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Working Group on Firearms

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How record-keeping, marking and tracing, as well as data collection and analysis and the sharing of information, under articles 6, 7, 8 and 12 of 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, help reduce illicit trafficking in firearms

Development or strengthening of experts and competent authorities in firearms control networks in order to improve regional and international cooperation, exchange of information and good practices, with the objective of preventing and fighting against illicit firearms trafficking

Enhancing technical assistance and capacity-building to counter illicit trafficking in firearms in the context of crime prevention and criminal justice

Measures to prevent and reduce illicit trafficking in firearms, improve regional and international cooperation and related technical assistance activities

Background paper prepared by the Secretariat

I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 5/4, entitled “Illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms, their parts and components and ammunition”, the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime

* CTOC/COP/WG.6/2016/1.



established an open-ended intergovernmental working group on firearms, in accordance with article 32, paragraph 3, of the Organized Crime Convention, and rule 2, paragraph 2, of the rules of procedure for the Conference, to advise and assist the Conference in the implementation of its mandate with regard to the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition, supplementing the Organized Crime Convention (Firearms Protocol).

2. In its resolution 7/1, entitled “Strengthening the implementation of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocols thereto”, the Conference decided, inter alia, that the Working Group on Firearms will be a constant element of the Conference. Furthermore, in resolution 7/2, entitled “Importance of 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”, the Conference decided, among other matters, that the Working Group on Firearms should continue to perform its functions set forth in Conference resolution 5/4, hold at least one intersessional meeting prior to the eighth session of the Conference, and invited the Working Group to consider practical proposals for implementing the recommendations formulated at its previous meeting held from 26 to 28 May 2014.

3. At the third session of the Working Group, held on 9 July 2015, the Working Group, inter alia, welcomed its fruitful discussions and recognized its important role in facilitating the exchange of expertise and knowledge among practitioners on ways to enhance the implementation of the Firearms Protocol.¹

4. The present paper was prepared by the Secretariat for the consideration of the Working Group during its deliberation of items 2, 3, and 4 of the provisional agenda.

II. How record-keeping, marking and tracing, as well as data collection and analysis and the sharing of information under articles 6, 7, 8 and 12 of the Protocol help reduce illicit trafficking in firearms

5. Illicit trafficking in firearms is intrinsically linked to various forms of organized and other serious crimes, including terrorism, as firearms serve as facilitator of violent crimes, as a tool to perpetrate power, and as lucrative trafficking commodities that fuel armed conflicts, crime and insecurity, and which also have a direct and negative impact on development, safety and security. As reflected in the Study on Firearms 2015, conducted by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), data collected from country responses on the offences associated with seized firearms suggested that illicit firearms are trafficked for use in the commission of other crimes; in responding countries, firearms were often seized from individuals engaged in other forms of criminal activity, primarily the

¹ Report on the meeting of the Working Group on Firearms held in Vienna on 9 June 2015 (CTOC/COP/WG.6/2015/3).

trafficking of drugs and other commodities, as well as involvement in organized and violent crime.

6. Illicit trafficking in firearms is essentially a complex and transnational crime, difficult to detect and to combat. Still not enough is known about the size, patterns and routes of illicit trafficking of firearms, as it is a highly hidden and complex trade, whose points of departure from licit manufacturing and trade (diversion) remain difficult to detect. One of the major challenges related to this issue is the difficulty of establishing the origins and destinations of the firearms, and to devise and implement effective strategies to prevent and combat this crime.

7. In order to effectively prevent and combat the illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms (their parts and components and ammunition), a wide-ranging control regime is needed. The Firearms Protocol, as well as the Arms Trade Treaty² provide the international legal framework for such regimes. The Conference acknowledged the importance of the Firearms Protocol as one of the principal global instruments adopted by the international community, to prevent and combat the illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms, their parts and components and ammunition (resolution 5/4).

8. Implementation of this comprehensive regime requires States Parties to put in place a series of legislative, regulatory and operational measures at the national level, including: (a) adequate legislative frameworks, including the criminalization of illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms as serious crimes, and measures to enable their seizure and confiscation; (b) establishment and maintenance of national registries of all firearms; (c) proper marking of all produced and imported firearms for their unique identification; (d) systematic recording and tracing — both at domestic and at international level — of all seized firearms, to identify the point of diversion from legal to illegal ownership and use; (e) effective international cooperation and sharing of information in firearms tracing, to support criminal investigation and prosecution of illicit trafficking and related crimes; and (f) regular collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data and information on firearms trafficking, and their sharing and analysis at the international level, to identify and monitor trafficking routes, patterns and trends, and to monitor progress in international and national efforts to prevent and combat illicit trafficking and related forms of organized crime.

9. Record-keeping, marking, tracing of firearms, data collection and analysis, and the sharing of information represent therefore interconnected building blocks that can — together — help to reduce the illicit trafficking in firearms, as illustrated below.

² General Assembly resolution 67/234 B.

Figure 1
National control framework to fight illicit trafficking of firearms



10. States parties to the Firearms Protocol are required to, inter alia, confiscate, seize and dispose of illicit firearms, and related parts and components and ammunition (art. 6); keep records on firearms, and where appropriate and feasible, on their parts and components and ammunition (art. 7); mark firearms for purposes of their effective tracing and identification (art. 8); and the exchange of case-specific information among States parties, in accordance with their domestic legal and administrative systems (art. 12).

Record-keeping, marking and tracing

11. The establishment and maintenance of firearms registries is a fundamental pillar of any comprehensive firearms control regime, in order to effectively prevent and combat illicit firearms trafficking. Firearms registries allow for the provision of information on the history of the firearms, from the time of their manufacturing, their movements and transfers, until their final disposal. Because firearms are long-lasting and can be reused almost endlessly, it is especially important for States to ensure their maintenance for as long as possible, in order to be able to keep track of their whereabouts and movements throughout their life cycle. Article 7 refers to

the relevance of firearms records in the context of criminal investigations, when requiring States parties to maintain for at least 10 years, information on firearms “that is necessary for their identification and tracing”.

12. The Firearms Protocol defines “tracing” as the systematic tracking of firearms and, where possible, their parts and components and ammunition from manufacturer to purchaser for the purpose of assisting the competent authorities of States parties in detecting, investigating and analysing illicit manufacturing and illicit trafficking (art. 3 (f)).

13. In order to support their identification and tracing, article 8 of the Firearms Protocol requires States parties to mark firearms at the time of manufacture, at the time of their import (import marking), and at the time of their transfer from government stocks to permanent civilian use. Furthermore, marking requirements exist also with regard to firearms that have been deactivated.

14. According to article 6 of the Protocol, States parties shall also adopt measures for confiscation, seizure and disposal of firearms, their parts and components and ammunition to prevent them from “falling into the hands of unauthorized persons”.

15. The unique marking of each firearm identifies it and forms the basis on which records are kept and firearms are traced. Markings on a recovered firearm can be used by a State party to search its own records and also as a basis of a request from another State party for the tracing of that firearm. The basic record-keeping obligation of the Protocol, set forth in article 7, is to ensure that records that are sufficient are kept to ensure that firearms could later be traced.³

16. Tracing of firearms is valued as a source of evidence for prosecution of trafficking and other offences and of information for detecting and analysing the routes used by firearms traffickers, and national authorities could attempt to trace the origin of firearms seized in their territory regardless of the reason for the seizure. Additionally, successful international tracing, which usually requires some form of international cooperation, could help verify the licit or illicit origin of seized weapons and possibly establish routes of trafficking, including the country of manufacture, departure and intended destination, information which can become the basis for policies to help prevent and reduce illicit trafficking in firearms.

17. Furthermore, as noted in the background paper prepared by the Secretariat on challenges and good practices in countering illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms, their parts and components and ammunition, and measures to facilitate the implementation of the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition, supplementing the Organized Crime Convention,⁴ a capability to trace firearms can play a crucial role in the investigation of criminal offences. Preventive and regulatory requirements for States to mark and record firearms and the related transfers, and to establish functioning licensing authorities for legal manufacturing and transfer of arms and ammunition, are geared towards the efficient operation of

³ Legislative Guides for the Implementation of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocols Thereto (United Nations, New York, 2004), part four.

⁴ CTOC/COP/WG.6/2014/2.

the firearms regime and the creation of clear conditions to facilitate enforcement and conduct related investigations.

18. In its resolution 7/2, the Conference urged States parties to promote the exchange of good practices and experiences of practitioners who are involved in combating illicit trafficking in firearms and to consider the use of available tools, including marking and record-keeping technologies, to facilitate the tracing of firearms and, where possible, their parts and components and ammunition, in order to enhance criminal investigations into illicit trafficking in firearms, in accordance with their capabilities. At the fourth session of the Working Group, States may wish to provide information on national efforts to implement articles 6, 7, 8 and 12 of the Protocol, as well as challenges and lessons learned in this regard.

19. In addition, the Working Group may also wish to follow up on its previous relevant recommendations. For instance, at its second session, the Working Group focused on the challenges and good practices in the criminalization, investigation and prosecution of illicit firearms trafficking, and measures to enhance international cooperation in criminal matters, including through effective tracing of firearms in ongoing investigations, and on the importance of monitoring illicit trafficking flows in firearms at the national, regional and global levels.⁵ Related practical recommendations included support to the implementation of the Protocol requirements for record-keeping and marking and encouraging systematic tracing of firearms in criminal investigations (recommendations 4-6). The Working Group also recommended to further promote international cooperation in tracing and information exchange (recommendations 7-9, 11 and 12), and to take measures to support data collection and analysis on firearms trafficking and related fields (recommendations 10, 13, 14 and 15).

20. At its third session, the Working Group adopted a number of additional recommendations, which may also contribute to inform the discussions under the present agenda item.⁶ Several recommendations reaffirmed the importance of marking, record-keeping and tracing, as well as data collection and analysis and information-sharing, to support criminal investigations and combat illicit trafficking. The Working Group recommended that the Conference urge States parties to strengthen their domestic marking and record-keeping regimes, consistent with the requirements of the Firearms Protocol (recommendation 9); and to urge Member States to systematically record, trace and analyse periodically the data on seized, confiscated, collected and found firearms suspected of being involved in an illicit activity, with a view to identifying their origin and detecting possible forms of illicit trafficking (recommendation 10). The Working Group also recommended that the Conference encourage Member States to use the tracing results to conduct in-depth criminal investigations on firearms trafficking, including parallel financial or other investigations where appropriate, to combat this form of crime (recommendation 11), and to provide one another the broadest possible cooperation in tracing firearms and in investigating and prosecuting their illicit manufacturing and trafficking, making use of existing tracing or cooperation mechanisms, including, as appropriate, the Organized Crime Convention and its Firearms Protocol (recommendation 12).

⁵ CTOC/COP/WG.6/2014/4.

⁶ CTOC/COP/WG.6/2015/3.

21. In this regard, also at its third session, the Working Group further recommended the Conference to request UNODC to continue to assist Member States, upon request, through its Global Firearms Programme, in their efforts to strengthen their firearms control regime, consistent with the Firearms Protocol, in particular in the areas of legislative development; firearms identification, seizure, confiscation and disposal; technical support for marking, record-keeping, and tracing; and training and capacity-building in the investigation and prosecution of related crimes, with a view to preventing, combating and eradicating the illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms, their parts and components, and ammunition (recommendation 16).

Sharing of information

22. Information exchange and international cooperation are fundamental pillars in any serious effort to counter organized crime, including illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms. In accordance with article 12, paragraph 1 of the Firearms Protocol, States parties are required to share relevant case-specific information on matters such as authorized producers, dealers, importers, exporters and, whenever possible, carriers of firearms, their parts and components and ammunition, as well as general information on matters such as organized criminal groups known or suspected of taking part in these activities, the means of concealment used in the illicit manufacturing of or trafficking in firearms, and the methods and means, points of dispatch and destination and routes customarily used by organized criminal groups. States parties are also required to exchange their legislative experience and practices in countering these crimes (art. 12, para. 2), which includes the exchange of scientific and technological information among law enforcement and cooperation among States (art. 12, para. 3). In addition, article 12, paragraph 4, requires States parties to the Protocol to cooperate in the tracing of firearms, their parts and components and ammunition and to respond promptly to requests for assistance in such tracing.

23. As noted in the above-mentioned background paper prepared by the Secretariat for the second session of the Working Group,⁷ useful information exchange could include updates among States on best practices in the areas of record-keeping, marking and deactivation of firearms; guidelines on efficient measures for seizure, confiscation, management and disposal of firearms, their parts and components and ammunition; statistical data on firearms losses, thefts and seizures in each country; levels of arms flows, internally and externally; patterns of both legal and illegal acquisition; impact on society; and best types of public awareness campaigns in each country.

Data collection and analysis

24. The relationship between illicit firearms trafficking and organized crime and its impact on development has been acknowledged under target 16.4 of the Sustainable Development Goals,⁸ “By 2030, significantly reduce illicit financial and arms flows, strengthen the recovery and return of stolen assets and combat all forms of organized crime”.

⁷ CTOC/COP/WG.6/2014/2.

⁸ General Assembly resolution 70/1.

25. The indicator proposed by the Inter-Agency Expert Group on the Millennium Development Goals Indicators to monitor the progress in the achievement of this target focuses on the “percentage of seized small arms and light weapons that are recorded and traced, in accordance with international standards and legal instruments”.⁹ This indicator aims at measuring the progress of national authorities in preventing and combating illicit firearms trafficking, the effectiveness of their domestic and international control systems over firearms and their movements, and the ability of domestic criminal justice systems to detect illicitly trafficked arms and to seize, identify and record them; to establish their provenance and their point of diversion through domestic and international tracing; to infer from this information useful conclusions about illicit flows and involvement of criminal organizations; and ultimately to investigate and prosecute such crimes and combat all forms of organized crime. The proposed indicator will help to measure the progress in enforcing the control system that will enable national authorities in the fight against firearms trafficking.

26. In 2015, UNODC published the Study on Firearms, developed pursuant to resolution 5/4 and 6/2 of the Conference of the Parties, and based on firearms seizure data collected from 45 Member States that voluntarily contributed information. This collective exercise, although not global in coverage, highlighted the value and usefulness of collecting this type of data at the international level, and allowed to shed some light on the transnational nature of and routes used in trafficking of firearms among respondent countries. Resolution 7/2 of the Conference of the Parties requested UNODC to continue gathering information from States parties on illicit trafficking in firearms on a regular basis, and directed the Working Group to consider the outcomes of the study, with a view to making recommendations to the Conference, at its eighth session. At its third session, the Working Group reiterated the mandate given to UNODC to continue to collect and analyse quantitative and qualitative information and suitably disaggregated data on trafficking in firearms, their parts and components and ammunition, and consider requesting the Secretariat to produce a biennial study in close cooperation and collaboration with Member States (recommendation 18).

27. As highlighted in the Study on Firearms, a widespread lack of capacity to collect and analyse data on firearms seizures and trafficking was revealed in both developed and developing countries. Some of the key issues identified in this regard included the lack of systematic data-collection mechanisms in many countries, including adequate tools and capacities, such as registries and software applications; a lack of opportunities for criminal justice officials to participate in relevant networks and interact with fellow experts from their region or beyond, which is deemed crucial in facilitating an understanding of the transnational problem of firearms trafficking; and that, in many cases, trafficking in firearms does not seem to be analysed regularly, and where it is, the results of analyses are not widely disseminated. Such challenges diminish the ability of actions at the national level to prevent trafficking in firearms and undermine international cooperation in the investigation and prosecution of traffickers.

28. A key priority for States is to enhance capacity for data collection and analysis, especially in countries most affected by trafficking in firearms. In this

⁹ E/CN.3/2016/2.

regard, States could benefit from technical assistance, upon request, which could be provided at the bilateral or international level. Regular opportunities for sharing information, data and good practices in preventing and combating illicit trafficking in firearms could also contribute to fostering confidence and strengthening international cooperation in this field.

29. At its third session, the Working Group recommended among other things that the Conference may wish to invite Member States to develop or strengthen their internal capacity for the collection and analysis of data on illicit firearms trafficking, inter alia, by promoting enhanced coordination among relevant competent authorities, and to provide training to law enforcement personnel on the identification, recording and reporting of seizures of firearms, their parts and components, and ammunition and on producing relevant statistics on seizures at the national level (recommendation 8).

III. Development or strengthening of experts and competent authorities in firearms control networks in order to improve regional and international cooperation, exchange of information and good practices with the objective of preventing and fighting against illicit firearms trafficking

30. Trafficking in firearms is a transnational offence that requires cooperation efforts by Member States, including exchange of relevant information and data, good practice and experiences, among competent firearms control authorities and criminal justice practitioners, at all stages of the trafficking chain, to detect, investigate and combat such crime. International and regional cooperation are often hampered by a lack of expertise relating to firearms and difficulty in identifying and prosecuting suspects. A lack of specialized knowledge and capacity to identify and trace firearms and to conduct complex criminal investigations, have often been cited as obstacles to effectively countering illicit firearms trafficking.

31. To overcome some of these challenges, the Working Group on Firearms, at its second session (CTOC/COP/WG.6/2014/4) recommended that the Conference may wish to encourage States parties to promote the regular exchange of experiences on different methods and tools to combat the illicit trafficking in firearms, their parts and components and ammunition, including marking in accordance with the Firearms Protocol (recommendation 9).

32. A number of international and regional instruments on small arms provide a framework and a common basis for action among States. Four instruments with a global scope, two of which are legally binding: the Firearms Protocol, the Arms Trade Treaty, adopted by the General Assembly on 2 April 2013 and entered into force on 24 December 2014,¹⁰ the Programme of Action on Small Arms, adopted in 2001 by the General Assembly (not legally binding),¹¹ and the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons, adopted by the General Assembly in 2005,

¹⁰ General Assembly resolution 67/234.

¹¹ A/CONF.192/15.

(also not legally binding),¹² comprise the international legal regime. These instruments, while different in scope, have overlapping objectives which mutually complement and reinforce each other. Together with regional agreements, they facilitate the coordination of action by law enforcement officers in different jurisdictions, standardize laws and regulations and provide international support and cooperation to counter illicit diversion and trafficking.

33. Regular and direct contact among practitioners, such as through meetings, seminars or similar events, present good opportunities for sharing and discussing experiences, knowledge and difficulties. In regions where practitioners have the opportunity to meet on a regular basis, experience has shown that the levels of mutual trust and confidence are considerably higher and that the exchange of relevant and even case-specific information is significantly greater than in regions where formal requests are the only channel of communication.

34. The Small Arms Division of the Commission of the Economic Community of West African States in West Africa; Working Group on Firearms and Explosives of the Common Market of the South in South America; the Firearms Task Force of the European Commission are some examples of regional platforms to support regional cooperation and the exchange of information on firearms related matters. At the global level, the Working Group on Firearms, too, fulfils an important role in facilitating the implementation of the Firearms Protocol through the exchange of experience and practices among firearms practitioners in the fight against firearms trafficking inter alia.

35. Specialized networks of firearms control authorities and criminal justice practitioners in charge of combating organized crime and illicit firearms trafficking, can facilitate and support the exchange of expertise and experience with regard to the effective investigation and prosecution of firearms criminality and related forms of organized crime cases, through exchange of information, good practices, lessons learned and capacity-building, in ways consistent with respective domestic legal and administrative systems. Such exchanges are broad and involve inter alia matters such as: organized criminal groups known to take part or suspected of taking part in the illicit manufacturing of or trafficking in firearms, their parts and components and ammunition; means of concealment; findings of efforts to monitor illicit trafficking flows, including data on arms seizures and related fields; points of dispatch, destination and routes; legislative experience; case-specific information on matters such as authorized producers, dealers, importers and exporters; case work and best practices in the investigation and prosecution of firearms criminality and related crimes; and good practices in the implementation of criminal prevention measures and policies. At the national level, good practice in some States includes the establishment of specialized firearms programmes, units or hubs within a competent authority, to centralize and deal with all firearms specific matters. Such specialized units can be beneficial for firearms investigation purposes and as a data generator and processor of up-to-date statistics for intelligence and senior law enforcement officers, and in assisting such officers in tracing the source of firearms and streamlining the testing system, in order to facilitate prosecutions.¹³

¹² A/CONF.192/15.

¹³ See also CTOC/COP/WG.6/2014/2.

36. Promoting the broadest possible cooperation among practitioners and firearms control authorities is crucial for enhancing and sharing knowledge and information on firearms trafficking and related areas, and indispensable for detecting, investigating and prosecuting related trafficking offences, including complex investigations. Through its Global Firearms Programme, UNODC has continued to promote and support regional and international cooperation, and organized subregional, regional and cross-regional meetings to facilitate cooperation and exchanges of experiences, support existing cooperation mechanisms, and promote the establishment of a specialized network of criminal justice and firearms control authorities in different subregions.

37. In December 2015, UNODC launched a global programme on building effective networks against transnational organized crime, with the objective of creating effective networks “networking the networks” and developing a more integrated and coordinated approach by Member States to improve operational structures and practices, enhance information exchange and operational cooperation, together with improved training for personnel.

IV. Enhancing technical assistance and capacity-building to counter illicit trafficking in firearms in the context of crime prevention and criminal justice

38. As noted in the Study on Firearms, in view of the challenges faced by Member States in acceding to and fully implementing the international agreements on firearms, many instruments, such as the Firearms Protocol and the Organized Crime Convention, emphasize the importance of continuous training and capacity-building for practitioners to effectively implement the instruments. These instruments also call on States parties to cooperate with each other and with relevant international and regional organizations in order to facilitate such training and technical assistance, which are necessary to enhance their ability to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms and related forms of organized crime (in this regard, see art. 29 of the Organized Crime Convention and art. 14 of the Firearms Protocol).

39. Established in 2011, the UNODC Global Firearms Programme seeks to assist Member States in their efforts to counter illicit trafficking in firearms through the full implementation of the Organized Crime Convention and the Firearms Protocol; based on a multidisciplinary approach, the Programme seeks to provide support in policy advice and legislative assistance; capacity-building and training; technical support for marking, record-keeping, seizure, collection, management and destruction of firearms; development of technical tools; data collection, research and analysis on firearms trafficking.

40. Technical and legislative assistance are essential elements to support Member States’ efforts to take decisive steps to strengthen their national capacities to prevent, combat and prosecute transnational organized crime. Legislative tools such as the Model Law against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition can assist States to review their legal frameworks and bring them in line with the international legal regime, as well as to meet important preconditions for effective information exchange and cooperation.

Further technical assistance in areas such as marking and record-keeping, enhancement of national data-collection capacities, the provision of specialized training on firearms control matters and the investigation and prosecution of illicit trafficking also support the efforts of Member States to counter illicit firearms trafficking.

41. The development and delivery of specialized training courses on investigation and prosecution of firearms trafficking and its links to organized crime complements the more traditional forms of technical assistance that are commonly provided and that focus more on the preventive aspects, in particular on marking, record-keeping and stockpile management. A parallel strengthening of the criminal justice response capacities of Member States constitutes, in this regard, an essential link between prevention and control, which is often overlooked.

42. At its first session, the Working Group on Firearms highlighted some specific challenges related to the investigation and prosecution of firearms trafficking and related offences, and provided relevant recommendations to assist States to strengthen national capacities in these particular fields.¹⁴ One major challenge for States relates to the overall difficulty in applying the preventive measures contained in the Firearms Protocol and to support adequate enforcement and criminal justice responses to counter illicit trafficking.

43. At its second session, the Working Group recommended, *inter alia*, that the Conference: urge States parties to develop and provide training programmes to build capacities for relevant government authorities, including law enforcement, customs, prosecution and judicial authorities, on firearms trafficking investigation and related matters (recommendation 6); encourage Member States to use the tracing results to conduct in-depth criminal investigations on firearms trafficking, including parallel financial or other investigations where appropriate, to combat this form of crime (recommendation 11); provide one another the broadest possible cooperation in tracing firearms and in investigating and prosecuting their illicit manufacturing and trafficking, making use of existing tracing or cooperation mechanisms, including, as appropriate, the Organized Crime Convention and its Firearms Protocol (recommendation 12).

44. Furthermore, in its resolution 7/2, the Conference recognized the importance of continued training and capacity-building to effectively prevent and combat the illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms, and invited States to begin or to continue training for law enforcement, judicial and customs authorities on the identification and tracking of firearms.

V. Conclusions and questions for discussion

45. Trafficking in firearms and its links to organized and other serious crimes, including terrorism, poses important challenges to Member States and requires comprehensive and broad based actions in order to effectively prevent and combat these threats. The implementation of effective firearms control regimes in line with the Firearms Protocol requires not only an appropriate legislative and normative framework, but also the coordinated action of specialized entities, as well as human,

¹⁴ See CTOC/COP/WG.6/2012/3 and CTOC/COP/WG.6/2012/4.

technical and financial resources. Although there has been progress in the implementation of various initiatives, much remains to be done, including in the area of international cooperation.

46. Activities aimed at improving marking, record-keeping, tracing, data collection and information are not ends in themselves but should be seen as part of a comprehensive and interlinked framework to exercise effective illicit firearm manufacturing and trafficking control. Pillars of such a regime are the creation of national registries of firearms, proper marking of all firearms produced and imported, systematic recording and tracing of all seized firearms to identify the point of diversion from legal to illegal ownership and use, and international collaboration in firearms tracing. In this regard, previous recommendations of the Working Group may prove useful in improving the implementation of such control systems.

47. During the upcoming session of the Working Group, Member States may wish to address the effectiveness and sustainability of ongoing initiatives, aimed at improving the fight against the illicit trafficking of firearms through record-keeping, marking and tracing, as well as data collection and analysis and the sharing of information, including capacity-building in these areas.
