

## Statement at the 2023 Constructive Dialogue on Firearms

Vienna, Austria  
5th May, 2023

Mr. Chair, distinguished representatives and fellow members of civil society:

Widespread availability of firearms and ammunition, fueled mainly by illicit trafficking, is undeniably a determinant factor of violence and crime worldwide. Being so complex, firearms control is an issue that requires the implementation of evidence-based policy and operational solutions. Of course, international and inter-agency cooperation efforts are fundamental to approach these.

My intervention will focus on how civil society organizations can support and participate in meaningful ways in such processes, particularly in national inter-agency cooperation ones. The core of my organization's statement is that, in the matter of firearms control, as it is true of any public affair, cooperation at all levels must include measures that promote accountability, transparency and democratic oversight.

The following are some proposals for public policy and institutional design that arise from the documentation and analysis work that Mexico United Against Crime (MUCD for its acronym in Spanish) has developed around the issues of firearms availability, illicit trafficking and gun violence:

1. Civil society and academia representatives must be included in the design, implementation, oversight and evaluation of public policy regarding firearms control. As the background paper prepared by the Secretariat points out, a national coordination mechanism should take input and feedback from the relevant government agencies, civil society organizations and private sector stakeholders. The Preamble of the Programme of Action on small arms and light weapons is very explicit on this matter.<sup>1</sup>
2. Legislative bodies should have specialized commissions or committees on firearms and gun violence. Efforts of public policy, research and monitoring to prevent and eradicate illicit firearms traffic should be periodically reviewed and subjected to accountability. The relevant authorities, whether at the policy or the operational level, should justify their specific reasons for action and show an account of results in a democratic and open forum. Of course, the hearings must be open to civil society and academia.

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<sup>1</sup> 16. Recognizing also the important contribution of civil society, including non-governmental organizations and industry in, inter alia, assisting Governments to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects, (...)

3. Inter-agency cooperation needs complete and standardized information to actually work. Ideally, the planning, construction and updating of databases and other measurement tools should be allocated in one agency with the technical expertise to do so. In addition, there must be standardized protocols for the proper registration, by all agencies of law enforcement, of legal and illegal weapons, whether the latter are confiscated, destroyed or deactivated. Using accurate and reliable information regarding firearms is not only more effective for their control, but is also more compatible with the principles of good public administration and maximum publicity. Also, it would provide data that would allow civil society and academia to do better analysis and propose more comprehensive solutions.

We firmly believe that the functions and obligations related to matters of public security within a given territory should fall, predominantly, under the responsibility of professional, civil institutions with democratic legitimacy. The issue of firearms is no exception. The relationship between civil authorities and security forces in this matter must be one of democratic oversight, transparency and accountability.

Thank you.