



# Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime

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## Working Group on Firearms

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**Strengthening international and inter-agency  
cooperation and coordination mechanisms in  
accordance with the Firearms Protocol and the  
United Nations Convention against Transnational  
Organized Crime**

## **Strengthening international and inter-agency cooperation and coordination mechanisms in accordance with the Firearms Protocol and the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime**

**Background paper prepared by the Secretariat**

### **I. Introduction**

1. The present background paper was prepared by the Secretariat to facilitate discussion by the Working Group on Firearms at its tenth meeting. It provides an overview of measures for and best practices in strengthening international and inter-agency cooperation and coordination mechanisms in accordance with 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, and the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

2. In its resolution 6/2, the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime requested the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) to promote inter-agency and international cooperation. Although the Working Group has addressed international cooperation at each of its meetings and has given increasing consideration to inter-agency cooperation, the Working Group has never discussed different types of such cooperation in a structured manner. In this context, the present background paper sets out provisions and commitments contained in international instruments (section II) and introduces promising practices and challenges in inter-agency coordination (section III) and international cooperation (section IV).

\* [CTOC/COP/WG.6/2023/1](#).



## II. International framework related to inter-agency and international cooperation

3. Different forms of cooperation are included in all international arms control instruments.

### *Firearms Protocol*

4. In the Firearms Protocol, States parties commit to cooperate at the bilateral, regional and international levels to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms, their parts and components and ammunition (art. 13, para. 1); and to identify a national body or a single point of contact to act as liaison between it and other States parties on matters relating to the Protocol (art. 13, para. 2). In addition, the comprehensive framework on international cooperation under the Organized Crime Convention applies to the offences covered by the Firearms Protocol. This includes international cooperation for purposes of confiscation (art. 13), extradition (art. 16), transfer of sentenced persons (art. 17), mutual legal assistance (art. 18), joint investigations (art. 19), cooperation in the use of special investigative techniques (art. 20, para. 2), transfer of criminal proceedings (art. 21), law enforcement cooperation (art. 27) and cooperation for the purposes of training and technical assistance (art. 29, para. 2).

### *Arms Trade Treaty*

5. The Arms Trade Treaty requires States parties to designate one or more national points of contact to exchange information on matters related to the implementation of the Treaty, to notify the secretariat of the Treaty of its national point(s) of contact and to keep the information updated (art. 5, para. 6).

### *Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons*

6. The Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and the International Tracing Instrument recommend United Nations Member States to establish or designate one or more national points of contact to exchange information and act as liaison between States on matters relating to the implementation of the respective instrument. The Programme of Action also refers to inter-agency cooperation, and Member States undertake therein:

(a) To strengthen or develop agreed norms and measures at the national level that would reinforce and further coordinate efforts to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects (sect. I, para. 22 (a));

(b) To establish, or designate as appropriate, national coordination agencies or bodies and institutional infrastructure responsible for policy guidance, research and monitoring of efforts to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects (sect. II, para. 4);

(c) To ensure coordination, complementarity and synergy in efforts to deal with the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects at the national level and to encourage the establishment and strengthening of cooperation and partnerships at all levels among international and intergovernmental organizations and civil society, including non-governmental organizations and international financial institutions (sect. III, para. 2).

### **III. National inter-agency coordination mechanisms**

7. Firearms control requires multisectoral approaches, just as complex investigations into firearms-related cases often involve authorities in charge of different subject matters at the local, national and international levels. Inter-agency cooperation and coordination at both the policy and operational levels is therefore key to effectively addressing licit and illicit firearms in a country. The Firearms Protocol does not explicitly mention inter-agency coordination mechanisms, but it requires States parties to establish a single point of contact to act as a liaison between it and other States parties on matters relating to the Protocol (art. 13, para. 2). Given that the broad spectrum of firearms control measures and criminal justice responses addressed in the Firearms Protocol correlate to the mandates of various national authorities, the functioning of that single point of contact envisioned in the Protocol will inevitably require some form of inter-agency cooperation.

8. At its eighth meeting, in 2021, the Working Group adopted several recommendations related to inter-agency cooperation, in which it encouraged States to establish national strategies and standing operational procedures on inter-institutional coordination among arms control, customs and law enforcement authorities, prosecutors and financial intelligence units (recommendation 15); encouraged States to analyse illicit arms trafficking and financing of terrorism risks, combining the knowledge of relevant agencies, including financial crime specialists, intelligence authorities, authorities specializing in arms control and criminal justice authorities, and promote inter-agency cooperation in that regard (recommendation 16); and requested UNODC to assist States, upon request, in building the capacities of their relevant agencies and officials and in establishing joint strategies to reduce illicit financial and arms flows in order to ensure better cooperation and effective coordination among relevant agencies dealing with illicit financial flows and firearms trafficking (recommendation 21).

9. At the policy level, a large proportion of countries have established national coordination mechanisms, often in the form of small arms and light weapons commissions and inter-institutional committees, to coordinate firearms control policies, develop national firearms strategies and action plans and ensure policy coherence across all sectors of government. In contrast, integrated firearms centres and national firearms focal points serve more operational purposes. They are established with the aim of building a better intelligence picture over time and centralizing expertise in preventing and countering the illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms, their parts and components and ammunition, and they serve as single points of contact.

#### **A. National coordination mechanisms and small arms and light weapons commissions and inter-institutional committees**

10. Once considered solely the responsibility of national security actors, firearms control is increasingly recognized as a multidimensional undertaking that requires interventions from a wide range of national actors. Comprehensive arms control regimes and responses addressing illicit firearms therefore dovetail the work of various national authorities, agencies and ministries. In this context, creating an effective national coordination mechanism can be an important step in adopting a coordinated, comprehensive and multisectoral approach to preventing and combating the illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms, their parts and components and ammunition. Conversely, the lack of such a mechanism can be a significant barrier to effective firearms control. Furthermore, a national coordination mechanism can serve as an interlocutor for the international community, which is often a prerequisite

for receiving technical assistance and financial support in the implementation of firearms control measures.<sup>1</sup>

11. Among the global instruments, the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects requires States to consider establishing or designating national coordination agencies or bodies and institutional infrastructure responsible for policy guidance, research and monitoring. These agencies are often referred to as small arms and light weapons commissions or inter-institutional committees and have the role of ensuring that all relevant sectors of government at the national and subnational levels, as well as non-governmental stakeholders, are involved in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of national firearms control programmes.<sup>2</sup>

12. Some regional instruments require States parties to create such mechanisms. For instance, the Economic Community of West African States Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and Other Related Materials requires States parties to establish a national commission as national coordination agency (art. 24). Similarly, pursuant to article 6 of the Protocol on the Control of Firearms, Ammunition and Other Related Materials in the Southern African Development Community Region, States parties are required to establish inter-agency working groups, involving the police, the military, customs, home affairs, foreign affairs and other relevant agencies, to improve policy coordination, information-sharing and analysis at the national level.

13. To date, at least 88 States have established and nominated national coordination agencies.<sup>3</sup> However, the mandate and effectiveness of these institutions may vary significantly from one country to another. Sometimes, what is referred to as a small arms and light weapons commission or inter-institutional committee may, in fact, be an individual acting as coordinator of an unidentified body with an unspecified mandate and no or limited resources.<sup>4</sup>

14. The module on national coordinating mechanisms on small arms and light weapons control of the Modular Small-arms-control Implementation Compendium provides guidance on the roles, functions and composition of national coordination mechanisms. While specific functions and roles may vary between different jurisdictions, five broad mandates can be distinguished:<sup>5</sup>

(a) **Knowledge and evidence-base.** Monitor, on an ongoing basis, the impact of firearms on State and human security, as well as on economic and social well-being in the territory. Recurring assessments should investigate the extent, distribution, safety and security of State holdings, civilian holdings and holdings of private companies, as well as the manufacturing processes of the industry, and should gather information on criminal and violent misuse of firearms, and firearms trafficking and other diversion modalities, including the drivers of illicit demand and supply and trafficking routes;

(b) **Policy development.** Provide strategic oversight of and direction to firearms control efforts and design and oversee the implementation of firearms control

<sup>1</sup> CTOC/COP/WG.6/2020/3 and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); and *How to Guide the Establishment and Functioning of National Small Arms and Light Weapons Commissions* (Geneva, Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery, 2008), p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> United Nations, Office of Disarmament Affairs, Modular Small-arms-control Implementation Compendium, MOSAIC 03.40, “National coordinating mechanisms on small arms and light weapons control”, Reference No. MOSAIC 03.40:2014(E)V1.0 (2018), p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Available at <https://smallarms.un-arm.org/national-contacts>.

<sup>4</sup> UNDP, *How to Guide the Establishment and Functioning of National Small Arms and Light Weapons Commissions*, p. 4.

<sup>5</sup> United Nations, Office of Disarmament Affairs, Modular Small-arms-control Implementation Compendium, MOSAIC 03.40, “National coordinating mechanisms on small arms”, item 7; and UNDP, *How to Guide the Establishment and Functioning of National Small Arms and Light Weapons Commissions*, chap. 2, item 2.1.

strategies and national action plans in consultation with relevant stakeholders, which may include advice on resource mobilization and allocation;

(c) **Coordination.** Identify and designate the government entities that will have responsibility for each aspect of firearms control and the implementation of national firearms strategies and action plans, in order to ensure policy coherence and prevent the duplication of roles at the national, subnational and district levels. In addition, coordinate and interact with civil society to determine the nature of the firearms problem across the country;

(d) **Outreach and information-sharing.** Disseminate to all relevant stakeholders, including parliamentarians and the media, information related to firearms control, including research findings on the impact of firearms. Establish communication with neighbouring countries and regional organizations to exchange information on policy directions;

(e) **Monitoring and evaluation.** Monitor the implementation of the firearms control strategy and the national action plan to ensure that implementation is proceeding according to plan, and review and update the policy documents if required to respond to changing operational conditions and to evaluations and research findings.

15. In Sierra Leone, for instance, the national commission on small arms and light weapons serves as the sole focal point for all matters relating to firearms and as the adviser to the Government on the formulation of policies and strategies for control of the illicit proliferation and circulation of small arms in Sierra Leone.<sup>6</sup> The national commission implemented a series of surveys on issues of stockpile security, legal and institutional frameworks and the socioeconomic impact of firearms after the war. Their work contributed to the creation of a five-year national action plan to manage small arms and light weapons and played a key role in the enactment of the Arms and Ammunition Bill.<sup>7</sup>

16. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, in October 2005, the Council of Ministers established the Coordination Board for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons, which is composed of representatives from the ministries of security, foreign affairs, interior, defence, foreign trade and economic relations, as well as the national tax authority. The Board meets on a regular basis and has, since its inception, developed a national strategy for the control of small arms and light weapons. It plans, coordinates, directs and supervises activities, including those carried out by international partners, for implementation of the strategy. The Board also reports regularly to both the Council of Ministers and international partners on progress made in the control of firearms in Bosnia and Herzegovina.<sup>8</sup>

17. Ideally, the membership of national coordination mechanisms is broad and inclusive, combining government agencies, civil society and private sector stakeholders with responsibility for areas that are directly or indirectly related to firearms control. This may include representatives of the single point of contact for applicable regional and international instruments related to firearms; the national security council; the ministries of defence, foreign affairs, interior, education, planning, finance, economic affairs, justice, health, trade and industry, and gender and youth affairs; the intelligence services; the Office of the President or Prime Minister; customs; the police forces; the Office of the Attorney General or Public Prosecutor; parliamentary commissions; and local government. To ensure that national coordination mechanisms benefit from the skills, perspectives and

<sup>6</sup> Sierra Leone National Commission on Small Arms, Office of the President, available at <https://slencsa.gov.sl/about-us/>.

<sup>7</sup> Margaret Sosuh, "Managing national commissions for small arms and light weapons control in West Africa", Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre Policy Brief, No. 1 (2013).

<sup>8</sup> UNDP, "The Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) control strategy in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2016–2020" (November 2016).

experiences of both men and women, their membership should also be gender-balanced, to the extent possible.<sup>9</sup>

18. Representatives of relevant industries and business sectors, as well as associations of sport shooters, hunters and firearms holders, can complement the picture and provide technical insight and guidance. In this regard, article 13, paragraph 3, of the Firearms Protocol requires States parties to seek the support and cooperation of manufacturers, dealers, importers, exporters, brokers and commercial carriers of firearms, their parts and components and ammunition, to prevent and detect illicit activities related to firearms.

19. Representatives of civil society provide a crucial link to local communities that are directly or indirectly affected by firearms, relaying community concerns and priorities, lobbying Governments and advocating effective firearms control. In some countries, civil society organizations are formally included in national coordination mechanisms, while in others, civil society organizations are not formal members but are consulted on a regular basis. For example, the Coordination Committee on Firearms Control Policies of Argentina, which comprises representatives of various ministries, provincial and municipal executives, and the federal and provincial judiciary, is supported by an advisory council. The advisory council is made up of civil society actors specialized in the subject, members of the academic and scientific community, and representatives of regional and international governmental organizations.

20. In some countries, national coordination mechanisms have decentralized bodies at the geographical and thematic levels. In Uganda, for instance, to ensure appropriate representation at the district and provincial levels, the national small arms and light weapons commission is mirrored at the district level through regional task forces in which district representatives participate.<sup>10</sup> With regard to thematic decentralization, some coordination mechanisms have set up purpose-specific task forces or working groups, which can be permanent or established on an ad hoc basis.

## **B. Integrated firearms centres and firearms focal points**

21. In many jurisdictions, firearms-related information, such as information on international transfers, civilian possession, seizures, ballistic evidence and the use of firearms in crime, is spread across different databases that are neither interconnected nor interoperable. The absence of appropriate channels for relevant actors to access such information weakens efforts to effectively combat trafficking in firearms and gun crime.

22. In this context, integrated firearms centres and national firearms focal points play an important role in enhancing the intelligence picture, initiating proactive, intelligence-led investigations, improving operational cooperation at both the international and inter-agency levels and better informing stakeholders in order to target firearms trafficking at the national, regional and international levels. This is mainly achieved through the collection, analysis and sharing of information on licit and illicit firearms at the strategic and operational levels.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> UNDP, *How to Guide the Establishment and Functioning of National Small Arms and Light Weapons Commissions*, chap. 3, item 3.2 and United Nations, Office of Disarmament Affairs, *Modular Small-arms-control Implementation Compendium*, MOSAIC 03.40, “National coordinating mechanisms on small arms”, p. 5.

<sup>10</sup> More information on the national focal point on small arms and light weapons of Uganda is available on the website of the Ministry of Internal Affairs Republic of Uganda ([www.mia.go.ug/departments/national-focal-point](http://www.mia.go.ug/departments/national-focal-point)).

<sup>11</sup> European Multidisciplinary Platform against Criminal Threats Firearms and European Firearms Experts, “Best practice guidance for the creation of National Firearms Focal Points (NFP)”.

23. Integrated firearms centres are usually assigned some or all of the following functions:<sup>12</sup>

(a) **Information hub.** Maintaining or having access to all databases containing firearms-related data, including (i) registries of legal firearms; (ii) records of ballistic evidence; (iii) records of seized, lost, stolen and recovered firearms; and (iv) notification mechanisms that ensure that all gun-related incidents are reported. This ensures that information that would otherwise be dispersed across various departments and units in law enforcement agencies is collated in one place and integrated for use and cross-reference;<sup>13</sup>

(b) **Tracing and ballistic centre.** Carrying out ballistic analysis, tracing all seized, found and surrendered firearms from the manufacturer to the most recent legal owner (where feasible) and responding to incoming tracing requests;

(c) **Data and intelligence analysis and sharing.** Collecting, systematizing and analysing gun crime and firearms tracing data to identify the scale, trends, modalities and trafficking routes in order to provide updated intelligence to customs and law enforcement agencies for proactive investigations and to inform policymakers;

(d) **Point of contact and liaison.** Acting as a liaison at the national level, between relevant agencies, and at the regional and international levels (see also the information on single points of contact in section IV, below) to facilitate various forms of international cooperation and support international reporting requirements and data collection initiatives, such as the UNODC illicit arms flows questionnaire and the annual reports on the implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and the International Tracing Instrument.

24. A prominent function of integrated firearms centres is the standardized and systematic gathering and analysis of firearms-related data, statistics, information and intelligence. Such analysis can be strategic in nature, focusing on the different types of firearms used in crime and their illicit origin for threat assessments, early warnings and policy guidance documents. In contrast, the systematic analysis of information for operational purposes can help to link investigations carried out by different units in a country and coordinate their work, in order to establish investigative leads and identify suspects and trafficking networks. Centralized access to information also permits integrated firearms centres to share information with foreign law enforcement institutions, as well as with international organizations to enhance the global intelligence picture with regard to illicit firearms flows.<sup>14</sup>

25. States of the European Union and the Western Balkans have made significant efforts to establish interconnected national focal points on firearms, with the aim of developing expertise and improving analysis and strategic reporting on trafficking in firearms, notably through the combined use of ballistic and criminal intelligence.<sup>15</sup> In the 2020–2025 European Union action plan on firearms trafficking, the European Commission noted that the intelligence picture remained patchy owing to the absence of comprehensive and comparable data on firearms seizures across the continent, limited exchange of information for intelligence and profiling purposes and a lack of communication and coordination between different administrations, both within countries and at the international level. In that context, the Commission urged member

<sup>12</sup> For a detailed description of functions, see Council of the European Union, document No. 10726/21, annex, p. 4; European Multidisciplinary Platform against Criminal Threats Firearms and European Firearms Experts, “Best Practice guidance”, p. 2; and Siniša Milatović, “Guidelines on establishing a firearms focal point” (Belgrade, South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons, 2020), pp. 8–10.

<sup>13</sup> Milatović, “Guidelines on establishing a firearms focal point”, p. 9.

<sup>14</sup> Council of the European Union, Manual on law enforcement information exchange, document No. 5825/20, p. 50; European Multidisciplinary Platform against Criminal Threats Firearms and European Firearms Experts, “Best practice guidance”, p. 1.

<sup>15</sup> European Commission, document COM(2015) 624.

States and South-East Europe partners to complete the establishment of fully staffed and trained firearms focal points in each jurisdiction. Furthermore, in the European Union strategy against illicit firearms, small arms and light weapons and their ammunition, the role of firearms focal points in producing better analysis of information on illicit firearms and exchanging information on firearms trafficking was highlighted.

26. While challenges remain with regard to the full operationalization of the focal points,<sup>16</sup> to date, 20 States members of the European Union and four Western Balkan partners have put in place a form of firearms focal point.<sup>17</sup> In a survey carried out among national firearms focal points in the European Union and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the majority of respondents reported that the existence of such focal points improved investigative and analytical capacities, cross-border law enforcement cooperation and, most significantly, the flow of information. Half of the respondents also reported that the focal points were understaffed, with staffing levels ranging from 1 person (Finland) to 21 persons (Spain), with an average of 6.75 persons reported.<sup>18</sup>

27. In addition to the national firearms focal points, the European Union also benefited from the establishment of a regional focal point on firearms within the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol). A total of 21 member States and 6 third partners are associated with that regional focal point. With the aim of providing strategic and operational support to ongoing investigations, the regional focal point was set up in 2014, and in its first two years, had already received around 4,800 contributions in relation to approximately 625 investigations, including information on 35,000 firearms, 28,700 persons and almost 3,220 companies.<sup>19</sup>

28. The United Kingdom was a forerunner in the development of a national firearms focal point, having established the National Ballistics Intelligence Service in 2008. The Service is a national centre of excellence for forensic science, intelligence and knowledge relating to the use, supply, distribution and manufacture of illegal firearms and ammunition. The Service supports law enforcement agencies at the local, regional and national levels and also offers support internationally through engagement with Europol, the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), UNODC and the United Nations Development Programme. Based on forensic examination, the Service provides law enforcement agencies with strategic and tactical reports and intelligence bulletins that inform operational activity on firearms trafficking and manufacturing modalities and trends. A key feature of the Service is the deployment of force liaison officers within different police forces and agencies at the local level to ensure better recognition of ballistic material by front-line officers. As part of its transformation vision 2020–2025, the Service also initiated the development of a mobile application to enable front-line responders to submit information on recovered firearms to Service databases in real time.<sup>20</sup>

29. Similar to the firearms focal points that have been established in Europe, in 2016 the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives of the United States of America launched a network of 25 crime gun intelligence centres, located across the nation. The centres engage in inter-agency collaboration to collect, analyse and distribute intelligence and investigative leads on crime guns, mass shootings and major incidents across multiple jurisdictions, with the aim of targeting and prosecuting the sources of crime guns. To that end, the centres have access to the National Integrated Ballistic Information Network to identify links between shootings

<sup>16</sup> European Commission, document SWD(2019) 282, pp. 31 and 37.

<sup>17</sup> European Commission, document COM(2020) 608.

<sup>18</sup> Marina Mancuso and Deborah Manzi, *Options for Enhancing Operational Instruments in the Area of Firearms Trafficking: Final Report of Project ECOFIT* (Milan, Italy, Transcrime 2021), p. 88.

<sup>19</sup> European Commission, document COM(2015) 624.

<sup>20</sup> Available at [www.nabis.police.uk/who-are-we/our-purpose/](http://www.nabis.police.uk/who-are-we/our-purpose/). See also the National Ballistics Intelligence Service Strategy 2020–2025, available at [www.nabis.police.uk/who-are-we/our-strategy/](http://www.nabis.police.uk/who-are-we/our-strategy/).



and other firearms-related cases in different jurisdictions, as well as access to eTrace, a secure, web-based law enforcement network run by the National Tracing Center of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, to trace recovered firearms from manufacture to the most recent legal purchase. Investigators use those data to uncover patterns of firearms trafficking, identify illegal and “straw” firearms purchasers and develop leads to recover firearms used in violent crimes. The centres are staffed by special agents of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, industry operations investigators, forensics experts, intelligence specialists and prosecutors. In the 2019 financial year, 450,000 crime guns were traced back to their origin and 67,000 investigative leads were generated by 220 National Integrated Ballistic Information Network stations.<sup>21</sup>

## IV. International cooperation mechanisms

30. Firearms trafficking is, by definition, a transnational crime. Its investigation often requires the cooperation of authorities from one or more countries in order to gather relevant evidence and information on the persons involved in the trafficking chain across different jurisdictions. Therefore, in accordance with article 13, paragraph 1, of the Firearms Protocol, States parties are required to cooperate at the bilateral, regional and international levels to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms, their parts and components and ammunition. Too often, however, investigations remain at the national level, resulting in lost opportunities to build a global picture of illicit firearms flows. In order to provide policy guidance to Member States, the Office for Disarmament Affairs and UNODC have jointly developed a module on criminal justice responses to illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons of the Modular Small-arms-control Implementation Compendium.<sup>22</sup> The module provides a good overview of different forms of international cooperation in criminal matters related to preventing and countering arms and ammunition trafficking and related criminal offences.

31. International cooperation in criminal matters is usually divided into policy cooperation, law enforcement cooperation and judicial cooperation (see sects. B, C and D, below). Single points of contact at the national level are key authorities for channelling these forms of international cooperation (see sect. A, below).

### A. Single points of contact

32. All international arms control instruments require the establishment of national bodies or single points of contact for liaising and sharing information with relevant national stakeholders, other States, international, regional and subregional bodies and the United Nations on matters relating to the respective instrument. This means that the single point of contact must have, on the one hand, knowledge of policy, legal and technical requirements related to the implementation of the instruments and, on the other hand, an informed understanding of the roles, responsibilities and capacities of all relevant stakeholders within the jurisdiction of its State, in order to consult, interact and share information.<sup>23</sup> For example, States members of the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR) have signed a memorandum of understanding under which, at the national level, single points of contact must establish a system of communication with domestic enforcement authorities to enable the expeditious processing of information on firearms with external partners.

<sup>21</sup> Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, “Crime Gun Intelligence Centers (CGIC) fact sheet” (June 2020).

<sup>22</sup> United Nations, Office of Disarmament Affairs, Modular Small-arms-control Implementation Compendium, MOSAIC 03.50 “Criminal justice responses to illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons” (United Nations publication, forthcoming).

<sup>23</sup> United Nations, Office of Disarmament Affairs, Modular Small-arms-control Implementation Compendium, MOSAIC 03.40, “National coordinating mechanisms on small arms”, p. 4.

33. To establish synergies, increase policy coherence and minimize coordination challenges, States may find it useful to designate one central single point of contact for matters related to all relevant international and regional instruments, instead of separate points of contact for each instrument.<sup>24</sup> This also facilitates the production of standardized and comparable data in relation to different reporting obligations and eliminates the risk of discrepancies in the information submitted. To that end, single points of contact should be part of or closely associated with integrated firearms centres, firearms focal points and national coordination mechanisms, where they exist. The European Union, for instance, encouraged member States to designate the same national firearms focal point for the UNODC illicit arms flows questionnaire and for the implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and the International Tracing Instrument.<sup>25</sup>

34. To date, only 66 of the 122 States parties to the Firearms Protocol have nominated single points of contact for matters pertaining to the Protocol.<sup>26</sup> As the Conference of the Parties to the Organized Crime Convention has urged in various resolutions, States should provide full and up-to-date information on their single point of contact through the UNODC online directory of competent national authorities (CTOC/COP/2018/13).

35. Considering the wide range of preventive and enforcement measures in the Firearms Protocol, the roles and responsibilities of a single point of contact can be equally broad. They may include functions pertaining to national licensing authorities, such as verification that import licences have been issued, transit States have no objection to the transit of firearms and a shipment has been received (art. 10, paras. 2 and 4); and verification or validation of the authenticity of licensing or authorization documents (art. 10, para. 5), as well as control and law enforcement functions such as the coordination of border controls and police and customs transborder cooperation (art. 11 (b)); and exchange of information as provided for under article 12, in particular cooperation in the tracing of firearms.<sup>27</sup> Lastly, such points of contact can serve as focal points for the purpose of the UNODC Monitoring Illicit Arms Flow initiative and the related annual collection of data and information on illicit firearms through the illicit arms flows questionnaire.

## B. Policy cooperation

36. At the global level, intergovernmental meetings, such as meetings of the Working Group on Firearms, the Conference of the Parties to the Organized Crime Convention, the Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty, the plenary of the Wassenaar Arrangement on Export Controls for Conventional Arms and Dual-Use Goods and Technologies and its subsidiary bodies, and the Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, are important forums for considering the implementation of their respective instruments and discussing arms control and firearms issues more broadly.

37. Several regions have also established regional policy coordination mechanisms and platforms. The Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Council of the European Union, document No. 10726/21, p. 5.

<sup>26</sup> United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Directory of Competent National Authorities, available at <https://sherloc.unodc.org/cld/v3/sherloc/cna/>; and Programme of Action on small arms and light weapons, “National points of contact”, available at <https://smallarms.un-arm.org/national-contacts>.

<sup>27</sup> UNODC, *Technical Guide to the Implementation 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* (Vienna, 2011), p. 99.

of the Organization of American States is complemented by a conference of the States parties and a consultative committee and is comparable with the Conference of the Parties to the Organized Crime Convention. Another example is the Regional Centre on Small Arms in the Great Lakes Region, the Horn of Africa and Bordering States, which is an intergovernmental organization that was established in 2005 with the sole mandate of coordinating the implementation of the Nairobi Protocol for the Prevention, Control and Reduction of Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa and building the capacities of member States in that regard.<sup>28</sup> In Europe, the Forum for Security Co-operation of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe develops norms and provides practical assistance to address the proliferation of illicit small arms and light weapons.<sup>29</sup>

## C. Law enforcement and customs cooperation

38. In accordance with article 27 of the Organized Crime Convention, States parties must cooperate closely with one another to enhance the effectiveness of law enforcement action to combat the offences covered by the Convention and the Protocols thereto. This includes establishing channels of communication between competent authorities, agencies and services in order to facilitate the secure and rapid exchange of information, conducting inquiries with respect to suspects, promoting the exchange of personnel and other experts, and exchanging information with other States parties on specific means and methods used by organized criminal groups. Generally, the systematic and spontaneous exchange of information may provide national authorities with important insights in order to prevent and counter firearms trafficking and related forms of crime.

### 1. Liaison officers and attachés

39. Liaison officers are usually law enforcement officers posted at embassies, consulates and the headquarters of multilateral organizations or partner law enforcement agencies. Their function is to strengthen cooperation with the appropriate authorities in the host country or the organization to which they are posted by acting as direct channels of information exchange (art. 27, para. 1 (d), of the Organized Crime Convention). They can play an important role in the coordination of transnational operations and the investigation and prosecution of firearms trafficking and related forms of crime. The UNODC *Digest of Organized Crime Cases* includes various cases in which liaison officers were considered an essential factor in the success of the investigation.<sup>30</sup>

40. A good example of the use of liaison officers is the large network of bilateral and regional attachés, from authorities with different firearms-related mandates, of the United States. In Central America, the United States has deployed liaison officers from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, United States Customs and Border Protection and United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement to work on firearms issues. The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives maintains a regional office for Central and South America in El Salvador in order to, inter alia, assist law enforcement authorities in 17 countries in tracing firearms using the Bureau's National Tracing Center. United States Customs and Border Protection attachés in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras and a regional attaché in Panama City provide support to national authorities through targeted inspections of items, including firearms, being transported into and out of the United States. Homeland Security Investigations, an operational directorate of United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement, is responsible for export control investigations, including investigations into the smuggling of firearms from the United States to Central America. Through attachés and transnational criminal

<sup>28</sup> Available at <https://recsasec.org/>.

<sup>29</sup> Available at [www.osce.org/forum-for-security-cooperation](http://www.osce.org/forum-for-security-cooperation).

<sup>30</sup> UNODC, *Digest of Organized Crime Cases: A Compilation of Cases with Commentaries and Lessons Learned* (Vienna, 2012), para. 148.

investigative units in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras, United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement works with United States and foreign law enforcement to identify and prosecute traffickers and seize illegal firearms.<sup>31</sup>

41. Similarly, France, through its International Security Cooperation Directorate of the French National Police and National Gendarmerie, has established a network of internal security services in 74 embassies to engage in bilateral and multilateral cooperation in the areas of terrorism and transnational organized crime, including firearms trafficking. The network is staffed by 300 police and gendarmerie officers, covering more than 150 countries in all five continents.<sup>32</sup>

42. In the area of border control, the World Customs Organization operates a global network of regional intelligence liaison offices that collect, analyse and supplement data and disseminate information on trends, *modi operandi* and trafficking routes, including in relation to firearms trafficking. Through the liaison offices, customs authorities can share data on firearms seizures in order to facilitate the detection of patterns of such trafficking.

## 2. Regional and global cooperation agreements, platforms and organizations

43. Bilateral, regional and global cooperation agreements, platforms and organizations related to the prevention and combating of firearms trafficking can take multiple forms. Through the conduct of information-sharing activities and periodic meetings, cooperation platforms, have proved to be useful in improving the intelligence picture related to illicit firearms, building trust and fostering cooperation among police agencies.

44. An example of bilateral cooperation related to security in general, and firearms in particular, is the adoption by the United States and Mexico, in September 2021, of the Bicentennial Framework for Security, Public Health and Safe Communities. Goal 2 of the agreement seeks to diminish the capacity of transnational criminal organizations and prevent trafficking in arms. To achieve this, both countries committed to expanding cooperation in the area of firearms tracing, collaborating on investigations and sharing information, including post-seizure information, and maximizing the law enforcement, investigative and prosecutorial impact of finding and seizing firearms. They affirmed the need to continue current efforts to prevent firearms sold in the United States from reaching Mexico, and to continue current actions to identify, target and investigate financing, transportation and communication methods employed by trafficking networks in order to disrupt and dismantle their operations. The agreement also contained a pledge to expand training, increase personnel and set up additional ballistics laboratories to process over 80,000 seized weapons in Mexico.<sup>33</sup> The United States and Canada re-established the Cross-Border Crime Forum in 2022. Part of its mandate is to reduce firearms violence by reducing cross-border firearms trafficking through the leveraging of collective resources, including intelligence, to identify the source and movement of unlawful firearms.<sup>34</sup>

45. In addition to bilateral cooperation, regional efforts are multifold. Regional police organizations, such as Europol, the Police Community of the Americas and the Association of Heads of Police of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, play an important role in exchanging information and intelligence and providing capacity-building, operational platforms and secure communication channels with a view to improving the capability of law enforcement agencies to carry out complex

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<sup>31</sup> United States Government Accountability Office, *Firearms Trafficking: More Information is Needed to Inform U.S. Efforts in Central America*, GAO-22-104680 (January 2022), p. 7.

<sup>32</sup> More information is available at <https://uk.ambafrance.org/Police-Attache-s-Office>.

<sup>33</sup> United States, White House, “Fact sheet: U.S.-Mexico high-level security dialogue”, 27 September 2021; and United States Mission to Mexico “Joint statement: U.S.-Mexico high-level security dialogue”, 8 October 2021.

<sup>34</sup> United States Department of Homeland Security, “The U.S. and Canada re-establish the cross-border crime forum”, 22 March 2022.

investigations into firearms trafficking networks. Europol, for instance, publishes the Serious and Organized Crime Threat Assessment to update Europe's law enforcement community and decision makers on developments in serious and organized crime.<sup>35</sup> In more specific relation to firearms, Europol runs the Analysis Project Weapons and Explosives, through which it provides analytical and operational support related to criminal organizations and individuals involved in the illegal manufacturing and possession of and trafficking in small arms, light weapons, ammunition, parts and components, and explosives.<sup>36</sup>

46. In connection to the work of Europol, the European Multidisciplinary Platform against Criminal Threats implements activities related to various priority areas of crime, including firearms trafficking. On the basis of the findings of the Europol Serious and Organized Crime Threat Assessment, the European Council identifies priorities that lead to the development of operational action plans by the Multidisciplinary Platform. The action plans are implemented by improving and strengthening cooperation between the relevant services of member States, European Union agencies and third-party countries and organizations, including the private sector where relevant.<sup>37</sup> During the implementation of its operational action plan for 2021, several cross-border operations were carried out, resulting in the seizure of more than 4,000 firearms and about 7,500 rounds of ammunition and the arrest of about 400 persons.<sup>38</sup> UNODC participates in various operational actions as a co-leader or participant.

47. At the global level, INTERPOL has developed several information technology tools that facilitate global information exchange and cooperation between authorized law enforcement agencies, including specialized tools on firearms trafficking and firearms crime. For instance, through the INTERPOL Illicit Arms Records and Tracing Management System, to which over 180 countries have access, members can trace seized, lost and stolen firearms. Furthermore, the INTERPOL Ballistic Information Network is a large-scale international ballistic data-sharing network for the centralized collection, storage and cross-comparison of ballistics data. These weapon-specific systems can be used in parallel with broader INTERPOL tools, such as the network of national central bureaus, the system of international notices and any other INTERPOL database, accessible through the I-24/7 global police communications system.<sup>39</sup>

48. With regard to border control, the World Customs Organization has developed the Customs Enforcement Network, a global system for gathering data and information to combat transnational organized crime, including customs offences related to weapons and explosives. The network permits customs officers to access and upload information on seizures and offences by customs authorities. That information comprises data required for the analysis of illicit trafficking; a concealment picture database to illustrate unusual concealment methods and to exchange X-ray pictures; and an encrypted communication network that facilitates cooperation and the exchange of information and intelligence among customs services.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>35</sup> European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol), *A Corrupting Influence: The Infiltration and Undermining of Europe's Economy and Society by Organised Crime*, European Union Serious and Organised Crime Threat Assessment (Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union, 2021).

<sup>36</sup> Europol, Operations, services and innovation, "Europol analysis projects", 6 December 2021.

<sup>37</sup> Europol, Crime areas, "EU policy cycle: EMPACT–EMPACT 2022+ fighting crime together", 20 January 2022.

<sup>38</sup> Europol, "EU policy cycle: EMPACT"; and European Union, *EMPACT 2021 Results: Factsheets* (2022).

<sup>39</sup> UNODC, *Technical Guide to the Implementation of the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms*, pp. 101 ff.; and United Nations, Office of Disarmament Affairs, *Modular Small-arms-control Implementation Compendium, MOSAIC 05.60, "Border controls and law enforcement cooperation"* (2018), p. 3 ff.

<sup>40</sup> United Nations, Office of Disarmament Affairs, *Modular Small-arms-control Implementation Compendium, "Border controls and law enforcement cooperation"*, p 5.

### **3. Networks of firearms experts and communities of practitioners**

49. Many cases of transnational trafficking are disclosed thanks to the spontaneous transmission of information or intelligence by one country to another. Therefore, regular direct contact between practitioners, through events such as meetings and seminars, provides a good opportunity for sharing and discussing experiences, knowledge and promising practices. When practitioners can meet on a regular basis, levels of mutual trust and confidence are considerably higher and the quality and timeliness of case-specific information are considerably better than when formal requests are the only channel of communication.

50. Specialized networks of firearms experts and criminal justice practitioners entrusted with combating firearms trafficking can facilitate and support the exchange of expertise related to the effective investigation and prosecution of firearms crime. Such networks can be established at the regional level, such as the Working Group on Firearms and Ammunition of the Southern Common Market, the South East Europe Firearms Experts Network and the European Firearms Experts Steering Committee. At the global level, the UNODC Community of Practitioners against Firearms Trafficking and Related Crimes brings together firearms experts and criminal justice practitioners from various countries and regions to promote the interregional exchange of expertise, facilitate cooperation and information exchange and establish channels of communication across jurisdictions to discuss ongoing investigations.

### **4. Joint cross-border operations**

51. Joint cross-border operations can help to dismantle trafficking networks that operate on both sides of a border and can be conducted on an ad hoc basis in response to concrete information or as recurring operations to police border areas and prevent firearms trafficking. Examples of such operations include the Joint Action Days carried out under the European Multidisciplinary Platform against Criminal Threats programme of Europol,<sup>41</sup> the recurring UNODC KAFO operations in West Africa and the INTERPOL Trigger operations.

52. For example, the two-week operation “KAFO III”, conducted in December 2021, targeted the people and networks behind firearms trafficking in the Sahel. A total of 850 officers from relevant law enforcement agencies in seven Western African countries seized 594 firearms and several thousand rounds of ammunition, including from suspected terrorists. Over the years, the “KAFO” operations have improved understanding of the extent and nature of this crime in the region, including the links between firearms trafficking, terrorism and other forms of crime. The immediate operation was accompanied by training delivered through UNODC in the detection investigation and prosecution of firearms trafficking, to enable participating authorities to strengthen their capacities. The operation was coordinated at the national level by national commissions on small arms and light weapons and the INTERPOL national central bureaus. UNODC is currently supporting participating countries in following up on the cases opened as a result of the operation.<sup>42</sup>

### **5. Special investigative techniques**

53. The special investigative techniques referred to in article 20 of the Organized Crime Convention, such as controlled deliveries and electronic and other forms of surveillance, can constitute important measures to investigate the illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms, their parts and components and related forms of crime. Sufficient evidence to prove the commission of a firearms trafficking offence in criminal proceedings can sometimes be obtained only by using such techniques in the countries along the trafficking route; for example, by using undercover agents to make fake purchases, conducting controlled deliveries,

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<sup>41</sup> Europol, “382 arrests during joint actions against traffickers using the Balkan route”, 4 November 2022.

<sup>42</sup> UNODC, “Operation KAFO III: disrupting firearms trafficking flows in the Sahel with UNODC support”, 5 January 2022.

monitoring email accounts or wiretapping telephone conversations. Often, this warrants the opening of a parallel investigation in all countries in which an element of the offence has been committed, with a view to enabling the authorities in those countries to exchange information and evidence. In article 20, paragraph 2, of the Organized Crime Convention, State parties are encouraged to conclude, where necessary, appropriate bilateral or multilateral agreements or arrangements for using special investigative techniques at the international level.

## **D. Judicial cooperation**

54. Law enforcement and judicial cooperation are complementary. Often, when judicial cooperation is required to obtain certain evidence, it is preceded by an informal information exchange between law enforcement authorities to prepare the ground for the more formal process to follow. This is particularly important in cases in which different legal systems lead to differences in the gathering of evidence and the admissibility of such evidence in court.

55. The Organized Crime Convention provides a legal basis for international judicial cooperation, including between States that have not concluded any bilateral cooperation agreements. The provisions cover several forms of international cooperation such as extradition and mutual legal assistance for various purposes. Judicial cooperation can enable authorities in one country to obtain evidence from another country in a way that it is admissible domestically. For example, witnesses can be summoned, persons located, documents and other evidence produced, warrants issued and suspects extradited. Article 18 of the Organized Crime Convention provides that States parties must afford one another the widest measure of mutual legal assistance in investigations, prosecutions and judicial proceedings related to the offences covered by the Convention and the Protocols thereto.

56. In some regional organizations even closer forms of cooperation have been established, including the mutual recognition of judicial decisions. In the European Union, for example, member States agree, subject to specified grounds for refusal, to recognize and execute European arrest warrants without any further formalities or the dual criminality requirement for 32 offences, including trafficking in weapons, munitions and explosives.<sup>43</sup> Similar provisions apply under the Caribbean Community Arrest Warrant Treaty for offences relating to firearms, weapons and explosives. This means that member States are required to execute arrest warrants related to firearms crime, even though the conduct might not be criminalized domestically.

### **1. Parallel investigations and joint investigative teams and bodies**

57. In complex investigations into cases of firearms trafficking across different jurisdictions, parallel or joint investigations can facilitate cooperation, the exchange of information and the development of a common strategy. Two models are commonly used in practice. Under the first model, national authorities carry out parallel, coordinated but independent investigations into criminal conduct with links to two or more jurisdictions. Such parallel investigations may be assisted by a network of liaison officers or personal contacts and supplemented by formal requests for mutual legal assistance in order to obtain and share evidence. This type of cooperation requires a good degree of coordination to ensure that judicial proceedings in one country do not undermine those in another. In contrast, the second model consists of integrated joint investigative teams or bodies with officers from at least two States that conduct criminal investigations in one or more of the States. Compared with ad hoc parallel investigations, they allow participating authorities to be in permanent communication and share the results of the investigations in real time, without

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<sup>43</sup> Council of the European Union framework decision 2002/584/JHA on the European arrest warrant and the surrender procedures between member States.

requiring separate requests for mutual legal assistance for each investigative measure.<sup>44</sup>

58. Article 19 of the Organized Crime Convention relates to both types of joint investigation: those that involve joint investigative bodies that act as a permanent structure formed on the basis of a bilateral agreement, and those that involve joint investigative teams that focus on specific cases and are established for a limited duration and for a specific purpose (CTOC/COP/WG.3/2020/2). In past resolutions on firearms passed by the Conference of the Parties to the Organized Crime Convention, States parties were invited to consider establishing joint investigative teams in border regions that share information and intelligence on an ongoing basis and work jointly in border corridors,<sup>45</sup> and, most recently in 2022, to consider strengthening international cooperation for investigations and prosecutions and establishing joint investigative bodies, consistent with article 19 of the Organized Crime Convention.<sup>46</sup>

59. The European Union provides a good example of promoting the use of joint investigative teams, having established, in 2005, the Network of National Experts on Joint Investigation Teams to share experiences and best practice in using this tool. To that end, a restricted web platform was created that gives access to information on national legislation, the drafting of agreements for joint investigative teams and the most common practical and legal difficulties.<sup>47</sup>

## 2. Liaison judges and prosecutors

60. Similar to police attachés but in the area of judicial cooperation, States may exchange judges or prosecutors to act as a liaison. With knowledge of the laws and procedures of both their own jurisdiction and the host jurisdiction, such judges or prosecutors can facilitate contact with counterparts and provide informal assistance in the formulation and processing of requests for mutual legal assistance and other types of judicial cooperation.

61. In the European Union, for instance, liaison prosecutors from 10 countries outside the European Union are posted to the European Union Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation on the basis of international agreements with the respective countries. The liaison prosecutors work side by side with their colleagues from European Union member States to provide support in cross-border investigations involving their country and have access to the Agency's operational tools and facilities.<sup>48</sup>

## 3. Regional cooperation platforms

62. Judicial cooperation networks have been established in various regions, with a view to fostering cooperation between single points of contact at the regional level. These networks include the Ibero-American Network for International Legal Cooperation; the West African Network of Central Authorities and Prosecutors; the Judicial Cooperation Network for Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus; the Great Lakes Judicial Cooperation Network; the Sahel Judicial Platform; the South-East Asia Justice Network; the Commonwealth Network of Contact Persons; the European Judicial Network; the Hemispheric Information Exchange Network for Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters and Extradition of the Organization of American States; and the Judicial Regional Platform of the Indian Ocean Commission

<sup>44</sup> European Union Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation, *Joint Investigation Teams: Practical Guide* (Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union, 2021), p. 7.

<sup>45</sup> Conference of the Parties resolution 10/2, paragraph 18 (CTOC/COP/2020/10).

<sup>46</sup> Conference of the Parties resolution 11/6, paragraph 17 (CTOC/COP/2022/9).

<sup>47</sup> European Union Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation, Judicial cooperation, Practitioner networks, "JITs network". Available at [www.eurojust.europa.eu](http://www.eurojust.europa.eu).

<sup>48</sup> European Union Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation, States and partners, "Liaison prosecutors". Available at [www.eurojust.europa.eu](http://www.eurojust.europa.eu).



Countries. Some of the networks have been established by UNODC in close cooperation with the Governments of the respective region.

63. These networks bring together criminal justice practitioners appointed by the central authorities of member countries and support interregional cooperation by facilitating informal consultations through its contact points. The contact points can seek or provide support in drafting mutual legal assistance and extradition requests, obtain information about the status of the execution of a request, discuss challenges impeding the execution of requests and identify solutions to problems and gaps.

## V. Conclusions and recommendations

64. Inter-agency cooperation and international cooperation are key for policy coherence in the implementation of the Firearms Protocol and related arms control instruments. Concerted approaches to preventing and combating the illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms, their parts and components and ammunition, both domestically and internationally, are also vital. The present background paper has outlined measures that States can implement in that regard.

65. The Working Group may wish to consider the following possible actions by States parties in strengthening inter-agency and international cooperation in the context of firearms trafficking and criminality:

(a) Establishing national coordination mechanisms, comprising government agencies, civil society and private sector stakeholders, to provide policy guidance, research and monitoring for coordinated approaches in preventing and combating firearms trafficking and related forms of crime;

(b) Establishing integrated firearms centres or national focal points on firearms, to support informed policy decisions and intelligence-led investigations, based on strategic reporting and analysis of illicit firearms, through the combined use of ballistic and criminal intelligence, and designating these bodies as the single point of contact for international cooperation;

(c) Seeking the support of UNODC in establishing inter-agency coordination mechanisms, integrated firearms centres and national firearms focal points;

(d) Posting police attachés and liaison judges and prosecutors in countries located along prevalent firearms trafficking routes in order to establish direct communication channels for law enforcement and judicial cooperation;

(e) Engaging in the activities of the UNODC Community of Practitioners against Firearms Trafficking to exchange experiences and good practices related to addressing firearms trafficking and related forms of crime;

(f) Creating enabling conditions for supporting the establishment of joint investigative teams or bodies to carry out cross-border investigations in complex firearms trafficking cases and seeking the support of UNODC in this regard.