

Statement by the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs

Agenda item 2: Operationalizing the Firearms Protocol in view of technological developments relating to the illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms, their parts and components and ammunition

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

Working Group on Firearms

Vienna, 3-4 April 2024

Distinguished Chair,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to address the Working Group on Firearms on behalf of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs.

SALW and their ammunition continue to pose a threat to international peace and security around the world. They prolong conflict, facilitate organized crime, enable human rights abuses, and hinder sustainable development.

International arms control instruments, including the Firearms Protocol, the Arms Trade Treaty, the Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons (PoA) and its International Tracing Instrument (ITI), and the newly adopted Global Framework for Through-life Conventional Ammunition Management remain critical in enhancing national, regional and global efforts to combat and prevent illicit arms trafficking and their misuse.

However, progress in their implementation has been challenged by several factors including weak state capacities, insufficient resources and recent developments in weapon technology, manufacturing, and design which complicate tracing actions.

To inform your deliberations in this Working Group, allow me to concentrate on the issue of new technologies. I would highlight, in particular, the relevant discussions in the framework of the Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons.

It is an important sign of progress that the upcoming Fourth Review Conference of the PoA (RevCon4) which will take place next June, has been mandated to discuss the establishment of an open-ended technical expert group (OETEG) to develop recommendations for effective implementation of the ITI and the PoA in light of recent developments in manufacturing, technology and design, in particular polymer and modular weapons and firearms produced using 3D printing.

The much-anticipated OETEG is expected to comprehensively address not just the challenges but also the opportunities that technologies can bring to strengthen firearms control throughout their life-cycle. It is also expected to propose effective measures for dealing with future technologies.

Bridging the technological gap between states through international cooperation and assistance - including financial and technical support - is a vital consideration in the efforts to strengthen weapon tracing capabilities. This also would be an area of focus for the OETEG.

In the preparatory deliberations leading up to RevCon4, Member States are currently discussing, among other subjects, the main modalities for the establishment of the open-ended technical expert group.

Preliminary discussions indicate that membership and the composition of the group would be open to all Member States and seeks to ensure the appropriate level of technical expertise. This includes national experts in the fields of marking, tracing, forensics, law enforcement and legal services, as well as insights from the industry and private sector, academia and civil society to inform the process.

Regarding the lifespan of the future OETEG, the majority of States are leaning towards a limited duration, although a few have raised the need for a standing mechanism.

Finally, on the group's output, States could make recommendations on the type/nature of the internationally agreed measures on the issue of technological developments that would be adopted by the OETEG. In the recent past, a sizable number of States and the UN Secretary-General have called for the adoption of a technical annex to the ITI.

Chair,

As the substantive Secretariat of the Programme of Action, the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs is ready to support Member States in this process as well as to work closely with our colleagues at the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime as we move forward on the issue of new technologies and firearms.

I thank you for your attention.