Welcome to the second issue of UNODC’s Firearms Trafficking Section (FTS) newsletter. This edition presents the activities implemented by the Global Firearms Programme (GFP) from January to April 2023.

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Countries call for stronger cooperation in Latin America to fight trafficking of firearms in the region at UNODC meeting

During a three-day forum, organized by UNODC’s Global Firearms Programme (GFP), in the city of Brasilia from 12 to 14 of April, representatives from various Member States from Latin America (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile and Paraguay) stressed the need for enhancing international cooperation to fight against the illicit trafficking of firearms in the region. The meeting gathered magistrates, prosecutors and law enforcement officers from the different participating countries and was aimed at strengthening capacities related to international judicial and police cooperation and the preservation and obtaining of electronic evidence in the case of arms trafficking. The workshop also addressed the specific problems of firearms trafficking in the Latin American continent: the most frequent modus operandi for the illicit manufacture of firearms, their entry to black markets and cross-border trafficking. Participants agreed on the need to strengthen collaboration between countries through the use of the different existing international cooperation tools at the regional level, such as the ones provided by INTERPOL, EUROPOL, the ATF, the Ibero-American Association of Public Prosecutors (AIAMP for its acronym in Spanish), the Ibero-American Network for International Legal Cooperation (IberRed for its acronym in Spanish) and the GFP’s Community of Practitioners. Continue reading here...
During a conference organised under the leadership of the Swedish Presidency of the Council of the European Union in the first half of 2023, GFP, together with more than one hundred experts and officials from the EU and its neighbouring countries, participated in the discussion on the threat of illicit firearms trafficking as a result of war and possible measures for enhanced customs cooperation. The objective of the Conference was to strengthen the capacity of customs authorities to prevent and combat firearms trafficking to contribute to EU's action plan on the subject for 2020-2025.

**STOCKHOLM: Discussion on measures for customs cooperation to prevent and combat smuggling of firearms**

GFP met with the European Multi-disciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats (EMPACT), the European Commission and representatives from the Netherlands and Portugal to update the Lebanese authorities on the current situation of the threat of firearms trafficking and to set the basis for a first joint operation to fight the illicit trafficking of firearms in the country.

**BEIRUT: Promoting the fight against illicit firearms trafficking**

GFP supported the organization of a first Joint Investigation Team (JIT) meeting between Burkina Faso and Benin aimed at strengthening the investigation, prosecuting, adjudication, and addressing the transnational aspects of specific firearms trafficking cases. The experts discussed and shared information on ongoing cases which were identified by the two countries, with UNODC support, and the team collected additional evidence to help set up investigation and prosecution strategies. The JIT is part of a broader effort under Project DISRUPT in the sub region aimed at intensifying judicial and police bilateral and international cooperation through the establishment of formal and informal and direct cooperation mechanisms. Read it [here](#)
Assessment missions

Strong commitment towards a Firearms Control Roadmap for Iraq

A delegation of the UNODC Global Firearms Programme embarked in a two-week scoping mission in Iraq, including visits to Baghdad and the Kurdistan Region at the end of February. Following requests of the authorities to support the country in preventing and combatting firearms trafficking and the nexus between illicit firearms, terrorism and organized crime, the delegation assessed the current situation as well as potential gateways to address the issue.

In a series of consultations with national stakeholders, international partners and site-visits at the forensic laboratories of Baghdad and Erbil, the UN officials were able to develop a profound understanding of the complex situation related to firearms in Iraq after decades of war, political instability, terrorism, the Islamic State insurgency and civil unrest. In meetings with the Minister of Interior of Iraq and the Secretariat of the Council of Ministers of Kurdistan Region, the delegation outlined immediate and long-term action points to establish a solid and comprehensive policy framework on firearms control. Authorities, in Baghdad and Erbil, reaffirmed that re-establishing firearms control is one of their key priorities.

Based on the consultations, UNODC, through its Global Firearms Programme, started the development of a comprehensive Firearms Control Roadmap for Iraq and is currently engaging actively with its various international partners to support the adoption and implementation of the Roadmap.
Support to Colombia to develop a roadmap to achieve Total Peace

GFP visited Colombia at the end of March with the objective of analysing the current context regarding firearms and identifying areas of assistance according to current needs and priorities, with a view to jointly developing a roadmap that contributes to the measures established in Law 2272 of 2022 on “Total Peace”. During the visit, the Chief of the Firearms Trafficking Section, Simonetta Grassi, met with the National Coordination Committee for the Prevention, Combat and Eradication of the Illicit Traffic of Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, and held meetings with the different authorities and departments in charge of the control, prevention, detection, investigation and prosecution of illicit firearms trafficking and its links to organized crime and drug trafficking. The encounters allowed for in depth discussion on the context and current challenges regarding firearms in Colombia, and to identify priority areas for assistance.

Assessment visit in Ecuador to support efforts against illicit trafficking of firearms and their criminal use

A GFP delegation visited Ecuador in April to analyse the current context regarding firearms trafficking and identify potential areas of assistance on this topic. One of the objectives of the mission was to jointly develop a roadmap to face the threat of illicit firearms, their trafficking and criminal use. During the visit, the GFP delegation met with Foreign Minister, Gustavo Manrique, and various representatives of relevant Ministries, Secretaries and agencies in charge of firearms control, prevention, detection, investigation, and prosecution of illicit firearms trafficking and its links to organized crime and drug trafficking. The mission allowed for a deeper analysis of current challenges regarding firearms trafficking and to identify priority areas for support.
**LEGISLATIVE:** Training magistrates and investigators in Benin and Mali to prevent firearms trafficking

GFP organized two workshops in Cotonou, Benin, and in Bamako, Mali, on the investigation, prosecution and adjudication of firearms related offenses, where magistrates and investigators strengthened their technical and operational capacities to conduct firearms trafficking parallel investigations, as well as on prosecution and adjudication. The workshops took place in the framework of project DISRUPT, funded by the European Union through its Global Illicit Flows Programme. Read more about the training in Mali [here](#) and in Benin [here](#).

**INVESTIGATION AND PROSECUTION:** Workshop series in North Macedonia to customize the Guidelines on investigation and prosecution of firearms trafficking cases

A series of four national workshops took place in North Macedonia on the “Guidelines on investigation and prosecution of firearms offences”. The meetings, organized in the cities of Skopje, Gostivar, Bitola and Stip, were conducted in cooperation with the Academy for judges and prosecutors and focused on the customization of the Guidelines to the national legal framework. The activity was conducted in the framework of the Western Balkans Roadmap 2024 on small arms and light weapons. Read it [here](#).
DATA ANALYSIS: Train the trainers on evidence-based investigations

In Budva, Montenegro, the Programme conducted a training together with INTERPOL of law enforcement officers from the Western Balkans on data collection and the use of intelligence for investigation of illicit firearms trafficking. UNODC presented the UN International Arms Flow Questionnaire (UN IAFQ), a data collection tool for monitoring illicit firearms flows. The participants were also addressed evidence-based approaches for investigation of illicit firearms trafficking and the use of intelligence for operational purposes and in connection with other crimes. Read more here.

DETECTION OF FIREARMS: Experts meeting to identify needs for detection of firearms in postal parcels

In Montenegro, GFP met with the Indirect Taxation Authority of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Montenegrin Customs Administration to exchange experiences in the identification and assessing needs for the detection of firearms, parts and components, ammunition and explosives in Express Courier and postal parcels. The UNODC experts visited the main points of entry and exit of parcel shipments in Montenegro and conducted an exercise at a border crossing point between the two countries. Read more here.

LEGISLATIVE: Firearms legislation workshop in Turkmenistan to promote harmonization of laws and practices

More than twenty national experts from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Interior, General Prosecutor’s Office, Supreme Court, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of National Security, Ministry of Defense, and the Border Control Services participated in a workshop organized by UNODC and UNOCT-UNCCT where they analyzed the national legislation on firearms to detect vulnerabilities, gaps and another loopholes, and identified potential solutions to strengthen the regulatory frameworks on firearms. The experts discussed the possibilities to develop the national legislation and align it to the international instruments. Read more here.
DETECTION OF FIREARMS: Practical workshop in Trinidad and Tobago

Members of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, Forensic Science Center, Customs and Excise Division and Port Authority participated in a workshop on the detection of illicit firearms trafficking, where they gained practical skills during the three day-training. In the activity, led by GFP, experts from other agencies such as INTERPOL, FRONTEX, CARICOM IMPACS, among others, also participated in a joint effort to strengthen the support to authorities in the country to fight illicit trafficking of firearms. Read more details about the workshop here.

DATA COLLECTION: Standardisation on firearms data collection at European level

GFP participated in a meeting organized by the European Commission on the establishment of National Firearms Focal Points and the standardisation of data collection in the EU. Participants discussed the state of development of the National Firearms Focal Points (NFFPs) in the EU member states and in Southeast Europe, with the objective of fostering the exchange of best practices and challenges. The meeting also focused on the mapping of the state of data collection on seizures of firearms, based on the requirements of the main databases at EU level and the UNODC IAFQ. GFP led a session on the importance of firearms data as the basis for evidence-based approaches, legislation and policy to counter firearms trafficking and criminal use. The structure of the UN IAFQ was discussed, as well as the objective of launching a new and updated Global Study on Firearms Trafficking.

INVESTIGATION AND PROSECUTION: Meeting to customize firearms investigation and prosecution Guidelines in Serbia

In Belgrade, the Programme presented the Guidelines on investigation and prosecution of firearms offences to prosecutors’ offices and law enforcement officers and discussed the content of the document to identify modalities to customize it to national regulations and legal framework. During the meeting it was agreed that the Judicial Academy will use UNODC’s Guidelines as part of its on-going training curriculum. Read these and the rest of outputs from the meeting here.
**INTEGRATED FIREARMS CENTER:** Initial discussions towards the establishment of an IFC in Trinidad and Tobago

In close cooperation with the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, GFP organized a workshop for the establishment of an Integrated Firearms Center (IFC) in the Caribbean country, to address the challenge that illicit trafficking of firearms represents in the region. During the meeting, the need for effective investigations was stressed to bring to justice those responsible for firearms trafficking. The importance of ensuring adequate information exchange and cooperation between all the relevant institutions with access to firearms-related data, at national and international levels was also highlighted. Read more [here](#).

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**LEGISLATIVE:** Trinidad and Tobago to submit a new Firearms Bill with GFP support

The Programme organized a legislative drafting and verification workshop in Trinidad and Tobago in April to share and discuss a draft Firearms Bill as part of an ongoing joint legislative effort with the country starting in June 2022, to align the legislation with the country’s regional and international commitments. GFP will then support national experts to revise the Bill, before a draft committee submits it to the Government for eventual adoption. Read more [here](#).

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**LEGISLATIVE:** Workshop on the Implementation of the Firearms Protocol and other international and regional instruments on arms control in Saint Lucia

GFP organized a legislative workshop to present and discuss the assessment of the firearms-related legislation in Saint Lucia in light of the regional and international agreements including the Firearms Protocol. The main findings of the legislative assessment were presented including: the need to revise definitions in domestic legislation, implementing procedures for confiscation, seizure, disposal and record-keeping, introduction of the regulation of brokering, and strengthening the country’s licensing regime. Read it [here](#).
PROJECT HERMES: Countering trafficking of firearms in Express Courier and postal parcels

GFP launched in the Western Balkans the new regional project Hermes, focused on countering trafficking in firearms, their parts and ammunition in express courier and postal parcels. At the inception phase, with meetings held in Pristina and Belgrade, it was agreed on the timelines for the activities, as well as on the identification of a project governance structure. As a next step, GFP will facilitate a study visit to the Paris Charles de Gaulle Airport and will develop standard operating procedures (SOPs). Find out more details about the new project here.

As part of project Hermes, two meetings were organized in Serbia and North Macedonia to review the regulatory framework on countering trafficking in firearms, their parts and components, and ammunition in express courier and postal parcels. Designated postal operators and Customs Administrations from all six jurisdictions of the Western Balkans discussed the scope of their work and identified the existing gaps in their procedures in relation to firearms controls and developing SOPs. Read more here.

DETECTION OF FIREARMS: Dominican Republic strengthen its capacities to detect illicit firearms trafficking in postal parcels, land and maritime boarders

GFP organized a training on the detection of illicit firearms trafficking in Santo Domingo aimed at strengthening capacities of practitioners to detect illicit transferred firearms through postal and fast parcels, as well as at land and maritime borders. The course sought to analyse the new trends in illicit arms trafficking and provide participants with tools and methods to improve their risk and threat assessment and management capacity. After that, a workshop on data collection was delivered to improve the collection and analysis of firearms-related data to monitor illicit arm flows and contribute to both measuring the achievement of Target 16.4 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and promoting an evidence-based action against firearms trafficking. Read more about both activities here and here.
WAREHOUSE IN NIGER: Delivery of a storage warehouse for seized weapons

GFP handed over a storage warehouse for seized arms and ammunition to the National Gendarmerie in Niger. The activity was part of UNODC’s efforts in countering transnational organized crime and terrorism in the country, which include securing weapons and ammunition seized, voluntarily surrendered or found pending their final fate (restitution, confiscation or destruction as appropriate). The stockpiling site will be used by defense and security forces, the Ministry of Justice and the National Commission for the Control and Collection of Illicit Weapons. Continue reading it here.

Handover of equipment

GFP handed over three x-ray scanners to the Indirect Taxation Authority of Bosnia and Herzegovina (ITA BiH) as part of its activities under the project HALT, a joint project between UNODC and UNDP BiH, with the objective to counter illicit firearms trafficking. The scanners are part of the technical assistance provided by GFP to its counterparts in BiH.

In Burkina Faso GFP continued its work with the National Commission on Arms Control and provided additional equipment for the proper storage of seized and confiscated firearms.
Activities with Academia

WEBSTER UNIVERSITY: Students reflected on the role of firearms trafficking in supporting crime

Students from Webster University in Vienna reflected on the role that illicit firearms provide in supporting crime and the challenges in addressing its threats during the Global Governance and Diplomacy Public Speaker Series.

TRENTO UNIVERSITY: Real scenarios on criminal justice responses to the illicit firearms trafficking problem

Students from international universities participated in an interactive session in the framework of the Winter School at the School of International Studies of the University of Trento where they had the opportunity to deepen their knowledge on the international instruments that support an adequate criminal justice response to the illicit firearms trafficking problem. Read it here.

Publications

OUTREACH: GFP Annual report 2022

GPF recently published its “Annual Report 2022” which collects the main accomplishments made last year as well as perspectives for upcoming work. Read the full report here.

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