Marking the 10th anniversary of the Global Firearms Programme

SPECIAL EDITION
“The full and effective implementation of the International Tracing Instrument and the Firearms Protocol is important in efforts to combat the acquisition of small arms and light weapons by all unauthorized recipients, including terrorist groups (...) and provide the normative framework and investigative tools for enhanced criminal justice response (...).”

Mr. António Guterres, UN Secretary-General
GFP’s 10th anniversary at a glance

The Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition (Firearms Protocol) adopted by the General Assembly on 31 May 2001, supplementing the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC), is the principal global legal instrument to prevent and combat the illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms, their parts and components and ammunition and the only international legal instrument that requires its States parties to establish these conducts as criminal offences. It establishes a comprehensive regulatory framework on the marking and record-keeping of firearms as well as an effective system for firearms transfer authorization that builds on the principle of reciprocity.

At the beginning of the programme, 84 countries were party to the Protocol. To date, the number has increased to 119, an increase of 35 parties during the implementation period. To this end, the Implementation Support Section (ISS) of the Organized Crime and Trafficking Branch (OCB), created in 2011 the Global Firearms Programme (GFP) to promote and assist in the implementation of the Firearms Protocol. The Programme also aims at enhancing the capacity of Members States to detect, investigate, and prosecute criminal organizations engaged in the illicit firearms business and related forms of organized crime. 

The Conference of Parties has repeatedly invited Member States to consider becoming party to the Protocol, and urged States Parties to the Protocol to strengthen their national legislation in a manner consistent with this instrument, and requested UNODC to support States and facilitate technical assistance for the ratification and implementation of the Protocol. UNODC was also mandated to develop and disseminate technical assistance tools, conduct a study on trafficking in firearms and collect and analyse on a regular basis data to monitor illicit trafficking flows.
The work of UNODC to prevent and counter illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms, their parts and components and ammunition is spearheaded through the UNODC Global Programme on Firearms. The Global Programme follows an integrated approach based on five major pillars, each covering one of five interrelated areas of action to address the different aspects of the problem:

a) enhancing policy and normative development through awareness-raising and legislative assistance and legal research to support ratification and implementation of the Firearms Protocol;

b) provision of technical support for the implementation of preventive and security measures to prevent the illicit manufacturing and theft of and trafficking in firearms, their parts and components and ammunition;

c) strengthening law enforcement and criminal justice responses to detect, investigate and prosecute the illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms, their parts and components and ammunition;

d) fostering and promoting international cooperation and information exchange to address the transnational dimension of trafficking in illicit firearms and related issues; and

e) mapping and monitoring illicit arms flows through global data collection and analysis to enhance the knowledge and evidence-based actions on firearms trafficking and its criminal context.

Together, the five pillars also contribute to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular target 16.4 (“by 2030, significantly reduce illicit financial and arms flows, strengthen the recovery and return of stolen assets and combat all forms of organized crime”). The approach is complemented by a number of cross-cutting elements, such as gender mainstreaming, human rights and civil society participation and oversight, which are streamlined into the Programme’s activities.
Over the past 10 years, the Global Firearms Programme has significantly increased its geographical scope and has moved from its initial cross-regional focus on South America and West Africa, to a more global and multi-regional focus, targeting also Central America and the Caribbean; Central and Eastern Africa; MENA; the Western Balkans and Eastern Europe; as well as Central Asia.

Since its initiation, more than 70 countries have benefited from the Programme’s technical assistance to prevent and combat the illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms, their parts and components and ammunition.
The establishment of the Global Firearms Programme is fundamental for facilitating the fulfilment of UNODC’s core mandate to assist requesting countries in their efforts to counter illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms, and related criminal activities such as terrorism, organized and other serious crimes. The programme contributes directly to:

✓ Awareness raising and understanding on the issue of illicit firearms trafficking and their links to other crimes and security threats;

✓ Supporting the work of the Conference of Parties to UNTOC and its Working Group on Firearms, and fostering synergies with other inter-governmental bodies and processes on firearms / Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW);

✓ Supporting ratification and transposition of the Firearms protocol into domestic legal frameworks;

✓ Strengthening domestic firearms legislation and regulatory measures to strengthen control and reduce the risk of their diversion into illicit circuits;

✓ Supporting implementation of effective regulatory measures to prevent illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms, their parts and components and ammunition, in particular with regards to marking, record keeping, voluntary collection campaigns, management and destruction of (confiscated) firearms;

✓ Promoting crime prevention measures to reduce armed violence and urban crime through awareness, education and community-based work;

✓ Strengthening the rule of law, good governance and the fight against impunity by improving the detection, investigation and prosecutorial capacities of criminal justice systems and ensuring more effective border control and international / regional cooperation practices;

✓ Enhancing the channels of cooperation and communication among relevant state institutions and among countries at regional and cross-regional level;

✓ Strengthening capacities of specialised bodies and units in charge of preventing and combating firearms trafficking and related crimes, such as organized crime or terrorism;

✓ Improving good governance and transparency in firearms control matters by actively engaging civil society organizations and national and regional parliaments;

✓ Better understanding of the extent, routes and modus operandi of illicit firearms trafficking flows through the development of the first Global Firearms Study;

✓ Strengthening national and international data collection and analysis capacity for monitoring illicit arms flows and the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goal target 16.4 through annual collection of firearms data, evidence-based research, and accompanying capacity building and technical assistance support.

We are proud to present in this special edition the most relevant achievements of the Programme from the last 10 years.
LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORKS AND POLICIES

Developed of a series of legal & technical tools & publications

Supported Member States in reviewing & assessing national legislation on firearms & organized crime
Participated in the collection & destruction campaigns & enhanced marking capacity
Enhanced capacity of national practitioners in detecting, investigating & prosecuting of firearms trafficking & related offenses
INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION & INFORMATION EXCHANGE

Supported intelligence-led operations against firearms trafficking in the Sahel region (KAFO, Trigger III) & Latin America (Trigger VI)

Boosted effective cooperation, sharing of information & exchange of good practices at regional & international level through Communities of Practitioners
Enhanced understanding about illicit firearms flows and their links to various forms of crime through the Monitoring Illicit Arms Flows Initiative

Supported Global Data Collection and Analysis on Firearms Trafficking & Fostering Cooperation & Information Sharing
MEET OUR TEAM

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