



Why the Programme of Action on Small Arms and timely preparation for the 2020 seventh Biennial Meeting of States are vital: Perspectives from Member States

Dear IANSA Members and Friends,

From June 15-19 of 2020, the seventh Biennial Meeting of States (BMS7) will take place at the United Nations Headquarters in New York City to consider the national, regional, and global implementation of the [Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects](#) (PoA).

The PoA is a politically binding instrument that all UN member states adopted in 2001. States agreed to improve national small arms laws, control small arms imports and exports, better oversee and manage their arms stockpiles, and engage in more international cooperation and assistance. Within the policy framework established by the PoA, the International Tracing Instrument (ITI) was adopted in 2005. The ITI outlines requirements on marking, record-keeping, and international cooperation and assistance that will enable tracing illicit small arms and light weapons.

States are encouraged to voluntarily submit national reports on their PoA implementation, and 2018 reports can be found [here](#). Every two years, states gather at UN headquarters in New York to report on their progress in implementing their PoA commitments in a meeting called a Biennial Meeting of States. Every six years, states gather for a Review Conference to examine progress of the PoA and its ITI, and discuss ways to strengthen it. IANSA's [Quick Guide](#) summarizes key results of the third Review Conference (RevCon3) that took place in June 2018.

Because BMS7 will give states a chance to report on their progress on old and new commitments under the PoA, and because the PoA remains the only universal instrument dealing with preventing, combating and eradicating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects, it's vital that states and civil society prepare in a timely way for the meeting and work to ensure its effectiveness and impact.

Below are statements provided to IANSA by member states in various regions expressing why the PoA and BMS7 are important to them.

Antigua and Barbuda

Antigua and Barbuda remains a convinced supporter of the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons. While Caribbean Community (CARICOM) countries such as Antigua and Barbuda are neither manufacturers nor large importers of these weapons, they are disproportionately affected by their violence. The illicit trade in SALW is a major impediment to peace and security as well as to achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the CARICOM region. The PoA gives us another tool for reducing the human suffering, the criminality, and the violence caused by easy access to illicit SALW. Antigua and Barbuda recognizes the critical role played by civil society in addressing SALW issues. Likewise, the role of women should be recognized and encouraged on this topic to build on important work in ensuring that gender-based perspectives are fully incorporated in deliberations. BMS7 in 2020 represents an opportunity to continue work in these areas. Working to mitigate the illicit trade in SALW can only benefit those impacted by the human suffering and violence caused by the small arms trade. We stand ready to engage with other member states to take full advantage of this opportunity.



Destruction of small arms and light weapons in Antigua and Barbuda. Photo credit: UNLIREC.

Argentina

For Argentina, it is a priority to continue advancing in discussions related to Programme of Action on Small Arms, given both its universality and the wide range of topics that it covers. To stop firearms from falling into the hands of prohibited users, we believe it essential to not just adopt adequate internal legislation, but also to establish clear criteria regarding the transfer control of weapons that take into account human rights obligations, international humanitarian law, regional stability, crime rates, and socioeconomic development. As part of our commitment to implementing the PoA and ITI, as well as to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, we have renewed our national firearms amnesty program. This program allows people to voluntarily and anonymously surrender illicit firearms and ammunition across the country, and provides an incentive for them to do so. This is part of our effort to not only prevent accidents and crimes, but also to promote a culture of non-possession and non-use of firearms. We are also committed to destroying such weapons. Recent development in technologies, such as 3D printed and modular weapons pose a new challenge, and at the same time, new technologies also offer us an opportunity to strengthen gun control. We welcome BMS7 as an opportunity to discuss this and other issues.

Hungary

Hungary fully shares the concerns of the international community that the illicit trade,

spread and misuse of small arms and light weapons still cause a terribly high number of deaths and injuries around the world. They also continue to pose a serious threat to international peace and security, undermine sustainable development, and fuel heinous terrorist attacks. We believe that the UN Programme of Action is one of the most important and universal tools in global efforts to combat these threats. We also are highly concerned about the ammunition of these weapons. Just as a pen will not write without ink, weapons cannot kill without ammunition, and therefore preventing, combating and eradicating the illicit trade in ammunition is essential. Today's modern wars are not fought by nuclear weapons, but to a large extent by small arms and light weapons, and Hungary looks forward working with other member states to bring an end to them. We will give our full commitment to achieving a successful BMS7.

Ireland

Ireland remains a strong supporter of the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons. The UN Programme of Action, together with the International Tracing Instrument, continues to provide a valuable international framework to mitigate the threat posed by illicit SALW. The illicit trade in SALW remains a significant source of instability, particularly in developing countries; overwhelmingly contributes to gender based violence, in particular violence against women and girls; and continues to enable transnational crime, including the international drug trade. To help address these challenges, we must all work to enhance the PoA and ensure its full and effective implementation at national, regional, and global levels.

Ireland remains committed to strengthening the PoA through continuing to our efforts to promote the inclusion of ammunition, encourage synergies with other instruments such as the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), and working to combat gender-based violence. We continue to uphold the highest standards in our national implementation measures, including in export controls, and we continue to promote the aims of the PoA through financial support for UNSCAR and the ATT Voluntary Trust Fund. We welcomed the outcome of the Third Review Conference in 2018 and welcome the agreed measures to review progress made in the implementation of the PoA. We look forward to working with other member states during the BMS7 in 2020 to strengthen international efforts to combat the illicit trafficking of SALW.



Government officials in Ireland participating in a Wear Orange Against Gun Violence Campaign

Jamaica

Jamaica is proud to offer its continued support to the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms. Diversion of SALW deeply affects Jamaica's crime rates, stifles its economic growth and development, as well as wreaks havoc on its citizens. The global security climate is

growing increasingly unpredictable and technology is advancing more quickly than it can be incorporated into regulatory frameworks. For these and other reasons, we remain fully committed to the objectives of the PoA. To honour its commitments under the PoA, Jamaica has undertaken several measures, including the creation of an electronic database for the marking and record-keeping of SALW, and the introduction of numerous policy enhancement and legislative amendments aimed at reducing arms trafficking and increasing penalties for illegal possession of firearms. We strongly encourage other member states to take similar initiatives where relevant. Jamaica also remains committed to addressing the gender dimension of SALW, further regulating ammunition, and further developing systems for information sharing with other member states. In this regard, we look forward to working with other member states during the BMS7 in 2020 in order to effectively combat the illicit trafficking of SALW, which requires enhanced cooperation and collaboration at all levels

Lebanon

Lebanon is committed to implementing the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons, including the new commitments that resulted from RevCon3 in 2018. We have already made progress on our commitments by updating and enforcing our relevant laws. As a reminder to ourselves and the public on the impact of weapons and the importance of peace, we have intentionally preserved a bullet-riddled statue in the heart of downtown Beirut after it was damaged during the civil war. We look forward to reporting on our additional progress in PoA implementation at BMS7 in 2020, and we will continue to value and work with other UN member states to maintain consensus on the PoA



Bullet-riddled monument in Beirut, Lebanon serves as a reminder of the importance of peace

Mali

Small arms and light weapons are a great concern for Mali. They are used by terrorists and traffickers who regularly attack peaceful civilian populations as well as our national defense and security forces. These criminal activities take lives and undermine development activities not only in Mali, but also in the Sahel region and other regions of the world. This is why we value the PoA as a vital instrument to combat the illicit trade in SALW. As part of our PoA commitments, we have strengthened our legislative framework on the possession and use of SALW, and set up a permanent secretariat to counter SALW proliferation. Every year, we also present a resolution at the United Nations to encourage assistance by states for curbing the illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons and collecting them. At BMS7 in 2020, we will continue to work with other countries to strengthen implementation of the PoA and to seek common solutions to ending the scourge of armed violence.



Three thousand weapons become the Flame of Peace in Mali. Photo credit: UNDP

New Zealand

Consistent with New Zealand's strong support for the Arms Trade Treaty (as well as the Sustainable Development Goals), New Zealand remains committed to the implementation of the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons. Since its establishment in 2001, the Programme of Action has been a valuable tool for countering the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. New Zealand's focus in mitigating the effects of the illicit trade in small arms has primarily been regional. Through the production of a model "export control list", regional workshops with Pacific neighbours, and contributing to the Arms Trade Treaty's Voluntary Trust Fund (for which New Zealand currently serves as Chair), we strive to ensure the goals of the Programme of Action are furthered in our region. Next year, there will be a number of important opportunities to build on regional and global partnerships in addressing the illicit small arms trade – including BMS7. New Zealand looks forward to addressing new and emerging concerns in this area and to continuing our efforts to include ammunition within the ambit of the Programme of Action.



United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific gender workshop on small arms trafficking from a gender perspective. Photo credit: UNRCPD.

Turkey

Turkey is committed to the full and effective implementation of the PoA, including the new commitments that resulted from RevCon3 in 2018. We are committed to the PoA because the excessive accumulation and uncontrolled spread of SALW pose a significant threat to peace and security as well to the development of many countries. There is also an undeniable relationship between the illicit trade in SALW, terrorism and organized crime. The Turkish Law No. 5201 requires licenses to be obtained from the Ministry of National Defence (MND) for the export of SALW and ammunition. It is the responsibility of the Ministry of Trade (MoT) to take all monitoring, control, arrangement and orientation measures regarding exports of SALW. We look forward to reporting on our progress in PoA implementation at BMS7 in 2020, and we will continue to value and work with other UN member states to maintain consensus on the PoA.

With approximately one billion guns in the world and millions more added annually, it's essential that governments, civil society, and the United Nations continue to work together to end the devastating toll of gun violence--both in the rooms of the United Nations and on the ground of local communities.

Sincerely,

IANSA

United Nations Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation

UNSCAR



Regulate weaponry – develop community

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