

Constructive Dialogue on Firearms
United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime (UNTOC)
May 6th, 2022
Vienna (hybrid)

Talking points- Secretary General Karin Olofsson, 3 minutes

Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, it is an honour to greet you on behalf of the Parliamentary Forum on Small Arms and Light Weapons (the Forum). My name is Karin Olofsson, and I am the Secretary General of the Forum.

I would like to express heartfelt gratitude to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) for the kind invitation and for this vital dialogue opportunity.

The Forum is the only membership-based organisation gathering over 300 parliamentarians globally across party-political lines in 100 countries, to specifically reduce and prevent Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW)-related violence.

According to the Small Arms Survey, more than 1 billion SALW are circulating worldwide, of which 85% are in civilian hands, causing the death of over 223 300 people every year. Organised crime, as well as armed conflict and violence, is perpetuated by illicit trafficking in firearms.

The link between transnational organised crime and illicit trafficking in firearms is noted in the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime (UNTOC). As highlighted in the UNTOC's Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of, and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition, illicit trafficking in firearms endangers the wellbeing of peoples, their socio-economic development and right to live in peace.

The consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrate that the widespread availability of illicit firearms hinders efforts to provide development support to the most vulnerable. The United Nations (UN) has stated an increase in domestic violence of approximately 30% during the pandemic, where domestic violence is further intensified by firearms. Hence, preventing illicit trafficking in firearms is vital to ensure the safety and rights of all, including women.

The urgency of the situation calls for concise steps by all, including parliamentarians, to implement relevant international instruments, including the UNTOC, the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (UN PoA), the 2030 Agenda and the Women, Peace and Security agenda. Parliamentarians play a vital role through their legislative, oversight and awareness raising functions, by bridging the gap between international arms control instruments and national and regional levels.

However, parliamentary involvement in the aforementioned international processes is generally neglected, which means the potential of parliamentary action in contributing to more peaceful societies is lost. Therefore, the Forum emphasises active parliamentary involvement related to the UNTOC and its synergies with other relevant instruments.

Illicit firearms trafficking cross borders, and is closely linked to criminal and terrorist activity, requiring collaboration between states. In light of the regional synergies in the implementation of international arms control instruments, it is important that parliamentarians collaborate.

Preventing illicit firearms trafficking is a precondition for the achievement of more peaceful and sustainably developed societies. The pandemic's consequences have demonstrated the importance for the world to come together, for the security, rights and well-being of every child, woman and man.

Thank you!