. The abundance of those weapons makes them difficult to trace and track, rendering them more vulnerable to diversion and use by illegal groups, particularly in armed conflict situations. That phenomenon has become more widespread as a result of new technologies, such as 3D printing and the dark web, hence the need for more effective controls against the diversion, proliferation and misuse of small arms

and light weapons. As such, it is important to carefully consider the observations and recommendations of the Secretary-General in his New Agenda for Peace and his reports on small arms and light weapons regarding ways of addressing the scourge of illicit arms flows, including his most recent report (S/2023/823).

In the context of our meeting today, I would like to share some points with the Council to enrich our deliberations.

First, within its mandate, the Security Council must continue to monitor trends in the illicit use, flow and diversion of small arms and light weapons. We value the support provided by the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms, and we stress the need to update and improve the Council's methods of monitoring those developments to keep abreast of the new methods used to divert and use those weapons.

The Security Council could benefit from utilizing modern technology in mandates and resolutions providing for the control or prohibition of the flow of weapons. While we realize that such use of technology is accompanied by many challenges, there are some technologies that can enhance the monitoring of weapons movements, such as surveillance via satellites and drones, which can be used to monitor vast geographical areas for the movement of illicit weapons and identify illegal manufacturing sites, with the consent of the countries concerned.

Secondly, combating the illicit flow of arms requires Member States to adhere to all arms embargo resolutions adopted by the Council in coordination with the sanctions committees and the Council's panels of experts, wherever appropriate. Given that certain States with limited capacity may face challenges in fully implementing the relevant Security Council resolutions, it is important to ensure that those resolutions are clear and consistent and that they consider the specific context of each conflict or situation that necessitates such a prohibition. When the Council considers renewing the mandate of any peacekeeping mission in an area on which an arms embargo has been imposed, there is a need to explore opportunities provided for peace operations to support host Governments in combatting the illicit flow of small arms and light weapons.

Thirdly, coordination, cooperation and the exchange of information and expertise at the regional and international levels remain indispensable in addressing the illicit flow of small arms and light weapons,

especially across borders. While existing efforts and legal frameworks to address that phenomenon at the international level are important, local and regional contexts and concerns must be considered, and strategies must be developed that address the challenges specific to each country or region. In that context, we commend the various initiatives and frameworks developed by various regional organizations around the world, such as the African Union's Silencing the Guns initiative. It is also important to enhance support and build the capacities of States that are significantly suffering from that challenge, including by providing them with expertise and equipment that would enable them to secure their borders and effectively monitor the illicit flow of weapons.

Lastly, studies on small arms and light weapons must include information and analysis on the impact of those weapons on women and girls, especially regarding violence committed against them using those weapons, whether in situations of armed conflict or other situations. That is important to ensure that strategies seeking to reduce the proliferation of small arms and light weapons consider programmes and policies focused on the protection of women and girls. On the other hand, it is also important to empower women and ensure their full, equal and meaningful participation in efforts to prevent and combat the threats of those weapons.

**Mr. Kariuki** (United Kingdom): We are grateful to Ecuador for convening this important meeting, and I also thank Under-Secretary-General Nakamitsu, Ms. Aptel and Ms. Mutota for their valuable briefings.

The diversion and misuse of small arms has an all-too-real human cost, claiming hundreds of thousands of lives every year. It threatens security and sustainable development and fuels conflict, crime and terrorism. Let me make four points for this debate.

First, we must accelerate our collective work to reduce those threats in the coming year. At the fourth 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, to be held in June 2024, we look forward to building on conclusions from the Biennial Meeting of States on Small Arms, held in 2022. Improving how we organize cooperation on small arms and establishing a technical expert group to explore the impact of new technologies are two important steps. Given the overlap between

work on small arms and conventional ammunition, we were pleased that the new Global Framework for Through-life Conventional Ammunition Management was endorsed by the First Committee. We hope to see progress on its development in 2024.

Secondly, the differentiated gender impacts of small arms mean that we need to include a women and peace and security perspective in our collective efforts. We are committed to fostering women's participation in processes to tackle small arms and eradicate gender-based violence. The United Kingdom's national action plan for women and peace and security reflects that. It includes commitments to improve our data collection on the gendered effects of small-arms policy and control.

Thirdly, we should support regional and subregional approaches to small-arms challenges. As such, the United Kingdom is proud to be providing funding for the implementation of the Caribbean firearms road map.

Finally, we remain committed to the full implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty, which we encourage all States to join. The Treaty has the power to prevent unregulated and irresponsible arms transfers and their diversion. The tenth anniversary of its signing next year will be a moment to redouble our efforts.

The effective control of small arms should unite us all. We look forward to working with other Member States to advance progress in that area.

**Mr. Agyeman** (Ghana): I would like to begin by thanking Ecuador for convening today's open debate, which seeks to address the threats to international peace and security posed by the diversion, illicit trafficking and misuse of small arms and light weapons. We are grateful to the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Under-Secretary-General Nakamitsu, for her briefing to the Council, and we thank Ms. Aptel and Ms. Mutota for their additional perspectives.

While small arms and light weapons are necessary and even useful for legitimate law-enforcement activities and for the defence of territorial integrity, they have also been a source of great instability for many countries around the world, particularly those of us in Africa. Besides being used by non-State armed actors and terrorist groups to enforce a reign of terror over huge segments of society, they have also been resorted to in the past by mercenaries and other actors working to overthrow Governments. Moreover, transnational criminal networks have relied on such weapons when stealing natural resources and protecting the benefits of



their nefarious and transboundary criminal activities. All of that reinforces the drivers of instability in the States and regions affected and threatens international peace and security.

As the African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism reports, there was a troubling surge in terrorist activities between April and June of this year, with 809 recorded attacks — a 152 per cent increase over the previous year — resulting in 4,027 fatalities. That underscores an alarming trend in the interconnected challenges of unregulated arms circulation and terrorism and the broader security concerns of the African continent. And while Africa has been a major victim of the conspiracy of small arms and light weapons, it has by no means been the only continent affected. In Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as in Asia, we have seen the devastating impact of the diversion, illicit trafficking and misuse of small arms and light weapons. We believe it is therefore time to hold all actors strictly accountable, not excluding manufacturers and traders, if we are to indeed preserve global peace.

In today's debate, Ghana's statement will focus more narrowly on the African context, in recognition of the persistent resort to those tools of violence in the Sahel, the Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes region, and of Africa's ambition to silence the guns on the continent by 2030. In addressing today's topic, we will make three main points.

First, it is important for the Security Council, through its convergent actions, to prioritize and reinforce compliance with the existing international instruments and treaties aimed at preventing the illicit acquisition, proliferation and misuse of conventional weapons in order to address the adverse consequences of small arms and light weapons. A crucial aspect of the Council's action should be aimed at strengthening advocacy and outreach on respect for the norms of export controls, which should be backed up by effective monitoring and enforcement, as required by international and regional instruments. In that context, the major arms exporters, most of which are permanent members of the Council, should be unalloyed in their commitment to mitigating the challenges associated with the proliferation of illicit arms. It is therefore regrettable that two of the five major arms-exporting countries have not fully committed to the Arms Trade Treaty. For many around the world, it is difficult to comprehend how arms-producing States fail to see

the connection between their failures of control and the consequences of that failure for other parts of the world in the form of violent conflicts and instability. Affirming the responsibility of major manufacturers and exporters is therefore essential to fostering a collective commitment on the matter.

Secondly, the Security Council must play the pivotal role that it is best placed to undertake in addressing the nexus between small arms and light weapons and organized crime and armed violence. The Council should encourage the reinforcement of international cooperation under the rubric of prevention, including through intelligence-sharing and capacity-building initiatives, to help disrupt the growing symbiotic linkages between the proliferation of small arms and other malignant activities.

As we note the impact on risk mitigation of international cooperation, we also want to highlight the positive impact of regional mechanisms such as the Economic Community of West African States Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and Other Related Materials, the Nairobi Protocol and the Southern African Development Community Firearms Protocol, which seek to ensure transparency in arms transfers and have played an essential role in combating their diversion and preventing their unauthorized acquisition, including by terrorist groups. It was in that regard that we welcomed the agreement reached by the Open-ended Working Group on Conventional Ammunition, within the context of the First Committee of the General Assembly, to establish the Global Framework for Through-life Conventional Ammunition Management. We believe that platform will help address the current gaps in the area and foster responsible and effective ammunition management.

Thirdly, while the Council's imposition of sanctions on entities violating arms embargoes is crucial in curtailing the illicit flow of weapons to conflict zones, a nuanced approach is always necessary to enhance the effectiveness of such sanctions. An effective approach should be aimed at avoiding the undermining influence that arms embargoes have on legitimate State defence efforts and should focus instead on the armed groups, individuals and entities that exploit clandestine trade channels and profit from conflict. It must also seek to ensure that the effects of sanctions extend to those responsible for manufacturing such tools of violence, holding them accountable for the trade in and use of such weapons.

Meanwhile, we believe in the continued importance of the existing measures in place to ensure the comprehensive data capture of crimes and activities related to conventional weapons. The Council must identify new ways to consider information that it may receive on the proliferation of small arms and ammunition from peacekeeping missions and other entities in the field, beyond those that are considered within the context of the existing Sanctions Committees.

We encourage the Council's further efforts to transform gendered power dynamics in the peace and security arena and to support initiatives that empower women in conflict-affected areas. We acknowledge the disproportionate impact of armed conflict on women and girls and support the Security Council's ongoing commitment to integrating the perspective of women and girls, as well as young people, into decision-making processes, including through the promotion of women's participation in conflict resolution, peacebuilding and disarmament.

Finally, as an outgoing member of the Council, Ghana encourages the Council, which bears the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, to make a more determined effort to address the trends in small arms and light weapons and their implications for the stability of our world. We must prioritize prevention and reinforce actions that minimize the human cost associated with the use of these weapons and their misuse.

**Mr. França Danese** (Brazil): I thank Ecuador for organizing this timely open debate. I also thank Under-Secretary-General Nakamitsu for briefing the Council, and Ms. Aptel and Ms. Mutota for bringing their valuable perspectives.

The illicit trafficking and diversion of small arms and light weapons and their ammunition pose significant challenges to international peace and security. Uncontrolled flows of these weapons and ammunition feed conflicts and urban and rural violence and exacerbate public security problems in many parts of the world. Considering the destabilizing effects of these illicit flows, the implementation of effective arms control mechanisms at the global, regional and national levels is critical — I underline “national”. Instead of casting a blind eye to the terrible “buy legal-take away illegal” trend in much of this terrible trafficking, as unfortunately so often happens, fuelling the international trafficking of arms and ammunition and thus violence and conflict abroad, national legislation

should help curb the illicit traffic of those weapons by more effectively controlling their end use.

Brazil has always supported the discussions and deliberations on this matter at the United Nations. They have resulted in a set of instruments, treaties and political commitments that provide an important framework for the control of small arms and light weapons and ammunition. The principles and obligations established by the Arms Trade Treaty and the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, for example, provide guidance for responsible and diligent transfers, as well as control, marking and tracing mechanisms.

The same is true for political instruments, such as the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and its International Tracing Instrument and the recently adopted Global Framework for Through-life Conventional Ammunition Management (see General Assembly resolution 78/47). Brazil welcomes the Global Framework as the newest piece in the conventional arms control architecture. The proper treatment of issues related to ammunition management, both in its safety and security dimensions, was long overdue. Its implementation will certainly benefit our societies.

The diversion, illicit trafficking and misuse of small arms and light weapons and ammunition continue to fuel violence in conflict and non-conflict settings. According to the Secretary-General's report (S/2023/823), small arms and light weapons are a prominent cause of conflict-related civilian deaths and pose a threat to humanitarian operations in many conflict-affected areas. Therefore, Brazil supports the inclusion of provisions on the control of illicit flows of weapons and ammunition, as appropriate, in Security Council resolutions. It is a relevant aspect to be considered in the mandates of peace operations, as has been done in several cases.

We recognize arms control as a tool for the prevention of conflict and violence. Uncontrolled flows of weapons that end up in the hands of unauthorized recipients are among the root causes of conflict and violence. To address this serious issue, Brazil supports, in particular, the adoption of minimal standards for the making and tracing of small arms and light weapons and ammunition, in line with the provisions

of the International Tracing Instrument and the Global Framework. This allows the identification and dismantling of routes of diversion and illicit trafficking.

As we address this important issue of arms control, let me draw the Council's attention to the alarming surge in military spending, which exceeded \$2 trillion last year, as mentioned in the Secretary-General's report. This reflects a misalignment of global priorities. President Lula has been advocating for the reallocation of these extensive resources to address pressing global needs, emphasizing the urgent necessity of investing in socioeconomic development.

Brazil commends Ecuador for particularly highlighting the gender dimension of this debate. The available disaggregated data on the relationship between the illicit circulation of small arms and light weapons and the incidence of conflict-related sexual violence only prove the acute and differentiated impact of the proliferation of these weapons on women and girls.

Furthermore, as recognized by resolution 2467 (2019), sexual violence in conflict occurs on a continuum of interrelated and recurring forms of violence against women and girls, including in peacetime. In drafting its second national action plan on women and peace and security, the Brazilian Government decided to promote, as one of the strategic objectives of the document, a safer, less violent environment for Brazilian women, including by further controlling the circulation of small arms and ammunition in the country, as part of our national security policy.

Brazil recognizes the importance of securing women's full, equal and meaningful participation in decision-making processes in arms control and disarmament forums. The scant presence of female negotiators in these forums suggests that national Governments are failing to link the women and peace and security agenda to this critical area of implementation. This pattern must be overcome if we aspire to address the problems related to small arms and light weapons in a comprehensive and inclusive manner.

**Mr. Zhang Jun** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Ecuador for convening today's meeting and welcome Your Excellency, Madam President, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ecuador, presiding over today's meeting. I thank Under-Secretary-General Nakamitsu, Ms. Aptel and Ms. Mutota for their briefings.

The issue of small arms and light weapons has a bearing on peace and development. Over the years, the

international community has made relentless efforts to address the issue. Placing the issue high on its agenda, the Council has adopted resolutions 2117 (2013), 2220 (2015) and 2616 (2021) and has taken into full account the impact of small arms and light weapons in its consideration of hotspot issues.

At the same time, the problem of the illicit trafficking, misuse and irresponsible transfer of small arms and light weapons and ammunition remains severe and is intertwined with armed conflict, terrorism and transnational organized crime, posing serious threats to international peace and security. To better address the issue of small arms and light weapons, China holds the following position.

First, we must eliminate the root causes of arms proliferation. Development is the cornerstone of peace and security. Regions such as the Horn of Africa and the Sahel are economically underdeveloped. Local populations live in poverty and suffer tremendously from the scourge caused by the spread of weapons, conflict and violence. The international community should help the countries concerned to build their capacity for sustainable development to allow more people to enjoy the dividends of development, thereby stemming the problem at its root. By embracing the vision of common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security, all countries should remain committed to the peaceful settlement of disputes and resort to dialogue and consultation to collectively address global and regional security threats, including war and conflict, terrorism and organized crime.

Secondly, the countries concerned should take on greater responsibility. States should assume the primary responsibility for the management, research and development, use and transfer of small arms and light weapons, improve relevant laws and regulations and enhance law enforcement and control. In particular, major arms exporting countries should set a good example by strictly managing their military exports and should stop interfering in the internal affairs of other countries through the arms trade, stop pouring fuel on the fire in conflict-affected areas and stop transferring arms to non-State actors. The lax gun control and severe gun violence problems of a certain developed country have not only jeopardized its own social stability and the safety and security of its own people but has also caused growing spillover effects. That also spells major trouble for other countries. That

country needs to seriously reflect on that issue and change its course of action.

Thirdly, the Council's arms embargo measures should be viewed accurately and implemented. Haitian gangs are rampant and are inextricably linked to the illicit inflows of foreign weapons. All countries, especially those in the region, should effectively implement the Council's arms embargo so as to cut off the source of crimes committed by Haitian gangs. At the same time, the Council's arms embargo is meant to help the country concerned restore national stability and normal social order and should not impede the country's capacity-building efforts. The Council should make targeted adjustments to its arms embargo measures in the light of the developments on the ground so as to help the Governments of the countries concerned bolster their security capacities.

Fourthly, the United Nations should play its role as the main channel for addressing these issues. The United Nations should continue to promote the implementation of international legal instruments, including the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects; the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) and the Firearms Protocol and should enhance the authority, universality and effectiveness of relevant mechanisms. The Council should continue to monitor the impact of small arms and light weapons on regional hotspot issues and provide political support for the peaceful settlement of disputes between the countries concerned. Relevant United Nations agencies and regional organizations can, on the basis of respect for the wishes of the countries concerned, carry out information exchanges, experience-sharing and technical assistance to help them strengthen capacity-building.

As a State party to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects and the ATT, China has always actively participated in the governance of the global arms trade and has taken a prudent and responsible approach towards arms exports. China has defined cooperation in small arms and light weapons control and the implementation of the Silencing the Guns in Africa initiative as key areas of cooperation under the Global Security Initiative. We have been working hand in hand with other countries under the framework of the United Nations, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the United Nations peace

and development trust fund. Also, China has concluded the legal procedures for the ratification of the Firearms Protocol and will submit its instrument of accession shortly. All that reflects China's determination and sincerity in upholding the international arms control system and supporting multilateralism.

In his New Agenda for Peace, Secretary-General Guterres called for reducing the human cost of weapons. Addressing the issue of small arms and light weapons is a long-term task and an important mission for the international community. Following the concept of building community with a shared future for humankind and acting on the Global Security Initiative and the Global Development Initiative, China has been working to combat the illicit trafficking, misuse and irresponsible transfer of small arms and light weapons, thus contributing to the maintenance of international peace and stability and the realization of common security for all.

**Mr. Biang** (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): I commend Ecuador for taking the initiative to convene this important open debate. I thank High Representative Izumi Nakamitsu for her informative briefing. I also thank Ms. Cécile Aptel and Ms. Folade Mutota for their important contributions to this debate.

The combination of crises in several regions of the world has led us to place arms proliferation issues once again at the forefront of international security concerns.

The distressing massive armament being seen in areas plagued by chronic cycles of conflict and tension is reviving the fears of civilian populations and the traumas experienced during the two World Wars. A subregion such as Central Africa is today infested by hundreds of armed groups who are taking control of whole swathes of States' territory and committing an increasing number of atrocities against civilian populations.

The mapping of armed groups attests to the clear link between their deployment and their control over natural resources. The illicit exploitation of natural resources, together with human trafficking, kidnapping for ransom and drug trafficking, is a major source of financing for terrorism and transnational crime in Africa.

A genuine new illicit triangular trade is linking, before our eyes, Africa, as an exporter of raw materials, to countries that export weapons and mercenaries through countries that offer parallel financial arrangements. In



addition, armed and terrorist groups have progressively set up supply channels for various types of resources to better finance themselves. Consequently, underground criminal economies have been established in certain parts of States' territories and in cross-border areas.

As a result of the proliferation of small arms and the predation of natural resources, conflicts are self-perpetuating and the revenues derived from trafficking in natural resources is enabling the purchase of weapons and the recruitment of militias. Moreover, an armed and criminal economy is being organized on the basis of wild species of flora and fauna, coltan, gold and tin, as well as child labour. That parallel economy is being run by armed gangs, security companies, buyers, brokers and clandestine exporters, with regional and international repercussions.

Beyond today's debate, the Security Council must take a more serious look at the alarming situation affecting several regions of the African continent. There is a need for urgent solutions to adequately deal with the bloodshed and hardship caused by the financing of armed and terrorist groups. The scale of the task requires a multidimensional response involving both security and development.

We must identify the grey zones of the criminal economy and their links with the official economy. It is essential to identify the networks of companies, armies, transporters, arms dealers and traffickers, banks, illegal financial networks and the wide array of intermediaries, including companies that enjoy respectability via a veneer of legitimacy. Above all, it is imperative that the assets of the armed groups and nebulous terrorist groups that are plaguing Africa be tracked with the same rigour as international terrorist groups, by using the full range of counter-terrorism financing mechanisms, both at the level of supply chains and with regard to end buyers. The strengthening of cross-border security cooperation through joint regional operations, the exchange of financial information among countries, combating environmental crime, the freezing of assets, extrajudicial cooperation, countering the illicit circulation of small arms and light weapons and combating money laundering are all measures that must be implemented in a coordinated manner at regional and global levels.

It is of paramount importance that we encourage the coordination of programmes of action and the various peacebuilding actors by creating a positive dynamic and overcoming political divisions, conflicts of interest

and hidden agendas in order to build consensus on shared standards and actions in conflict prevention and peacebuilding. Gabon calls on the Security Council to strengthen its mechanisms for cracking down on networks financing armed groups in Africa and fully supports the efforts and advocacy of the African Union Peace and Security Council at this critical time, when the continent is vulnerable to the growing number of armed groups, attacks by terrorist groups and other asymmetric threats to peace and security.

The increasing level of awareness of this issue on the part of the international community and its ongoing hope to control, if not halt, the circulation of weapons of war must be encouraged. That hope has led to the adoption of relevant multilateral and regional disarmament instruments, culminating in the adoption of the Arms Trade Treaty in 2013. In addition to taking stock of recent major events, we must assess their implications, consider possible responses available to the international community and draw from the lessons learned from successive crises in order to step up the fight against the proliferation of small arms, as most crises of the recent past and current crises are fuelled by gaps in the international non-proliferation system. The seriousness of the current situation augurs a critical phase for international security, with the risk of seeing true proliferation having even greater destructive consequences, entailing the major threat to international security of further international destabilization, which is likely to lead to a markedly broader unstable strategic landscape and a spike in and increased resilience of the global terrorist threat.

The increase in tensions among the poles of influence and the insatiable quest for hegemony additionally complicate the control and regulation of the circulation of arms and exert significant pressure on fragile States in terms of securing their arms stockpiles. More than ever, the fight against arms proliferation must be a top priority of the global security agenda. The Council must ensure that the authority and effectiveness of the relevant international instruments are strengthened. The Council has the mandate to promote the universality and full implementation of treaties, while taking cooperative action to prevent the trafficking in arms and their means of delivery.

The international community must show that it is united in its action, overcome differences between the strategic interests of States or groups of States, and take practical measures to strengthen each of the existing

frameworks in order to ensure that States adhere more firmly to the entire gamut of commitments on the non-proliferation of weapons, in particular light weapons. Our course of action must be reinforced by requiring traceability measures for conventional weapons and pairing the violation of international non-proliferation commitments with adequately dissuasive sanctions. The Security Council must make it a rule to take action automatically whenever it determines that such a violation has been committed. The Security Council should also take the principled position of underscoring the seriousness of such acts, while specifying the range of measures or sanctions it might consequently be called upon to impose.

I would like to conclude by emphasizing the urgent need for the Council to act with greater determination to cut off financing for armed groups, which is fuelling instability and violence in various regions of the world, and the need to dispel the impression that any breach or violation of the small arms non-proliferation regime would have no consequences for their authors.

**Mrs. Shino (Japan):** I thank you, Sir, for convening today's important open debate. My appreciation also goes to the briefers for their insightful briefings.

The illicit trade and diversion of small arms and light weapons, sometimes described as *de facto* weapons of mass destruction, pose a clear threat to international peace and security. As the recent report of the Secretary-General (S/2023/823) confirms, the illicit transfer and misuse of small arms and light weapons have continued to initiate, exacerbate and sustain armed conflict, pervasive violence and acts of crime and terrorism, hindering sustainable peace and development.

Japan has been working closely with international partners to better address the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. Since 2001, Japan, together with Colombia and South Africa, has been playing the leading role in introducing annual General Assembly draft resolutions on the issue. This year's resolution (General Assembly resolution 78/46), adopted by consensus last week, reaffirmed the determination of the international community to continue to strengthen efforts through 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 its International Tracing Instrument. We look forward to further discussions to achieve a

successful outcome at its Review Conference scheduled for next year.

In addition, Japan has been a proactive contributor to the Saving Lives Entity trust facility, which has been operating in Africa and Latin America and assists Member States in addressing illicit small arms and light weapons. Japan also welcomes the successful completion of this year's session of the Open-Ended Working Group on Conventional Ammunition in June and the recent adoption of the General Assembly resolution entitled "Through-life conventional ammunition management" (General Assembly resolution 78/47), which endorses the historic establishment of the Global Framework for Through-life Conventional Ammunition Management.

Japan urges all Member States to effectively and seriously implement agreements and commitments related to the control and disarmament of conventional weapons. In that context, the Arms Trade Treaty is a landmark agreement to regulate international trade in conventional arms. Japan calls on all Member States that have not yet done so to join the Treaty.

No support should be given to a State that is violating international law, including the Charter of the United Nations. All Member States should refrain from supporting Russia's aggression against Ukraine, either directly or indirectly. It would be particularly unacceptable if support were rendered in violation of existing Security Council resolutions. We have confirmed that several arms transfers from North Korea to Russia have been completed, which directly violates the relevant Security Council resolutions. Such transfers are absolutely unacceptable, and they not only exacerbate the situation in Ukraine, but also severely undermine the non-proliferation regime, which we all must value and uphold. In addition, Japan is deeply concerned about the potential of any transfer of equipment or technology to North Korea.

Last but not least, we must promote the full, equal and meaningful participation of women through the women and peace and security agenda. Women's leadership should be emphasized in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation. We call for further international efforts and action to advance gender mainstreaming in decision-making and policymaking processes in addressing the issue of small arms and light weapons.

**Mrs. Baeriswyl (Switzerland)** (*spoke in French*): I thank the briefers for their presentations.

The modest sum of \$130 is enough to buy an AK-47 assault rifle in Afghanistan, as Lynne O'Donnell reports in *Foreign Policy*. That amount attests to the current widespread availability of small arms and light weapons that are fuelling the ravages caused by their illicit trade and misuse. The flow of weapons is both a source and symptom of conflicts.

As the Secretary-General points out, it continues to “undermine peace and security at the national, regional and global levels, derailing States from their paths towards sustainable development.” (S/2023/823, para.2) In particular, it stands in the way of ending all forms of discrimination, which is one of the objectives of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. That is underlined by the fact that small arms and light weapons are used in 70 to 90 per cent of cases of conflict-related sexual violence. Switzerland welcomes Ecuador's emphasis on gender aspects in today's debate and stresses the positive role that the Council can play in curbing the harmful effects of small arms.

First, our commitment to dealing with small arms and light weapons at both the multilateral and national levels must take account of the women and peace and security agenda. The recommendations of the Women, Peace and Security Focal Points Network can inspire the Council's action. That involves, for example, providing better training for senior personnel, strengthening national legislation and encouraging ongoing engagement with civil society. Within the Informal Expert Group on Women, Peace and Security, led jointly by Switzerland, we are also committed to improving the recording of cases of weapons misuse.

Secondly, implementing embargoes adopted by the Council is crucial to curbing the illicit trade in light weapons. Resolution 2616 (2021) established important milestones, particularly through its recommendations on the marking, tracing and registration of weapons in accordance with established standards. The Council should encourage States to consider the risks of violating international law that the use of such weapons could entail. That also implies considering the risk of their being used in the commission of severe acts of sexual violence.

Thirdly, while the supply of weapons must be reduced, the root causes of the demand for them must also be addressed. That is why the New Agenda for Peace proposes integrating the subject of small arms into violence prevention strategies. With that in mind, Switzerland co-organized a regional seminar in

West Africa last week on the links between violence prevention and the management of conventional weapons. One of the key recommendations was on ensuring the participation of women in weapons management and violence prevention. Filling judicial and security gaps so that transnational organized crime cannot exploit them is fundamental to limiting demand. The missions mandated by the Council must have the capacity needed to support States in that task. The components of United Nations missions — such as the United Nations police, and the judicial and penitentiary services that develop the capacities of bodies responsible for maintaining public order and the rule of law — should be strengthened, particularly during transitions.

Switzerland welcomes the New Agenda for Peace and the Global Framework for Through-life Conventional Ammunition Management — adopted by the General Assembly last week in its resolution 78/47 — which recognize the harmful and disproportionate impact on women of the illicit trade and misuse of small arms and light weapons. The time has come to focus on implementation. The actors of international Geneva, such as the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, the Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance and the Small Arms Survey, will remain committed to supporting the development of concrete and effective measures to sustainably reduce the human cost of these weapons.

**Mr. Wood** (United States of America): I thank all of today's briefers for their efforts to call attention to the detrimental effects that the diversion and illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons have on international peace and security.

Responsible State use of conventional weapons contributes to global and regional security and stability and has a direct impact on several other areas of concern for the Council, including our efforts related to counter-terrorism. However, in the wrong hands, those tools threaten the global disarmament apparatus and the protection of civilians, while also having a disproportionate impact on women and children. The United States is therefore grateful to be part of a strong global coalition actively engaged on the issue. The current framework of instruments at the global and regional levels, such as the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and its complementary International Tracing Instrument,

offers a range of measures to reduce the risks posed by illicitly trafficked small arms and light weapons and related ammunition. The challenge facing us is how to improve their implementation. In 2022, at the eighth Biennial Meeting of States on the Programme of Action, numerous Member States and the Office for Disarmament Affairs underscored the problem of uneven implementation. The Security Council has similarly undertaken a number of general and conflict-specific measures over the years that continue to be critical to addressing the issue of small arms and light weapons. But the same principle applies. All Member States must be working towards full implementation for the Council's resolutions to be effective in this arena.

United Nations reporting on the implementation of arms embargoes has helped to identify areas in which the diversion and illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons fuels conflict. For example, through its resolution 2700 (2023), the Council adopted a territorial arms embargo designed to prevent violent gang leaders in Haiti from trafficking small arms and light weapons with impunity. Thanks to Member States' cooperation with the Panel of Experts of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2653 (2022) concerning Haiti, the Committee has just been able to designate four gang leaders.

Unfortunately, the issue of small arms and light weapons has an impact on every region. As we consider other conflicts in need of the Council's attention on the issue, the United States looks forward to working with all Council members to address the illicit sale, transfer and diversion of arms to Myanmar, in order to prevent further violations of international humanitarian law and violations and abuses of human rights. Regular reporting by the Sanctions Committees' panels is an integral component of our efforts, and we urge all member States to support their work.

Turning to the issue of ammunition, the United States actively participated in the Open-ended Working Group on Conventional Ammunition and endorsed its final report and its recommendations for establishing the Global Framework for Through-life Conventional Ammunition Management. Those efforts make it clear that Member States remain committed to the goal of reducing the risks created by the diversion of ammunition into the hands of unauthorized recipients, such as terrorist groups and criminal organizations.

The issue of small arms and light weapons, as its own Security Council agenda item, is not raised

frequently. But we cannot talk about counter-terrorism without discussing the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. We cannot talk about children and armed conflict without discussing the diversion of small arms and light weapons and their ammunition. And we cannot talk about women and peace and security without discussing how the effects of the diversion and illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons are felt acutely by women and girls. Indeed, several reports by the Secretary-General have noted that illicit small arms and light weapons have been used to facilitate conflict-related sexual violence. The issue clearly continues to prevent peace and development across many Council priorities and instead fuels conflict in many regions of the world.

The United States looks forward to working with all Member States to carry out its commitment to combating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and related ammunition, and it is prepared to assist with implementation.

**Mr. Afonso** (Mozambique): Mozambique would like to commend the Ecuadorian presidency for convening this timely and important open debate. We thank the briefers, Under-Secretary-General Nakamitsu, Ms. Aptel and Ms. Mutota, for their thoughtful and pertinent contributions to the debate.

Mozambique welcomed the Security Council's adoption of resolution 2117 (2013), on small arms and light weapons, including their illicit transfer, destabilizing accumulation and misuse. The central objective is to address our concerns about the serious threat to peace and security posed by the misuse of small arms and light weapons. We are aware that the proliferation of such weapons, coupled with the unauthorized transfer and misuse of their ammunition, continues to fuel conflicts, sustain criminal activities and undermine the very foundations of safety and stability around the world. The devastating consequences of those activities are felt within our societies and local communities, causing immense suffering and gross human rights violations and hindering our development efforts.

We remain deeply concerned about the threats posed by the illicit trafficking and misuse of small arms and light weapons and their links to transnational organized crime, such as trafficking in arms and drugs, terrorism and money laundering, among others. The perpetrators of those criminal and unlawful activities are exploiting weak border controls and corruption, thus contributing



to the illegal circulation of weapons and the expansion of criminal networks across countries and regions.

We are of the view that in order to address the threats posed by small arms and light weapons, there is a need for robust cooperation in the implementation of the existing regional, subregional and international instruments adopted to that end. We note that positive steps are being taken on the African continent in that respect. We would like to highlight the African Union Strategy on the Control of Illicit Proliferation, Circulation and Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons. The core objective of the Strategy is to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit proliferation, circulation and trafficking of small arms and light weapons in an integrated and holistic manner across all regions of Africa. It is our belief that cooperation must also include intelligence-sharing and enforcement measures to disrupt and dismantle networks engaged in the illegal trade of small arms and light weapons. In that regard, in September 2002, Mozambique ratified the Southern African Development Community Protocol on the Control of Firearms, Ammunition and Other Related Materials and became a State party to the Arms Trade Treaty in June 2018.

I would like to report that on the national front, Mozambique has undertaken successful disarmament initiatives such as Operation Rachel, in collaboration with the Government of South Africa, and the Transforming Weapons into Tools project, led by civil society and aimed at exchanging weapons for farming tools. In addition, the Government of Mozambique has also been holding public-awareness campaigns, in which the relevant legislation and strategies and measures to tackle the scourge of small arms and light weapons are explained and discussed with society and local communities.

In our action, Mozambique is also guided by the Silencing the Guns in Africa flagship initiative of the African Union's Agenda 2063. In that context, we reiterate our firm commitment to the prevention of and fight against the illicit trafficking and misuse of small arms and light weapons and their ammunition in our country, in Africa and worldwide.

**Mr. Polyanskiy** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Under-Secretary-General Izumi Nakamitsu, Deputy Director of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research Cécile Aptel and Executive Director of the Women's Institute

for Alternative Development Folade Mutota, for their briefings.

The situation in the world clearly demonstrates the importance of controlling transfers of conventional arms and military-use goods, including small arms and light weapons. The risks of the proliferation and illicit trafficking of those weapons, and of them falling into the hands of terrorists and criminals, are growing every day. Small arms and light weapons remain one of the most widely used forms of weapons in regional and local conflicts. Of all weapons, they cause the highest number of human casualties resulting from their use in combat. Terrorist and criminal groups are constantly expanding and improving their illegal arsenals of small arms and light weapons, and they are trying to realize their criminal objectives primarily in regions and countries with unstable military and political situations. Ultimately, the main victims of that are the civilian population. That is clearly evident in the examples of countries in various regions of the world — in Africa, Latin America and the Middle East.

Among the factors contributing to the uncontrolled proliferation of small arms and light weapons are the excessively liberal national legislation in that area and persistent gaps and breaches in national export-control regimes. Often, international transfers of small arms and light weapons benefit non-State actors who have not received the necessary authorization from their Governments. Often, in the pursuit of profit, or even political expediency, the supplier does not think about where and for what purposes their shipment of small arms and light weapons will be used and in whose hands it will end up. Moreover, the numerous brokerage structures operating in the market do not demonstrate the necessary responsibility. States that have accumulated excessive stocks of small arms and light weapons are also not always selective enough with their small arms and light weapons supply. For them, selling their surplus is a profitable alternative means for their disposal.

The manufacturing of small arms and light weapons under expired licenses or without any licenses at all from the countries that own the relevant technologies continues to be a serious problem. Those weapons, as a rule, are exported to third countries, and the facts of such deliveries are carefully concealed. That lack of transparency objectively creates a risk of flows of weapons to undesirable end-users, including terrorists, illegal armed groups and organized criminal groups, as

well as to countries that are subject to Security Council arms embargoes. We believe that all those problems require the closest attention.

The Russian Federation has always paid considerable attention to the issue of control over the supply of military-use goods, including small arms and light weapons. We are consistently strengthening our national legislation in that area and are ready to share our experience in that regard. We support relevant regional initiatives in Africa and Latin America.

Regarding the United Nations efforts in this area, the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects remains the only specialized global document on combating illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons. We are frankly surprised that the concept note for today's meeting (S/2023/954, annex), prepared by the Ecuadorian presidency, pays very little attention to the Programme of Action, especially in the context of the outcomes of the very successful meeting of the eighth Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action, held in 2022, and the Review Conference of the Programme of Action to be held next year.

A similar situation can be seen in the report of the Secretary-General on small arms and light weapons that was referred to today (S/2023/823), which includes unrelated initiatives alongside the Programme of Action. There are serious doubts about a number of the report's recommendations, including those that have nothing to do with the subject of small arms and light weapons, such as recognizing sexual violence as a standalone criterion for the imposition of all targeted sanctions regimes.

We believe firmly that State efforts to strengthen control over the circulation of small arms and light weapons should be aimed at building cooperation in the framework of the Programme of Action under the auspices of the General Assembly. It is simply superfluous to initiate discussions on the subject in the Security Council in the absence of a connection to specific violations of a Council embargo on the supply of weapons to individual countries and regions. That issue is dealt with effectively and very productively within the relevant Sanctions Committees.

My country has consistently proposed specific measures that could facilitate the practical realization of joint efforts to stop the illegal trade in small arms

and light weapons. They include introducing a universal ban on the transfer of all forms of small arms and light weapons to actors not authorized by the Governments of the recipient States; ensuring the strict regulation and direct control by States on territory under their jurisdiction of brokerage activities related to arms exports and limiting the number of such brokers as much as possible; introducing a strict prohibition on the re-export or subsequent transfer of imported small arms and light weapons without the written consent of the State that first exported them, meaning that having end-user certificates would be mandatory for arms export deals; and preventing the manufacture of small arms and light weapons on expired licences or without a licence from a country possessing the technology for its manufacture, including stopping the practice whereby countries that previously produced weapons under licence modify them slightly without the developer's consent and then export them as their own product. However, the Russian Federation believes essentially that it is the sovereign prerogative of States to manage the circulation and stocks of small arms and light weapons, determine standards for ensuring their physical security, marking, accounting and inventorying, and decide on the methods and technology needed to destroy surplus arms.

With regard to the calls for strengthening the role of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), which entered into force in 2014, we feel obliged to point out that as an instrument it is extremely weak and simply not able to fully achieve its stated aims. For example, it does not contain direct prohibitions on the unlicensed manufacture of weapons or the transfer of weapons to non-State actors. It does not include provisions regulating the re-export process for goods intended for military use, which means that the risk of weapons falling into the hands of criminals or terrorists remains. There are very serious questions about the application of the ATT in practice. There is a bitter irony in the fact that some States that are party to it continue to directly or indirectly supply military-use goods to conflict zones, resulting in an entirely self-contradictory situation. On the one hand, we are urged to accede to the Treaty, while on the other we are essentially being led to understand that its standards can be interpreted extremely selectively.

In that context, we cannot omit to draw the Council's attention to a subject that we have been regularly addressing in the context of the events in Ukraine. Russia has repeatedly convened the Council to discuss the harmful consequences of flooding the

Kyiv regime with arms, in violation of obligations related to the control of military-use goods. The risks that this creates are not specifically linked to the area of our special military operation but are rather relevant to large parts of the world. Western countries continue to supply Ukraine with arms, despite the fact that its leadership is simply unable to control the consignments and arsenals sent to it. Let me remind the Council how ammunition with the markings of a military unit from the Armed Forces of Ukraine based in Mukachevo in Zakarpattia oblast ended up on the border with Israel, as a result of which the Ukrainian security services, having come to their senses, conducted searches and made a number of arrests.

That is far from the only example of how arms supplied to Ukraine, including small arms and light weapons, end up on the black market, to the delight of terrorist and criminal groups around the world. That was mentioned more than a year ago by President Muhammadu Buhari of Nigeria, who reported that his country's authorities had found weapons intended for the Armed Forces of Ukraine in the hands of extremists there. However, that is no surprise, given how profitable this dangerous business is for the United States and its allies. Their desire to fight to the last Ukrainian is simply being driven by the financial gain they are deriving from it.

Against that backdrop, we would like to remind the Council that the Arms Trade Treaty signatories and the countries of the European Union are obliged to prevent the weapons that they supply from being used to create threats to international peace, security and stability, violations of international humanitarian law, the commission of acts of violence, the escalation of armed conflicts, the commission of repression and genocide, and so on. However, contrary to those principles, Western countries have continued to supply weapons to a regime that has been using them to carry out attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure for many years. We have repeatedly presented the Security Council with evidence of those facts, including material evidence, while the accusations that we have heard in the Council against Russia and other countries of supplying military-use goods in violation of Council resolutions have not been supported by any convincing arguments. By all accounts, Western countries are not yet ready to refrain from the harmful practice of flooding Kyiv with weapons, despite the damage it is clearly doing to their reputation in the world. The current tragic situation for Ukraine, which they worked for many years to create, is too useful to

them. In any case, Russia is entirely capable of repelling any of the weapons being used against it. However, we hope that the overwhelming majority of Member States realize who really bears the responsibility for violating international agreements in that area.

**Mrs. Frazier** (Malta): At the outset, I thank Ecuador for convening this important open debate. I would also like to thank Under-Secretary-General Nakamitsu, Ms. Aptel and Ms. Mutota for their insightful briefings.

Today's discussion comes at a time of heightened geopolitical tensions, escalating armed conflicts and widespread violence. At this pivotal moment, we must not forget that small arms and light weapons are the second most prevalent cause of civilian casualties in conflict-related situations. As the data shows, the illicit trade and misuse of those weapons pose a clear and direct threat to international peace and security. We are encouraged by the Council's active consideration of the item, as demonstrated by its inclusion of language on the negative effects of those weapons in multiple resolutions, including on Haiti and Libya. Weapons and ammunition management have also been integrated into the work of peace operations. In that regard, we welcome the mandate given to the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan to support regional and international efforts to tackle the illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons from and into the country.

Council-mandated arms embargoes are a crucial tool for addressing the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. The Council recognized that when it adopted resolution 2616 (2021) with a view to addressing violations of those embargoes. While we welcome these efforts, we are also concerned about the fact that circumventions of arms embargoes continue to be documented in several countries. We call on all Member States to cooperate with the Sanctions Committees' panels of experts and to ensure that adequate legislation and measures are in place to trace these weapons. We also urge the Security Council to include sexual violence as a stand-alone designation criterion in all targeted sanctions regimes.

The Secretary-General's report (S/2023/823) highlights that the misuse of small arms and light weapons contributes to violations of international humanitarian law and to violations and abuses of international human rights law, including by terrorist groups that can have close links to transnational organized criminal groups. The illicit trade in small

arms and light weapons often serves as an enabler of such mutually reinforcing relationships. This multifaceted issue cannot be solved by arms embargoes alone. As the Secretary-General emphasizes in his New Agenda for Peace, we need holistic and whole-of-society approaches. We echo his call for the issue to be considered as part of broader development efforts.

Arms control and disarmament are at the heart of the women and peace and security agenda. We welcome the call for a report on the implementation of resolutions 2242 (2015) and 2122 (2013). That would help to outline measures and identify best practices to minimize the negative impacts of arms transfers and illicit trafficking on conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence. We must also ensure the full, equal, meaningful and safe participation of women and the integration of gender equality concerns in the field of small arms and light weapons control.

Conventional arms, including small arms and light weapons, also play a clear role in facilitating grave violations against children. These include their killing and maiming and attacks on schools and hospitals. Such interlinkages must be considered and addressed throughout the Council's work.

In conclusion, I reiterate that Malta remains fully committed to all efforts aimed at addressing that collective challenge, including through the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. We reaffirm our full support for the Arms Trade Treaty and will continue to work through the European Union's small arms and light weapons strategy, including its assistance programmes. The Council has acknowledged that those weapons are a major driver of conflict and a threat to international peace and security. It is now time to take decisive action to ensure that all embargoes and legislation are respected.

**Mr. Olmedo** (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank the briefers for their presentations.

The illicit trafficking and uncontrolled dissemination of small arms and light weapons, as well as their ammunition, remain one of the most serious threats to peace and security. Those phenomena aggravate conflicts and fuel terrorism and organized crime. They undermine peacebuilding efforts and encourage armed violence, particularly against women. That is why France fully supports the call launched by

the Secretary-General in his New Agenda for Peace to reduce the human cost of those weapons. Achieving that objective requires a common effort in which the Security Council must be an active participant.

The Security Council must continue to implement embargo measures when necessary. As the representative of the United States recalled, the adoption of resolution 2699 (2023) made it possible to expand the embargo regime in Haiti by prohibiting the supply, sale and transfer of weapons to criminal groups who undermine the stability of that country. The Council must ensure, with the support of its groups of experts, the effective implementation of those measures.

The Council must also integrate, where appropriate, issues related to small arms and light weapons into the mandates it entrusts to peacekeeping operations and special political missions. Those mandates must include cooperation with local authorities to prevent the excessive accumulation, diversion or illicit trafficking of those weapons. That is provided for in resolution 2687 (2023), for example, in the case of Somalia. It requires a political commitment from the States concerned to strengthen the management of arms and ammunition stocks and to improve the governance of security forces.

The Council must also continue its efforts to prevent terrorist groups from both accessing weapons and exploiting illicit trafficking in weapons to finance their operations.

The Council must urge States to sign on to and implement the relevant international instruments in the fight against illicit trafficking and the prevention of diversion. In that regard, France reaffirms its support for the Arms Trade Treaty, the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition, and the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and its International Tracing Instrument. France also welcomes the adoption by the General Assembly a few days ago of a new Global Framework for Through-life Conventional Ammunition Management (General Assembly resolution 78/47).

We can further respond at the regional and subregional levels to the threats posed by the dissemination and illicit trafficking of small arms and their ammunition. In



that regard, France supports the ambition of the African Union to silence the guns by 2030.

Finally, again at the regional level and as was mentioned by the representative of Albania, France also supports, together with Germany and other partners, the implementation in the Western Balkans of the regional road map aimed at reducing the illegal possession and trafficking of weapons.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than four minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously. Flashing lights on the collars of the microphones will prompt speakers to bring their remarks to a close after four minutes.

I now give the floor to the representative of Ukraine.

**Ms. Hayovyshyn** (Ukraine): We thank Mrs. Nakamitsu, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, for presenting the report of the Secretary-General on small arms and light weapons (SALW) (S/2023/823) and the other briefers for their briefings.

Ukraine remains gravely concerned about the fact that the illicit transfer, destabilizing accumulation and misuse of SALW continue to pose threats to international peace and security, cause significant loss of life and contribute to instability and insecurity in many regions of the world. As indicated in the Secretary-General's report, SALW and their ammunition continue to be used by terrorists to facilitate the commission of human rights abuses. We are specifically concerned that those types of weapons remain one of the main means of grave violations against children and women.

We acknowledge, however, some positive developments in addressing the threat posed by the diversion, illicit trafficking and misuse of SALW and their ammunition, in particular the adoption by the Security Council of resolution 2616 (2021) and the adoption by the General Assembly of the report of the Open-ended Working Group on Conventional Ammunition, which contains the new Global Framework for Through-life Conventional Ammunition Management (see General Assembly resolution 78/47).

Ukraine has been strictly implementing the international instruments in the field of SALW, including Security Council resolutions, the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and its International Tracing Instrument, the decisions

of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Wassenaar Arrangement to comply with our obligations and commitments. In line with that approach, we have established transparent mechanisms for monitoring the use of the weapons and ammunition we receive from international partners to strengthen our country's defence and security capabilities in response to Russia's full-scale invasion. All weapons received by Ukraine from its partners are used precisely to exercise the right of self-defence pursuant to Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations. It speaks volumes that relentless attempts by the aggressor State to disseminate false information about the illegal transfer of weapons to Ukraine have never been substantiated with reliable evidence.

We remain extremely concerned about the activities of private Russian military formations in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine. They widely recruit people with criminal backgrounds in Russia and use weapons that are not subject to any control mechanisms, including internal Russian ones. Given the fact that such formations are reported to operate on other continents as well, the threat of illicit arms trafficking stemming from their activities is very serious and should be addressed by the Council and relevant international mechanisms.

Grave violations of Security Council resolutions, including on arms embargoes, remain another matter of concern. Ukraine has provided clear evidence of the transfer of Iranian uncrewed aerial vehicles to Russia in violation of resolution 2231 (2015) at a time when the relevant restrictions were in place. In addition, Russia has procured over 1 million rounds of ammunition, as well as landmines and other military goods from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in violation of a number of Security Council resolutions.

We reiterate that all States that violate their international legally binding obligations must be held accountable.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Denmark.

**Ms. Lassen** (Denmark): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Nordic countries, namely, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and my own country, Denmark.

Let me start by thanking Ecuador for convening this important meeting and the briefers for their valuable contributions.

The illicit transfer, destabilizing accumulation and misuse of small arms and light weapons continue to initiate, exacerbate and sustain armed conflict and violence at the national, regional and global levels. They derail States from their paths towards sustainable development, facilitate organized crime, impede humanitarian assistance and endanger civilians, including women and children.

As evidenced in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2023/823), things are not improving. On the contrary, we have seen a surge in civilian casualties, and the situation has been further aggravated by the Russian Federation's ongoing illegal, unprovoked and unjustifiable aggression against Ukraine.

As the report suggests, we must step up the control of small arms and light weapons and combat all irresponsible and illegal trade in or use of small arms and light weapons. We must pay special attention to the serious effects of uncontrolled arms flows on children and young people, and we encourage the Security Council to further examine the issue. Illicit flows of small arms and light weapons have far-reaching consequences and seriously hamper economic and social development. As the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development highlights, uncontrolled flows of arms and ammunition are a global development issue that must be addressed in a comprehensive manner, including at the regional, national and local levels. The initiative of the African Union (AU) on silencing the guns, and its operational collaboration with the United Nations, is worth highlighting in that regard. The Nordics are long-standing partners of the AU, and we support that effort.

At the global level, the policy brief of the Secretary-General, *A New Agenda for Peace*, is an important opportunity for renewed action on small arms and light weapons. The Nordic countries welcome the recommendations outlined by the Secretary-General. We are firm supporters of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, as well as of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) and the Treaty's Diversion Information Exchange Forum, in which States parties share information on combating and preventing the diversion of weapons.

As noted in the Secretary-General's report, there is a strong connection between gender-based violence and small arms. Based on the data available, as much as 90 per cent of incidents of conflict-related sexual violence involve small arms and light weapons. That is

only one example of the importance of advancing the integration of gender perspectives and the women and peace and security agenda in our work.

The Nordic countries are long-time supporters of work on restraining small arms and light weapons in a number of countries and regions, including through several United Nations programmes, research institutions, the ATT Voluntary Trust Fund, civil society actors and bilateral cooperation projects, and we will continue our support.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Israel.

**Mr. Miller** (Israel): I would like to commend you, Mr. President, and your delegation for this important and timely debate, and to thank the briefers for their briefings.

Regrettably, small arms and light weapons have been illicitly traded and proliferated throughout the Middle East in colossal quantities for decades. These weapons find their way into the hands of oppressive regimes, terrorist organizations and terrorist-sponsoring States. Today's timely meeting is being held against a backdrop of the 7 October attack in which Hamas stormed into Israel and savagely murdered more than 1,200 people, among them babies, children, women and the elderly. Two hundred and fifty people were brutally taken hostage and 132 of them are still being held in inhumane conditions. As the current investigations show, on 7 October Hamas resorted to gender-based violence and the perpetration of systematic sexual violence as a weapon of war. The nature of the incidents, which were widespread within a very limited time frame, as well as dozens of testimonies, point to the premeditated nature of the attack and to the planning of heinous crimes in advance. They produced an almost unimaginable result — all due to Hamas's acquisition of arms in quantities that exceed those of many national armies around the world. That, together with its murderous jihadist ideology, was behind Hamas's aim to annihilate Israel. And let us not forget that this terrorist group embeds itself in civilian infrastructure and uses schools, hospitals and United Nations facilities as hideouts and launch pads.

Through various resolutions, the Security Council has continually stressed the importance of addressing the illicit trade in and supply of small arms and light weapons to terrorists. Furthermore, in its resolution 77/298, on the eighth review of the United

Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, the General Assembly reaffirmed that Member States should eliminate the supply of weapons and their ammunition to terrorists, as well as preventing, combating and eradicating their illicit trade to terrorists.

The 7 October massacre was not a random attack but rather a calculated and meticulously planned act of war by Hamas — a jihadist terrorist group that has been armed, financed and backed for years by an Islamic regime. When the thousands of Hamas terrorists invaded Israel on 7 October, they carried with them massive amounts of weaponry, which Hamas had stocked and prepared well in advance of its killing spree. AK-47s, anti-personnel fragmentation grenades, rocket-propelled grenades of various kinds, rocket launchers, SA-7 anti-air missiles and many more types of lethal weapons were used to carry out the unprovoked massacre. The arsenal included both improvised self-made weaponry and more advanced arms, likely to have been supplied by Iran. Some of the weapons that were found to have been used by Hamas were manufactured in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The magnitude of the 7 October attack must be remembered forever for the immense damage and loss of life that the proliferation and illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons to terrorists of such rogue regimes can cause.

Among other things, the basic rationale that stands at the core of United Nations disarmament processes and frameworks and in so many United Nations decisions and resolutions is the need to eradicate the diversion of small arms and light weapons to terrorists, which stands in stark contradiction to the root causes that enabled the 7 October attack. In the case of Hamas, not only has the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons not been curbed or stopped, but it has been sponsored or promoted by at least one United Nations Member State. The damage and loss of life due to the proliferation of small arms and light weapons by Iran to its network of terrorists and terror proxies throughout the Middle East — Hamas, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Hizbullah, the Houthis and other militias — is evident and tragic, especially for civilians.

The threat to international maritime security posed by the Houthis nowadays is another evident and strategic consequence. The truth must be clearly stated. The diversion of small arms and light weapons to these terrorist groups is not only a problem for Israel or just a growing challenge in the Middle East, but rather a

global threat. Preventing the diversion of small arms and light weapons to terrorist organizations must remain a part of any future strategy or initiative of the Security Council. The international community must find a comprehensive strategy to combat this dangerous trend and hold the regimes responsible to account. If we do not act together now, the results will be nothing short of disastrous for us all.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Mexico.

**Mr. Ochoa Martínez** (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, we would like to thank Ecuador for convening today's open debate and the briefers for their briefings.

Mexico believes it is particularly important that the Security Council continue to closely examine the adverse consequences of the trafficking and diversion of weapons, especially when these have a direct impact on the situations that the Council must address. The most recent report of the Secretary-General (S/2023/823) confirms a worrisome reality with regard to arms flows, most of which violate the Council's sanctions. We appreciate the fact that the report includes the relevant provisions of resolution 2616 (2021), which my country promoted at the end of 2021. We also acknowledge that the concept note (see S/2023/954) for today's debate uses that resolution as a reference framework. There can be no question that illicit and unregulated flows of arms and ammunition, including those that violate Council embargoes, exacerbate conflict and armed violence and increase the suffering of civilians as a result. More worrisome still are the high rates of gender-based violence that result from the high availability of weapons.

We reiterate that it is the responsibility of all States, but especially manufacturing States, to strengthen the existing international frameworks to ensure effective through-life arms and ammunition management. Negligent practices by exporting companies, lax export controls and a lack of marking and tracing perpetuate the vicious cycles that the Security Council is attempting to address. Mexico therefore urges the Council to support and strengthen our shared frameworks in this area, such as the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, the Arms Trade Treaty and other regional initiatives, strategies and action plans. And to ensure that strategies are truly comprehensive, a gender perspective must be incorporated.

Resolution 2616 (2021) is clear on the need for capacity-building and for providing assistance to States suffering from the scourges of the trafficking and diversion of arms. It also calls for greater collaboration among States, including regional cooperation on land and sea and in the air. We call for those provisions be enforced.

It is imperative that, when the Council adopts and renews mandates of peacekeeping operations, it consider how such operations could support national authorities in monitoring the implementation of arms embargoes, detecting sources of illicit weapons and tracing seized weapons. States must also support sanctions committees' groups of experts so that they can inspect seized military equipment that has been illegally transferred in violation of embargoes. We fully support the recommendations made by the Secretary-General in his latest report (S/2023/823), in particular his call for the full integration of the consideration of weapons and ammunition into the work of the Council.

In conclusion, I reiterate the warning that my country made last week already in this Chamber (see S/PV.9497), which is not to establish an automatic link between transnational organized crime and terrorist or violent extremist groups. Although both scourges have been fuelled and sustained by the high availability of weapons, they are two phenomena that have their own legal frameworks and forums in being dealt with within in the Organization.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to Mrs. Samson.

**Mrs. Samson:** I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its Member States.

The candidate countries Türkiye, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Albania, Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Bosnia and Herzegovina and, for the first time, Georgia, as candidate country, as well as Andorra and San Marino, align themselves with this statement.

Allow me to convey our gratitude to Ecuador as President of the Security Council for December for today's open debate and also to thank the Secretary-General for his latest report (S/2023/823) on this important topic.

The diversion, illicit trafficking and misuse of small arms and light weapons and their ammunition contribute to instability and violence. Illicit small arms continue to destabilize entire regions, States and

their communities, thwarting sustainable development and crisis-management efforts. Economic and social development has been impeded because of armed conflicts, in which the availability of small arms and light weapons has played a significant negative role. Small arms and light weapons are the leading cause of violent deaths globally. Most armed conflicts today are fought with those weapons in civil wars, organized crime, including drug-related crime, gang violence and terror attacks. Most victims of small arms are civilians. Those weapons are cheap and easy to operate. New technologies, such as 3-D printing, contribute to the illicit manufacturing and diversion of small arms and light weapons. The widespread availability of such weapons and their ammunition are a key enabler of conflict.

The EU has long been a strong supporter of multilateral efforts to tackle illicit small arms proliferation. The EU is actively promoting 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. We consider the Programme of Action as an effective framework for States to address the diversion, illicit trade and unauthorized use of such weapons.

The EU systematically mainstreams gender considerations in the design of new initiatives relating to small arms and light weapons control. Integrating a gender perspective within legislative and policy frameworks increases the success and effectiveness of such interventions. The EU supports the activities of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs to advance the implementation of the Programme of Action and its International Tracing Instrument. It will be important that the upcoming fourth Review Conference of the Programme of Action include a gender-sensitive approach to small arms and light weapons control and acknowledge the differing impacts of armed violence on women, men, girls and boys, as well as promote a strong role for women and gender mainstreaming in control actions for such weapons. Furthermore, the EU promotes the implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty, including article 7, related to gender-based violence. The adoption by the General Assembly of the Global Framework for Through-life Conventional Ammunition Management (General Assembly resolution 78/47) will further strengthen this approach.

As a responsible international actor, the EU has strong safeguards in place against the threat of the



diversion of small arms and light weapons, wherever necessary. The EU's approach seeks not only to contribute to efforts to address the problem at the multilateral level, but also to support efforts by other regions. As one of the leading donors in the area, we have in recent years increased the scope and scale of our international assistance for other regions, including in Latin America and the Caribbean and the Western Balkans. Since 2018, the EU has contributed to a road map in the Western Balkans aimed at strengthening the control of small arms and light weapons, ammunition and explosives.

In conclusion, we believe that the New Agenda for Peace provides an opportunity for renewed, comprehensive action on the control of small weapons and light weapons, including by the Security Council. In that regard, we need to promote synergies across the various United Nations initiatives in the area to better use the tools we have in order to maximize outcomes.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Egypt.

**Mr. Mahmoud** (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): I have the pleasure of delivering this statement on behalf of the Group of Arab States.

At the outset, we would like to express our sincere appreciation to Ecuador for the efforts made during its presidency of the Security Council for December. We also express our gratitude to Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, for her support for the efforts made by the United Nations to combat the illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons. We took note of her statement as well as the valuable statements of other speakers.

The Arab Group attaches growing importance to the fight against the illicit trafficking and supply of small arms and light weapons, particularly due to the catastrophic repercussions at the security, humanitarian and economic levels caused by an unprecedented increase in the illicit supply of small arms and light weapons in the Arab region.

The Arab Group reiterates its rejection of the actions by some Governments that supply terrorists, illegal armed groups and entities with arms, without obtaining the authorization of the receiving State. Their aim is to prolong armed conflicts and to achieve disruptive political goals that run counter to the basic principles of international law, the Charter of the United Nations

and many Security Council resolutions, the most recent of which is resolution 2370 (2017).

In that context, the Arab Group stresses the importance of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and calls for preserving the value of that Programme of Action as a consensus tool, the primary objectives of which are to build confidence, promote cooperation among States and respond to the security needs of States, while supporting the legitimate rights of States to defend themselves pursuant to the Charter. The Arab Group is committed to the Programme of Action, which is an international framework in itself, and reiterates the need for it to not interfere with the work of any other international mechanisms. It is necessary for the Programme of Action to avoid addressing controversial issues that are not included in its work. The Arab Group looks forward to the convening of the fourth Review Conference of the Programme of Action in 2024.

The Arab Group notes the outcome of the Open-ended Working Group on Conventional Ammunition, which includes measures that can be used by States to voluntarily manage their conventional ammunition. The Arab Group reiterates the need to differentiate between the new framework for conventional ammunition, which is still under experimentation and development, and the Programme of Action.

The Arab Group believes in the importance of promoting international cooperation and assistance, including the transfer of technical expertise to developing countries and providing them with training and modern equipment that will enable them to develop their capacities in the area of tracing and marking of small arms and light weapons, along with monitoring their international borders, without any discriminatory obstacle or interference in their internal affairs, thereby contributing to their efforts to combat the illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons.

The Arab Group commends the Secretary General's New Agenda for Peace, which has addressed the issue of small arms and light weapons, in particular Action 7, on reducing the human cost of weapons, as well as the recommendation on strengthening the protection of civilians in inhabited areas during armed conflict. In that context, the Arab Group condemns the continued brutal Israeli aggression against Gaza for more than two months, which has caused unprecedented humanitarian catastrophe and led to more than 18,000

martyrs and nearly 50,000 people wounded, in addition to 1.9 million displaced civilians in the Gaza Strip. Those statistics disprove any Israeli assertion claiming that Israel is combating terrorist groups or is defending itself. They confirm that what we are currently witnessing constitutes genocide against the Palestinian people and a flagrant violation of international law and international humanitarian law.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Morocco.

**Mr. Kadiri** (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): The Kingdom of Morocco welcomes the holding of this extremely important open debate under your presidency for this month, Sir. We would also like to express our thanks to the briefers for their detailed briefings.

According to the United Nations, small arms and light weapons (SALW) were the second-largest cause of conflict-related civilian deaths in 2022, representing 14 per cent of those deaths. For its part, Africa is facing constant, serious threats as a result of the increased illicit flow and transfer of SALW to terrorist groups, non-State armed groups and criminal organizations. In that context, the Kingdom of Morocco will continue to place the promotion of peace and security in Africa, particularly cooperating in the fight against the illicit trafficking in SALW and the socioeconomic and environmental development of our continent, as part of its national and regional priorities.

Furthermore, under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the links between arms control, peace, human rights and development are recognized, particularly through Goal 16. Unfortunately, the successful tracing of weapons and ammunition remains a major challenge. Available data show that, on average, between 2016 and 2020, only 28 per cent of illicit weapons were traced successfully. Also worth highlighting is the importance of integrating SALW in development efforts. In the same vein, the implementation of complete and multidisciplinary approaches at the national, regional and international levels is essential to promoting the control and regulation of light weapons, while also addressing the political, socioeconomic and cultural reasons behind the proliferation of those weapons. Moreover, the strengthening of regional and international cooperation is crucial to countering the illicit trafficking in SALW in an effective and coordinated manner.

The Kingdom of Morocco supports the work carried out under the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and its International Tracing Instrument. The Kingdom will engage fully and actively in the work of the Programme of Action's Preparatory Committee meeting scheduled to be held in New York from 12 to 16 February 2024. My delegation thanks the Secretary-General for his report on SALW, which was published on 1 November (S/2023/823), and we take good note of the recommendations contained therein aimed at assisting Member States in their efforts to address the threats arising from the misuse of the illicit transfer and destabilizing accumulation of SALW.

Furthermore, Morocco still firmly believes that the Secretary-General's New Agenda for Peace provides an up-to-date and appropriate framework to address the illicit flow of SALW, particularly its three recommendations on that scourge, namely, first, to develop and strengthen the instruments and road maps to address the challenges linked to diversion, proliferation and misuse; secondly, to set national and regional goals and measure progress through data gathering and monitoring; and thirdly, to pursue comprehensive Government strategies that include the control of light weapons in development and conflict-prevention strategies.

Moreover, I would highlight that, in his latest report on SALW, the Secretary-General calls for the Security Council to further consider their impact on violations against children and to look at the resulting links in the relevant resolutions and in the discussions of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, particularly when issuing recommendations on potential measures and actions aimed at protecting children in armed conflicts.

In conclusion, with every passing minute, lives are being lost as a result of the illicit trade in SALW. In addition to the verified devastating consequences, these illicit flows contribute to violations of human rights and hamper development and growth. Morocco will continue to contribute resolutely to international and regional efforts to effectively counter this scourge.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Türkiye.

**Mr. Çetin** (Türkiye): Today's discussion concerns an issue that is crucial to international peace and security on several counts, ranging from terrorism to

transnational organized crime, armed conflicts, gender-based violence and sustainable development.

At the outset, I thank the briefers for sharing their valuable insights. The threat posed by the proliferation of illicit conventional weapons, particularly small arms and light weapons and their ammunition, is a serious concern. Considering the enormous humanitarian toll that they cause, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons deserves no less attention than the dangers posed by weapons of mass destruction.

Türkiye is firmly committed to the effective 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 its International Tracing Instrument. We must ensure those instruments' continued relevance. There is an urgent need to effectively address challenges resulting from recent developments in the marketing, manufacturing, technology and design of those weapons. To that end, we welcome the consecutive successful consensus outcomes achieved at the seventh and eighth Biennial Meeting of States Parties in 2021 and 2022. In the lead-up to the fourth Review Conference, we will be looking forward to continuing our efforts to strengthen international cooperation and capacity-building assistance, as well as to address challenges caused the new developments in small arms and light weapons manufacturing, technology and design.

We also believe that the Security Council can build on its existing body of work in that field. The recommendations in the most recent report of the Secretary-General on small arms and light weapons (S/2023/823) provides a good basis, most notably on the terrorism-arms-crime nexus. Moving forward, we see a need to increase capacity-building assistance to better implement the Programme of Action, as well as effective border and export controls, risk assessments, sharing best practices, transparency and reporting. The Council also has a key role to play in post-conflict settings, as small arms issues can be integrated into peace operation mandates, country-specific resolutions and sanctions regimes.

Türkiye is particularly concerned about the linkage between the illicit trade in small arms and light and terrorism, both as a direct threat to international peace and to Türkiye's own national security. Increasing conflicts in different regions of the world and an ongoing war exacerbate the risk to a great extent. Terrorist groups engage in the illicit trafficking and diversion

of small arms and light and have access to the latest technology, as well as weapons acquired from poorly secured stockpiles and transfers from the illicit market or States themselves. We know all too well that it is innocent people and our societies that pay the price when terrorist groups obtain the means to threaten national security and disrupt socioeconomic development.

Turkish security forces have seized more than 20,000 small arms and light from the Kurdistan Workers' Party/People's Protection Units (PKK/YPG) terrorist organization since 2018. Taking this opportunity, we would like to reiterate our call to all States to refrain from selling, or otherwise transferring, weapons and their delivery means to any terrorist organization. It is also critical that all States take their end-user commitments very seriously and fully implement them. Diversion risks should be minimized. As a country that has been targeted by the PKK/YPG terrorist organization, including with drones and paramotors, Türkiye is ready to take an active role in any initiative to address this challenge. We will continue to spare no effort to counter terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and to contribute to international cooperation in this field.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Republic of Korea.

**Mr. Hwang** (Republic of Korea): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening today's meeting. I also thank High Representative Nakamitsu, Ms. Aptel and Ms. Mutota for their insightful briefings.

The Republic of Korea recognizes the deeply detrimental and cross-cutting effects on international peace and security of the diversion and illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons. The uncontrolled transfer and misuse of small arms and light weapons initiates, aggravates and sustains armed conflict, transnational crimes and terrorism, all of which hamper sustainable development in vulnerable countries.

Against that troubling backdrop, we express our strong support for the comprehensive implementation of various international instruments, namely, the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, the International Tracing Instrument and the recently adopted Global Framework for Through-life Conventional Ammunition Management (see General Assembly resolution 78/47). As the President of the ninth Conference of States Parties

to Arms Trade Treaty, the Republic of Korea would also like to highlight the importance of universalizing and implementing the Arms Trade Treaty as the first legally binding instrument regulating the conventional arms trade.

Let me also take this opportunity to underline a unique tool at the disposal of the Security Council, that is, Council-mandated arms embargoes. Arms embargoes imposed by the Council contribute to curbing the illicit flow of small arms and light weapons and thereby prevent the escalation of conflict and promote peace all across the world. We strongly support and are committed to the full implementation of the Council-mandated arms embargoes and condemn any illicit flow of arms and ammunition in violation of the relevant Council resolutions.

With that in mind, my delegation condemns the illicit transfer of military equipment, including ammunition, by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to the Russian Federation. We also underscore the constructive role played by the relevant subsidiary bodies of the Council and their Panels of Experts in reporting on the implementation of sanctions. At the same time, we believe that United Nations sanctions regimes should be more efficient and strategically targeted, reflecting the developing situation on the ground while addressing relevant unintended humanitarian concerns.

The Republic of Korea reiterates the integral role of the Security Council in addressing this issue in tandem with the discussions in the General Assembly in a mutually reinforcing manner. We encourage the Council to remain seized of the matter and to holistically

address the issue of small arms as the primary organ of the United Nations responsible for maintenance of international peace and security. In addition to the synergies created across the United Nations system and the various international instruments, regional and subregional efforts can serve as effective catalysts for achieving these objectives at the international level.

As one of the signatories to the shared commitments on women and peace and security, we recognize the connection between gender and small arms. The gender perspective is clearly captured in the Secretary-General's report on small arms and light weapons (S/2023/823). We note with concern the disproportionate impact that the diversion and illicit transfer of small arms, light weapons and ammunition can have on women and girls, and we call for the full, equal, meaningful and safe participation of women throughout decision-making processes in arms control and disarmament.

In conclusion, the Republic of Korea calls on Member States to abide responsibly by the relevant binding and non-binding international instruments on small arms. At the same time, we would like to highlight that we are not only firmly committed to those mechanisms, but also ready to contribute to and support relevant capacity-building efforts to promote compliance.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): There are still a number of speakers remaining on my list for this meeting. Given the lateness of the hour, I intend, with the concurrence of members of the Council, to suspend the meeting until 3 p.m.

*The meeting was suspended at 1.05 p.m.*