



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

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Review of the implementation of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocols thereto: Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition

Activities of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime to promote and support 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

Report of the Secretariat

I. Introduction

1. The present report was prepared pursuant to resolution 9/2 of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, entitled “Enhancing and ensuring the effective 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”. In that resolution, the Conference highlighted that the Convention and, in particular, the Firearms Protocol were among the principal global legal instruments to combat the illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms, their parts and components and ammunition.

2. In the same resolution, the Conference noted with appreciation the assistance provided to requesting States by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), including through its Global Firearms Programme, for awareness-raising, the dissemination of information, and support for developing national legislation, aimed at promoting and facilitating adherence to the Organized Crime Convention and its Firearms Protocol, and requested UNODC to continue to assist requesting States in their efforts to adhere to and implement the Protocol. The Conference also encouraged those Member States in a position to do so to make available extrabudgetary resources to enable the Office to implement its mandate in this regard.

* [CTOC/COP/2020/1](#).



3. Also in resolution 9/2, the Conference requested UNODC to continue to assist requesting States in their efforts to strengthen their firearms control measures, consistent with the Firearms Protocol, with a view to preventing, combating and eradicating the illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms, their parts and components and ammunition, and to promote and encourage international cooperation in criminal matters, pursuant to the Convention, with the aim of investigating and prosecuting the illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms, their parts and components and ammunition, including when related to terrorism and to other crimes, such as urban crime committed by gangs, through regional and cross-regional workshops, including for countries that are on relevant trafficking routes.

4. Moreover, in the same resolution, the Conference requested UNODC to continue to collect and analyse, on a regular basis, quantitative and qualitative information and suitably disaggregated data on illicit trafficking in firearms, their parts and components and ammunition, taking into consideration the usefulness of the *UNODC Study on Firearms 2015* and target 16.4 of the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as to continue to share and disseminate its findings on best practices, the dimensions and characteristics of such trafficking, and lessons learned.

5. At the fifteenth anniversary of its entry into force, the Firearms Protocol has reached a total of 118 parties. Since the ninth session of the Conference, France (February 2019), Palau (May 2019) and the Sudan (October 2018) have acceded to the Protocol. Although several other Member States have informed the Secretariat about their ongoing and future plans to ratify or accede to the Protocol, the number of parties to this instrument continues to lag behind the number of parties to the Convention and its other Protocols. The 20-year anniversary of the adoption of the Firearms Protocol, which will be celebrated in July 2021, may provide an opportune moment for further increasing the commitment of Member States to this important international instrument.

6. The purpose of the present report is to inform the Conference about the activities carried out by UNODC to promote the ratification and implementation of the Firearms Protocol during the reporting period, from October 2018 to July 2020.

7. The second year of the reporting period saw the unprecedented global coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, which put serious strain on the capacity of Member States and the international community alike to continue their work and to face the complex challenges caused by the global sanitary and socioeconomic crisis. In close cooperation with national stakeholders and donors, UNODC put in place a contingency plan that made it possible to ensure that core work and services in the area of countering illicit firearms trafficking were not entirely disrupted and could in part be transferred to a remote working environment. Key achievements during the reporting period include the following:

(a) The substantive servicing of the seventh meeting of the Working Group on Firearms, held in a “hybrid” format on 16 and 17 July 2020;

(b) The expansion of technical assistance to new geographical and substantive areas, including a project in Ukraine and a regional project in cooperation with the United Nations Office on Counter-Terrorism on the links between arms trafficking, organized crime and terrorism in Central Asia;

(c) The launch of the *Global Study on Firearms Trafficking 2020*, which was developed in the context of the UNODC initiative to monitor illicit arms flows and was based on data from more than 100 countries and territories;

(d) The implementation of the first cross-border law enforcement operation coordinated by UNODC and implemented in cooperation with the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), targeting the people and networks behind firearms trafficking in Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire and Mali (Operation KAFO), which constituted a milestone in the support provided by UNODC in the area of illicit firearms trafficking;

(e) The in-depth evaluation of the Global Firearms Programme covering the period from 2011 to 2019.

II. Supporting effective criminal justice responses to the illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms, their parts and components and ammunition

8. The work of UNODC to prevent and counter the illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms, their parts and components and ammunition is spearheaded through the Global Firearms Programme. The Programme follows an integrated approach based on five major pillars, each covering one of five interrelated areas of action to address the different aspects of the problem: (a) enhancing policy and normative development through awareness-raising and legislative assistance to support the ratification and implementation of the Firearms Protocol; (b) provision of technical support for the implementation of preventive and security measures to prevent the illicit manufacturing and theft of and trafficking in firearms, their parts and components and ammunition; (c) strengthening criminal justice responses to detect, investigate and prosecute the illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms, their parts and components and ammunition; (d) fostering and promoting international cooperation and information exchange to address the transnational dimension of illicit firearms trafficking and related issues; and (e) mapping and monitoring illicit firearms flows by means of global data collection and analysis to enhance the collective understanding of trends and patterns in trafficking and of its criminal context. In doing so, the Programme also actively contributes to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular target 16.4 (by 2030, significantly reduce illicit financial and arms flows, strengthen the recovery and return of stolen assets and combat all forms of organized crime). The approach is complemented by a number of cross-cutting elements, such as gender mainstreaming, human rights and civil society participation and oversight, which are streamlined into the activities of the Programme.

Integrated five-pillar approach of the Global Firearms Programme



9. This approach is built on the premise that only the joint interaction of all five pillars can provide a meaningful framework for successful action and thereby support effective criminal justice responses to the illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms, their parts and components and ammunition.

10. During the reporting period, special attention was paid to the critical link between firearms trafficking, organized crime and terrorism and to establishing bridges and dynamic synergies between the various frameworks, mechanisms and stakeholders, to ensure greater efficiency and consistency across the multiple but complementary layers of action. This new paradigm emerged from the findings of the conference on the topic “Addressing illicit trafficking and access to firearms in the context of organized crime and terrorism – towards a new paradigm” jointly organized by Wilton Park and UNODC in January 2019, with the participation of practitioners from Africa, Asia, Europe and the Western Balkans and Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as leading experts in the field from United Nations partner agencies, international organizations, academia and civil society.

III. Activities to assist States in the implementation of the Protocol

11. During the reporting period, UNODC, through its Global Firearms Programme, carried out over 70 technical assistance activities and brought together more than 1,300 national stakeholders from more than 70 countries in Africa, Europe, the Middle East and North Africa region, the Western Balkans, the Americas and Central Asia to enhance international cooperation and information exchange through donor support.¹

A. Servicing intergovernmental bodies and processes related to firearms

1. Conference of the Parties and the Working Group on Firearms

12. The Office provided secretariat support for the seventh meeting of the Working Group on Firearms, held in a “hybrid” format on 16 and 17 July 2020, and prepared two background papers: one on the responsiveness of the Firearms Protocol and national legislation to new and emerging threats relating to the illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms, their parts and components and ammunition (CTOC/COP/WG.6/2020/2) and another on investigative and prosecutorial approaches in countering illicit firearms trafficking and related forms of crime within and across jurisdictions (CTOC/COP/WG.6/2020/3). The report on the meeting of the Working Group (CTOC/COP/WG.6/2020/4), which contains a summary of its deliberations, will be transmitted to the Conference at its tenth session.

2. Support for and cooperation with other intergovernmental bodies

13. During the reporting period, various intergovernmental bodies addressed the issue of firearms. UNODC provided substantive input for the twenty-eighth session of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice and for various reports to the General Assembly and the Security Council, such as the 2019 report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council on small arms and light weapons (S/2019/1011). Furthermore, UNODC provided input for reports of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly, including on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects and assistance to States for curbing the illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons and collecting them (A/75/78) and on women, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. Moreover, in April 2020 the Executive Director

¹ During the reporting period, activities of the Global Firearms Programme were funded through donations from France, Germany, Italy, Mexico, Sweden, the European Union, the Office of Counter-Terrorism, the multi-partner trust fund for the Western Balkans road map on small arms and light weapons, as well as from Denmark and Japan through the UNODC Sahel Programme.

of UNODC, Ghada Waly, participated in a meeting of the Executive Committee on the issue of small arms and light weapons.

14. In supporting cooperation and coordination among the governing bodies of the different instruments relating to firearms, UNODC participated in the fifth Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty, held in Geneva in August 2019, and organized a side event in collaboration with the Governments of Côte d'Ivoire and Mexico on the responsiveness of the Arms Trade Treaty and the Firearms Protocol to existing and emerging threats. UNODC also participated in the second Meeting of Presidents, Governing Bodies and Secretariats of International Instruments and Mechanisms on Small Arms and Light Weapons, on the topic of building synergies to prevent and combat illicit trafficking to achieve target 16.4 of the Sustainable Development Goals, held back to back with the meeting of the Consultative Committee of the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials in Washington, D.C., in April 2019.

15. Moreover, UNODC attended the high-level political forum on sustainable development held in New York in July 2019 and contributed to the discussion on Sustainable Development Goal 16 and target 16.4.

B. Development of tools

16. Several tools and publications have been developed by UNODC to provide practical guidance to Member States and support the delivery of technical assistance.

17. Legislative tools developed by UNODC in previous years continue to provide useful guidance to practitioners and support the delivery of legislative and technical assistance. For example, the UNODC Model Law on Firearms, developed in 2010 and updated in 2013, was downloaded 3,866 times during the reporting period. During the same period, the *Digest of Organized Crime Cases*, developed in 2012, was downloaded from the UNODC website more than 60,000 times. The cases contained in the *Digest* are also available in the knowledge management portal known as Sharing Electronic Resources and Laws on Crime (SHERLOC), and new cases are collected, analysed and uploaded on an ongoing basis. Finally, the *Comparative Analysis of Global Instruments on Firearms and Other Conventional Arms: Synergies for Implementation*, developed by UNODC in 2015, was downloaded 2,124 times during the reporting period and was frequently referenced by practitioners.

18. In the context of its initiative to monitor illicit arms flows, UNODC produced several technical assistance, outreach and visibility tools to promote and support evidence-based action against illicit firearms trafficking and related forms of crime. Building on different data collection tools used by national authorities and regional organizations and taking into account the data points requested by UNODC through the illicit arms flows questionnaire, UNODC developed a set of guiding templates for firearms-related investigations. The templates, which are available in English, French and Spanish, provide guidance to law enforcement and judicial officers on the type and scope of information to record during investigations involving seized firearms, their parts and components and ammunition. A short video clip produced by UNODC in English, French and Spanish highlights the investigative steps during which firearms-related data should be collected and explains how systematic firearms data collection at the national and global levels can support effective responses to illicit firearms trafficking. Finally, a new issue paper entitled "Supporting evidence-based action to counter illicit firearms trafficking and related forms of crime" illustrates how firearms-related data collection and analysis can create an evidence base for decision-making at the policy and operational levels. The various tools are published on the website of the Global Firearms Programme.²

² See www.unodc.org/unodc/en/firearms-protocol/.

19. The comprehensive firearms training curriculum, which is regularly reviewed and updated, continued to be used for capacity-building. The process of transferring the curriculum into e-learning modules was initiated during the reporting period.

20. In the context of the UNODC Education for Justice (E4J) initiative, the Global Firearms Programme continued to develop teaching modules to support tertiary-level educators in addressing the topic of illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms, their parts and components and ammunition and related topics in an academic setting. In 2019, the modules were translated into Spanish and Russian, and they were disseminated during regional training activities in Croatia, Kazakhstan, Nigeria and the United States of America.

21. Pursuant to a recommendation made by the Working Group on Firearms at its fifth meeting, held from 8 to 10 May 2017, UNODC continued to collect and analyse relevant judicial cases and good practices to investigate and prosecute firearms trafficking cases linked to terrorism and organized crime. The collected cases, expert commentaries and emerging good practices will be published in a digest of firearms trafficking cases linked to organized crime and terrorism, which will compile and analyse practical experiences, including concrete legal techniques, common protocols and operational norms in combating those crimes, as well as new and emerging forms of criminality.

22. Moreover, the Global Firearms Programme developed a specialized training module on the detection of illicit firearms through postal services and initiated collaboration with the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) to support the development of a handbook on the detection of firearms for border guards and customs officers, by contributing relevant training materials and participating in meetings to develop the tool.

C. Technical assistance

1. Policy and normative development to support the ratification and implementation of the Firearms Protocol

(a) Increasing knowledge and raising awareness

23. Under the framework of its Education for Justice initiative, UNODC organized several expert workshops for university lecturers, in Croatia, Italy, Kazakhstan and Nigeria, and convened two academic round tables at the annual meeting of the American Society of Criminology in San Francisco, United States, in November 2019, which was attended by more than 2,000 academics from around the world and made it possible to promote the tertiary-level modules prepared in the context of the initiative.

24. Partnering with several Member States, non-governmental organizations and research institutes, UNODC co-organized a series of side events to conferences and meetings, including the following: “Best practices in the collection, analysis, and operational use of firearms data to monitor illicit arms flows and achieve SDG target 16.4: UNODC’s firearms champion country initiative”, held during the ninth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Organized Crime Convention, in Vienna in October 2018; “Teaching on firearms and terrorism-related issues in higher education through UNODC’s E4J university module series and shedding light on illicit firearms trafficking: supporting evidence-based approaches”, held during the twenty-eighth session of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, in Vienna in May 2019; and “Responsiveness of the Arms Trade Treaty and the Firearms Protocol to existing and emerging threats”, held during the fifth Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty, in Geneva in August 2019. UNODC also participated in the high-level opening panel at the Small Arms Survey forum on “Taking stock of action on the illicit small arms trade”, organized as an online event in June 2020.

25. In the reporting period, the website of the Global Firearms Programme received more than 43,000 visits.

(b) Legislative assistance

26. The enhancement of national legal frameworks on firearms is at the core of the UNODC mandate on firearms and remains a key focus area of work to introduce sustainable changes in beneficiary countries. The methodology of the Global Firearms Programme for supporting legislative reform efforts provides for a flexible and progressively engaging and participatory process that involves diverse national and regional stakeholders. The process starts with a legislative assessment that includes, where possible, a national self-assessment report and then builds on the findings of country visits, interviews, desk reviews and analyses conducted by UNODC experts, resulting in tailor-made support.

27. UNODC has continued to provide legislative advice and assistance on accession to and implementation of the Firearms Protocol. The Global Firearms Programme assisted the national authorities of Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Chad and the Niger in their national accession processes and conducted awareness-raising activities with policymakers and members of parliament in those countries. In addition, UNODC conducted a legislative workshop in the Plurinational State of Bolivia in July 2019, after which the country approved a new firearms law, established a national committee against illicit firearms trafficking and passed a law authorizing the ratification of the Firearms Protocol. UNODC also held a legislative workshop in Angola in November 2019.

28. UNODC also continued to assist and advise Burkina Faso, the Central African Republic, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali and the Niger in revising and amending their national firearms legislation, through gap analysis reports and subsequent legal drafting workshops and by facilitating the preparation of draft bills on firearms. In collaboration with the National Commission on Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Central African Republic, UNODC conducted two legislative workshops, in June and November 2019, to prepare a legal analysis of gaps in national arms legislation and finalize a draft law. The national authorities emphasized their commitment to the legislative process and expressed the desire to advance the process speedily. In Côte d'Ivoire, UNODC provided comments to the national authorities on a draft law and supported the update of the country's firearms legislation to comply with the different instruments that the country had ratified (e.g., the Firearms Protocol, the Arms Trade Treaty and the Economic Community of West African States Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and Other Related Materials). UNODC participated in the subregional legal assistance workshop for States parties to the Central African Convention for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and All Parts and Components That Can Be Used for Their Manufacture, Repair and Assembly (Kinshasa Convention), which was organized by the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa and took place in Equatorial Guinea in September 2019. In cooperation with the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), UNODC also organized a regional conference for Central African countries aimed at analysing the synergies and complementarities between the Firearms Protocol and the Kinshasa Convention and identifying technical assistance needs. The meeting was provided with expertise and advice by representatives from the Regional Centre on Small Arms and Light Weapons, the Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa and the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa, which acts as the secretariat of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa.

29. On 8 November 2019, UNODC signed a letter of understanding with the Cabinet of Prevention, Security and Defence of Honduras. The letter formalized the commitment of both the Government of Honduras and UNODC to strengthening their cooperation to prevent and combat illicit firearms trafficking and related crimes in the country. As part of the activities identified in the joint road map attached to the letter, UNODC is supporting the legislative assessment of the firearms law of

Honduras and providing assistance in drafting an accompanying regulation. Likewise, the Programme is working to promote the cooperation and harmonization of responses with neighbouring countries in the Northern Triangle and at the regional and international levels.

30. UNODC also provided tailored legislative advice to national authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in Serbia on the implementation of the import marking requirements under the Firearms Protocol. As a result, both countries incorporated the requirements into their firearms legislation. On 10 December 2019, UNODC and the Ministry of Justice of Montenegro co-organized an expert group meeting to review the legislative analysis by UNODC for the harmonization of the country's criminal law and criminal procedure law with the Organized Crime Convention and the Firearms Protocol.

2. Technical support for the implementation of preventive and security measures

31. UNODC continued to provide technical support to Member States in the implementation of preventive and security measures under the Firearms Protocol, in particular for marking and record-keeping, the storage of seized and confiscated firearms and ammunition and the collection, management and disposal of illicit firearms. In the light of the COVID-19 pandemic, it became apparent that digitalized record-keeping systems are more resilient to external influences and continue to be accessible when travel and the freedom of movement are restricted.

(a) Marking and record-keeping of firearms

32. UNODC worked closely with national authorities and civil society organizations in Burkina Faso, Mali, the Niger and Senegal, in particular with regard to the provision of support for the marking, collection, safe stockpiling and destruction of firearms. By the end of 2019, more than 80,000 firearms had been marked and registered. The Programme is currently planning to extend its work in Central Africa, specifically in the Central African Republic and Chad, on the basis of ongoing consultations, and to procure marking machines for some of the countries.

33. UNODC has initiated consultations with partner countries on needs and technical specifications regarding national record-keeping systems (including ballistic recording) and related technical support. The target countries include Bolivia (Plurinational State of), the Central African Republic, Honduras, the Niger and Paraguay.

(b) Physical security and stockpile management

34. The proper storage and management of firearms poses a challenge for many countries, in particular those that face thefts and leakages from their storage facilities and problems in relation to securing the chain of custody required to produce valid evidence in court. In this regard, UNODC cooperated closely with national authorities and civil society organizations in Burkina Faso, Mali, the Niger and Senegal.

(c) Collection, management and disposal of firearms

35. Arms collection campaigns form part of national efforts to reduce the uncontrolled proliferation of firearms and reduce the risk of their theft and diversion into illicit markets.

36. UNODC continued its close work with national authorities and civil society organizations in Burkina Faso, the Niger and Senegal in the development of awareness-raising campaigns to collect and destroy illicit firearms, with messages tailored to specific population groups, including young men, women and youth in general.

3. Strengthening criminal justice responses to detect, investigate and prosecute the illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms, their parts and components and ammunition

37. Detecting illicit trafficking movements, dismantling the criminal networks or groups involved in trafficking in firearms or other serious crimes and bringing the perpetrators to justice are essential preconditions for reducing illicit arms flows and combating all forms of organized crime, as expressed in target 16.4 of the Sustainable Development Goals. In practice, however, criminal investigations of firearms trafficking offences are rare and difficult to carry out. Too often, criminal investigations are narrow in scope and are focused on the offence of illicit possession instead of investigating the trafficking networks behind the illicit arms transfers and the arms dealers operating in the shadows.

38. In February 2020, the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre, the Office of Counter-Terrorism and UNODC jointly launched a project to address the connection between terrorism, organized crime and the illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons in Central Asia. The project is aimed at enhancing criminal justice responses to prevent and combat the illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons and to disrupt the illicit supply of such arms to terrorist groups.

39. In 2019, UNODC continued to deliver specialized training and capacity-building courses on the investigation and prosecution of cases of trafficking in firearms and its links to organized crime and related matters, on the basis of previous nationally tailored needs assessments. Training courses that were carried out in Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Burkina Faso, the Central African Republic, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Montenegro, the Niger and Serbia strengthened the capacity of more than 350 law enforcement practitioners from police, gendarmerie and customs services, as well as judges and prosecutors, on the identification and classification of firearms, crime scene management, intelligence, investigation techniques and firearms tracing, international cooperation and the exchange of information.

40. In the Western Balkans, UNODC organized a training course in Montenegro from 12 to 14 November 2019 for 18 first-line responders from the country's customs administration on the detection of firearms trafficking in postal shipments and at land border crossing points. Moreover, in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations and the Prosecutor's Office of Bosnia and Herzegovina, UNODC provided three training events on the detection of firearms at land border crossings for customs officers from Bosnia and Herzegovina.

41. A cross-border operation in West Africa code-named "KAFO", coordinated by UNODC and implemented in cooperation with INTERPOL, targeted the people and networks behind firearms trafficking in Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire and Mali. Involving 110 police, customs, border police and prosecution officials from all three countries, the seven-day operation, which lasted from 11 to 17 November 2019, permitted law enforcement to intercept illicit firearms and identify potential links with other criminal activity, including terrorism, across the region and beyond. Thousands of checks for lost and stolen firearms, wanted persons, stolen and lost travel documents and stolen motor vehicles were conducted during the operation.

42. Building on the positive results obtained from involving prosecutors in law enforcement operations to facilitate the initiation of criminal investigations following seizures of illicit firearms, UNODC continued to work with INTERPOL in the organization of Operation Trigger IV, targeting the Middle East and North Africa region. UNODC focused in particular on the training and participation of criminal justice practitioners during the operation in September 2018 and during a debriefing meeting in November 2018. In the course of the operation, more than 50 firearms were seized and recovered, and 17 individuals were arrested for firearms offences. The operation also led to a surge in the use of the INTERPOL Illicit Arms Records and Tracing Management System (iARMS). UNODC also supported a similar police operation in Latin America, through joint planning and by providing financial support

to facilitate the participation of prosecutors from the target countries in the operation and providing capacity-building support. On 24 and 25 September 2019, the first planning meeting for Operation Trigger VI in South America was organized jointly by UNODC and INTERPOL in Brasilia and attended by 26 participants from 14 countries. Organizations and agencies such as Frontex, the Organization of American States and the European Multidisciplinary Platform against Criminal Threats (EMPACT) also participated in the meeting. In addition, UNODC was represented at the INTERPOL debriefing meeting on Trigger V in Latin America, held in Panama on 18 and 19 June 2019.

43. In 2019, UNODC delivered several training events for law enforcement, customs, prosecution and judicial authorities on the investigation and prosecution of firearms trafficking and related forms of crime, including in the Niger from 25 to 29 March, in the Central African Republic from 8 to 12 April, in Burkina Faso from 10 to 14 June, in Chad from 8 to 12 July and in Mali in December. From 23 to 27 September, UNODC gathered representatives from Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire and Mali in order to discuss cross-border cooperation and information exchange. Those training events provided a basis in the main skills required to investigate cases of trafficking in firearms and other crimes involving firearms. They provided law enforcement officers with knowledge and understanding of special investigative techniques, intelligence gathering and analysis, tracing of weapons, police cooperation and information-sharing, as well as international judicial cooperation, and aimed at improving the knowledge and skills of investigators to develop adequate intelligence materials that contribute to the success of the prevention, detection and investigation of firearms trafficking and related offences.

44. Additionally, assessment missions to El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras, Nigeria and Paraguay were carried out to evaluate assistance needs.

4. Fostering and promoting international cooperation and information exchange to address the transnational dimension of trafficking in illicit firearms and related issues

45. International cooperation in criminal matters is a fundamental part of the fight against illicit trafficking in firearms, including the regular sharing of information among practitioners, pursuant to article 12 of the Protocol.

46. During the reporting period, UNODC continued to promote the creation of an informal group of criminal justice practitioners dealing with firearms matters, referred to as the “community of practitioners”. The initiative is aimed at promoting better interaction among the different communities and fostering regional and interregional cooperation to counter trafficking in firearms and its links to other forms of organized crime and serious crimes, including terrorism, through the regular exchange of information, case-based experiences and good practices among criminal justice, law enforcement and firearms control practitioners. UNODC will soon officially launch the community of practitioners and create a dedicated portal on its website.

47. From 5 to 7 June 2019, the UNODC Global Firearms Programme organized a quadrilateral meeting of representatives from Argentina, Brazil, Colombia and Mexico, entitled “Strengthening regional cooperation in Latin America to prevent and combat the illicit trafficking of firearms and its related crimes”. The meeting was hosted by the Government of Mexico in the offices of its Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Mexico City and was funded by Sweden. The purpose of the meeting was twofold: first, to enable a peer-to-peer exchange of experiences and increase common knowledge, and second, to explore ways to promote synergies and foster cooperation in Latin America. On the basis of the experiences of this meeting, and in close cooperation with the Government of Mexico, UNODC organized two back-to-back regional meetings in November 2019 to strengthen cooperation in Latin America to prevent and combat illicit trafficking in firearms and related crimes. More than 70 experts, including 23 women, in the field of detection, investigation and prosecution of illicit trafficking in firearms from 20 Latin American countries

identified challenges and opportunities for cooperation in the area of criminal justice and exchanged good practices and experiences to effectively tackle the problem in the region.

48. On 7 and 8 October 2019, the Global Firearms Programme organized a cross-regional meeting in Vienna to address illicit trafficking in firearms to, from and across the European Union. The meeting brought together almost 70 practitioners from law enforcement and prosecutorial authorities from States members of the European Union and selected countries of the Western Balkans, West and Central Africa, the Middle East and North Africa, and Latin America. Experts from pertinent international and regional organizations and research institutes, including INTERPOL, the World Customs Organization, the European Union, the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol), Frontex, the Small Arms Survey and the Flemish Peace Institute also participated.

49. During the INTERPOL meeting of heads of counter-terrorism in the Middle East and North Africa region held in Lyon, France, on 14 and 15 February 2019, UNODC contributed to the discussions on illicit firearms and its linkages to terrorism as part of the strategic considerations for future operations in the region. The meeting was attended by high-level officers from 14 countries in the Middle East and North Africa.

50. Finally, UNODC participated in the regional meeting on preventing firearms trafficking of the Caribbean Community Implementation Agency for Crime and Security in Port of Spain on 29 and 30 January 2019. The objectives of the meeting were to strengthen cooperation among Caribbean States and international partners in addressing firearms trafficking and building forensic ballistics capabilities and to reach consensus on an updated Caribbean firearms road map, which was adopted in May 2020 after UNODC provided consolidated input.

5. Monitoring illicit arms flows through global data collection and analysis

51. In the context of its initiative to monitor illicit arms flows, UNODC continued to promote the generation, collection and analysis of firearms data in order to identify firearms trafficking trends and patterns and as an evidence base for decision-making at the policy and operational levels. The efforts of UNODC followed a three-pronged approach that included the development and dissemination of the illicit arms flows questionnaire, a standardized data collection methodology that also supports the collection of data for the purpose of monitoring target 16.4 of the Sustainable Development Goals; strengthening the capacity of Member States to collect and analyse firearms-related data; and producing analytical outputs on firearms trafficking at the global, regional and national levels, with a view to bringing the data collected and analysed by UNODC back to the Member States. This innovative approach of linking research and capacity-building efforts allowed UNODC to reach a wide range of countries and to provide hands-on support in linking firearms-relevant investigations with the development of an evidence base to counter illicit firearms trafficking and related forms of crime.

52. Following the launch of the global data collection exercise on seized and trafficked firearms on 14 June 2018 on the basis of the illicit arms flows questionnaire, UNODC collected and processed relevant data from more than 100 countries and territories and developed a comprehensive data set that is accessible through the UNODC data portal.³ The data set comprises responses from Member States to the illicit arms flows questionnaire, data collected and shared by the World Customs Organization and the Office for Disarmament Affairs and official data collected through public sources. In the first six months after its publication in October 2019, the data set was accessed more than 10,000 times, contributing significantly to data and information exchange at the global level.

53. Based on that comprehensive data set, UNODC launched the *Global Study on Firearms Trafficking 2020* on 15 July 2020, providing important insights into the

³ Available at <https://dataunodc.un.org/>.

magnitude and extent of illicit firearms trafficking and its links to other forms of crime. The study confirms that illicit firearms trafficking is a global but often invisible phenomenon with strong variations between countries. The results of the study indicate that the 81 countries for which data on total arms seized were available recorded a total of 550,000 seized firearms in each of the two years 2016 and 2017. However, the study acknowledges that this figure may be significantly lower than the real number of firearms seized in those years given that many countries, including some of the world's most populous countries, did not respond to the survey and that several countries underreported their seizures for administrative reasons. The study also showcased the responses of Member States to firearms criminality, particularly by analysing tracing results and cooperation in tracing. It reveals that there is a close link between the domestic and transnational characteristics of firearms trafficking, such as diversion at the national level and cross-border trafficking. To understand the complexity of firearms trafficking and to design appropriate responses, it is argued in the study that Member States need to set up systems that enable them to understand and react to the domestic and transnational extent of the issue. The study concludes that operational protocols and capacities to systematically collect and analyse data relevant to firearms require further enhancement.

54. In the context of the firearms champion country initiative, UNODC also worked with the Observatory of Studies on Coexistence and Citizen Security of the Province of Córdoba, Argentina, on a study on the prevalence of firearms in the criminal dynamics of the Province of Córdoba, and with the Public Security Police of Portugal on a national study on the origin of illicit firearms in Portugal. The two analytical reports are expected to be finalized in the second and third quarters of 2020, respectively.

55. With a view to enhancing national and international data collection and analysis efforts and promoting more effective international cooperation and information exchange among practitioners, UNODC organized a series of regional and cross-regional meetings in Vienna, targeting South-Eastern European, Eastern European and neighbouring Member States in July 2018, Member and observer States in the Middle East and North Africa region in February 2018 and countries along firearms trafficking routes into, from and across the European Union in October 2019. In total, more than 100 participants from more than 40 countries, as well as relevant regional and non-governmental organizations, participated in and contributed to the meetings.

56. Moreover, partly in cooperation with the Small Arms Survey, UNODC supported several countries in enhancing national firearms data collection practices and protocols and promoting global data collection efforts among national stakeholders by using the global data collection tool through field support in Argentina (Province of Córdoba, June 2019), Bosnia and Herzegovina (Republika Srpska, October 2019), Burkina Faso (May 2019), Burundi (by video conference in November 2019), Cameroon (March 2019), Côte d'Ivoire (May 2019), the Niger (March and August 2019) and Senegal (March 2019), reaching almost 200 national stakeholders. The technical assistance was tailored to the needs of each specific country and made it possible to pilot some of the tools developed in the context of the initiative to monitor illicit arms flows.

57. Increased and sustained funding is required to allow UNODC to continue the global firearms data collection and analysis exercise and to provide the technical assistance required to support countries in enhancing their evidence base on illicit firearms trafficking and related forms of crime.

D. Coordination with other relevant international and regional organizations and with civil society and the private sector

1. Cooperation within the United Nations

58. UNODC has continued to contribute to the work of the United Nations Coordinating Action on Small Arms, the system-wide coordination platform

established by the Secretary-General to promote the exchange of information and coordination on ongoing initiatives and to support the Organization in “delivering as one” on the issue of small arms.

59. At the field level, UNODC continued to coordinate its activities and cooperate with relevant United Nations agencies and offices, such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons, the Office for Disarmament Affairs and its regional centres and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. In the Western Balkans, for example, UNODC is contributing, together with UNDP and other organizations, to the implementation of the road map for a sustainable solution to the illegal possession, misuse and trafficking of small arms and light weapons by 2024, and participated in several local and regional coordination meetings organized in 2019 and 2020 on the implementation of the road map, gathering representatives of commissions on small arms and light weapons in the Western Balkans, representatives of the international organizations engaged in arms control in the region, as well as key donors in the area. UNDP and UNODC also established the multi-partner trust fund for the implementation of the road map, and three meetings of the fund’s steering committee were held. As a result, several projects in the region, including two UNODC projects, received donor support through the trust fund.

60. UNODC took part in the Wilton Park meeting in the run-up to the establishment of a formal Group of Governmental Experts on problems arising from the accumulation of conventional ammunition stockpiles in surplus, held in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland from 9 to 11 December 2019. On 12 December, UNODC also participated in an informal expert meeting held in London to exchange and discuss research methods and options to profile conventional ammunition. The meeting was organized by the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, with support from Germany, to support States in their preparations for the Group of Governmental Experts.

61. UNODC contributed to the high-level political forum on sustainable development in New York, in particular to the discussion of Sustainable Development Goal 16 and target 16.4 (to significantly reduce illicit financial and arms flows, strengthen the recovery and return of stolen assets and combat all forms of organized crime).

2. Cooperation with other international and regional organizations

62. In the reporting period, UNODC continued to strengthen its cooperation with national, regional and international organizations, including ECCAS, the Economic Community of West African States, the European Union, INTERPOL, Frontex, EMPACT, the Europe-Latin America Technical Assistance Programme against Transnational Organized Crime, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons.

63. In November 2019, the Programme supported the EMPACT Firearms workshop held in Novi Sad, Serbia, on the implementation of key performance indicator 5 of the Western Balkans road map mentioned above and the obstacles that European Union countries face in complying with the indicator. In cooperation with EMPACT Firearms, UNODC organized an additional dedicated meeting in Vienna in December 2019 with European Member States on the implementation of that performance indicator. The meeting was aimed at identifying the challenges countries face when collecting and reporting seizure data. In September 2019, UNODC participated in the EMPACT Firearms session held in The Hague, Netherlands, for the drafting of the 2020 Operational Action Plan on Firearms, and in the planning sessions for the definition of the operational actions for each strategic goal. Subsequently, in January 2020, UNODC participated in the kick-off meeting of the 2020 EMPACT Firearms cycle, also held in The Hague.

64. Building on the strong thematic ties between INTERPOL and UNODC, the two organizations held a meeting in Lyon, France, on 4 March 2019 to explore areas for joint programming and ways to further expand that cooperation in the future. The joint activities will have a global impact, with a focus on Africa, Latin America, the Middle East, Asia and Eastern Europe. In addition, UNODC attended the fourth meeting of the iARMS Steering Committee, organized by INTERPOL on 12 and 13 March in Lyon. The meeting focused on a wide range of issues that are critical to the overall evolution and service of the iARMS database.

3. Cooperation with civil society and the private sector

65. UNODC has actively engaged with civil society organizations at various levels, from legislative development to training activities, the development of a training course on civil society participation and oversight, and collaboration in the implementation of advocacy materials. During the reporting period, civil society organizations participated in the legislative drafting workshops organized by UNODC in the Central African Republic, Chad and the Niger in order to include their experience and views in the discussions on the legal regime and the examination of the provisions of the draft laws, and they helped to identify those points that would need to be further amended or harmonized with existing laws or local practices. Likewise, members of civil society were also included in meetings with Members of Parliament in Bolivia (Plurinational State of) and Chad, organized by UNODC as part of its legislative assistance efforts.

66. Representatives of civil society organizations have participated in and contributed to several training activities organized in West African countries. For example, in its efforts to promote the exchange of firearms-related information and knowledge-sharing, UNODC joined the Small Arms Survey in a project to support national authorities in developing systems of national indicators on firearms that promote the efficient use of resources and the development of more effective policy and operational strategies. As part of this initiative, UNODC contributed to and co-organized related workshops on strengthening national institutions by establishing a system of indicators in Burkina Faso, Burundi and the Niger throughout 2019.

67. UNODC remains engaged with key organizations working on illicit trafficking in firearms, such as Conflict Armament Research, the Bonn International Centre for Conversion, the Geneva Centre for Security Policy, the Institute for Security Studies, the Joint Research Centre on Transnational Crime (Transcrime), the Mines Advisory Group, RAND Europe, the Small Arms Survey and the West African Action Network on Small Arms and Light Weapons.

68. Furthermore, UNODC has been invited to join the steering committee of a new research project of the Flemish Institute aimed at improving the internal security of the European Union by increasing knowledge and expertise on the relationship between illicit firearms trafficking and gun violence in Europe. UNODC is also a member of the steering committee of the new Transcrime research project, entitled “Options for enhancing operational instruments in the area of firearms trafficking”, which is funded by the European Commission and was launched by the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Tilburg University and the South-East European Law Enforcement Centre.

69. Finally, the Programme also actively supports the participation of civil society in the upcoming Mechanism for the Review of the Implementation of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocols thereto, supporting the work of the UNODC Civil Society Team. In this context, the Global Firearms Programme contributed to the development of the *Toolkit on Stakeholder Engagement: Implementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime*, published in June 2020, and participated in the first online training event for non-governmental organizations, academics and the private sector on how to engage in the Review Mechanism.

IV. Priority areas for further action

70. Integrated approaches to prevent and fight the illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms, their parts and components and ammunition remain crucial to address the various interconnected aspects of the problem. In this regard, the integrated five-pillar approach of the Global Firearms Programme remains highly relevant.

71. Growing interlinkages between firearms trafficking and other serious crimes suggest the need to further address and deepen the understanding of the nexus of firearms trafficking, crime and terrorism.

72. The Programme plans to develop focused activities to ensure greater gender mainstreaming of the Programme and its capacity-building curriculum and to promote specific strategies in pilot countries.

73. The Programme will also continue to promote proactive, investigative and prosecutorial approaches to firearms trafficking, to firearms seized at borders and at crime scenes, thus fostering the detection, investigation and prosecution of those crimes and the overall generation, collection and analysis of firearms data that can serve as an evidence base for decision-making at the policy and operational levels.

V. Supporting responsiveness to and preparedness for COVID-19 and other pandemics

74. The COVID-19 pandemic has posed unpredicted challenges both to the work of UNODC and to the capacities of countries to continue countering illicit firearms trafficking, as public health measures initially affected some planned activities, and new trends and dynamics have also emerged and national resources and law enforcement have been reallocated to cope with the pandemic.

75. UNODC adapted its work in order to continue to support affected Member States in key areas of technical assistance and to effectively address the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on arms control regimes and on criminal justice systems, as well as on firearms trafficking, proliferation and misuse. With the aim of ensuring an evidence-based approach when designing its responsiveness and preparedness to pandemics, UNODC first conducted an analysis of the current situation, which was based on information provided by national focal points in beneficiary and partner countries through a questionnaire distributed to stakeholders and through regular communication from field offices. Acknowledging that the accuracy of predicted outcomes may be limited by unforeseen variables, the analysis still helped to identify priority actions and responses, as well as suggestions for additional technical assistance by UNODC to respond to the needs of States during and after the crisis.

76. The response to the COVID-19 pandemic and to other potential crises requires new dynamics of work, including virtual training, virtual meetings, teleconferences, remote assessments and events and telecommuting by staff. Priority actions in substantive areas of work to strengthen national capacities to cope with pandemics include the following: (a) addressing legal loopholes to ensure the responsiveness of the institutional and legal frameworks to the new and emerging threats; (b) establishing and strengthening the technical and operational capabilities of specialized firearms hubs for the tracing and investigation of firearms trafficking, including through remote mechanisms; (c) developing guidelines for investigators and prosecutors to adjust and reinforce current procedures and practices for investigating and prosecuting firearms trafficking cases in the light of new and emerging challenges related to pandemics; (d) assisting countries in the digitalization of their national firearms control regimes; (e) developing and delivering virtual training and capacity-building workshops, including through specialized e-learning modules, addressing the use of specialized investigation techniques, such as cyber-patrolling adapted to emerging trends; (f) strengthening the capacity for document

control with regard to arms transfers, as well as secure online systems to facilitate the linking of import, export and transit countries; (g) fostering international cooperation and mechanisms to facilitate remote exchanges of expertise and of evidence; and (h) supporting digitalized and centralized registries for firearms and ammunition as a measure to mitigate risks and facilitate remote firearms control processes.

77. UNODC will continue to monitor the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic to tailor its responses to the needs of States and to emerging circumstances.

VI. In-depth evaluation of the Global Firearms Programme

78. In 2019, UNODC commissioned the first independent in-depth evaluation of the Global Firearms Programme to assess its methodological concept, its overall implementation and its impact since its creation in 2011, with a view to consolidating achievements, helping to better draw lessons learned and informing the future development and implementation of projects. The evaluators conducted a desk review of project documents, semi-structured interviews with stakeholders of the Programme from across the globe, and field missions to selected countries, including Argentina, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Burkina Faso and the Niger, to evaluate the Programme against a series of recognized criteria, including design; relevance; efficiency; effectiveness; likely impact; sustainability; partnerships and communication; and human rights, gender equality and leaving no one behind. The findings of the evaluation will be made available to the public in the course of 2020.

VII. Conclusions

79. The illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms and their links to organized crime, terrorism and other serious crimes remains a pressing problem in many countries and regions.

80. UNODC has continued to promote the ratification and implementation of the Firearms Protocol and to assist Member States in its implementation, building on its five pillars – legislation, technical support, criminal justice response, international cooperation, and data collection and analysis – and is committed to continuing its efforts to work collaboratively with Member States, international and regional organizations, civil society, academia and the private industry in their common endeavour.

81. However, sustainable and predictable funds are required in order to ensure the presence of specialized staff and the continuation of the activities of UNODC and to allow it to respond to the growing technical assistance requests from different countries and regions.
