



First Committee 2021 Statement

Thank you, Chair. My name is Mayda de Leon, Human Security Programme Coordinator for IEPADES (Instituto de Enseñanza para el Desarrollo Sostenible). Today, I speak on behalf of the International Action Network on Small Arms, IANSA.

IANSA is a global network of non-governmental organizations working to reduce the human costs of armed violence. We are also the official coordinator of civil society participation in the United Nations process on small arms. We gratefully acknowledge the support of UNSCAR and the European Union for this work.

Around this same time last year, IANSA extended its condolences and sympathy to the families of the victims of the COVID-19 pandemic and those whose lives and livelihoods had been affected by the pandemic. A year later, the pandemic has not slowed down and people around the world are still enormously affected. The pandemic also continues to greatly impede civil society participation in UN processes on small arms, including this First Committee where once again civil society cannot attend in person.

It has been 20 years since the adoption of the UN Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat, and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects. Despite this, the proliferation and misuse of SALW continues to pose a systemic and pervasive threat to the social and economic development of many countries. SALW have also played a detrimental role in the surge of sexual and gender-based violence during the pandemic. IANSA therefore urges all states to increase their efforts to eradicate the illicit trade of SALW and to prevent armed violence in all its forms.

During the First Committee, we urge delegations to:

- Demonstrate their commitment to the full and effective participation of women in the UNPoA process by ensuring parity in their delegations' leadership and composition, as well as their presentations;
- Support resolutions containing gender focused measures to prevent, curb, and eradicate SALW proliferation and violence;
- Share comprehensive reports on their progress on meeting their RevCon3 commitments, especially if they were unable to do so before BMS7;
- Ensure that any resolutions on BMS8 set a broad mandate for the meeting;
- Recognise that the vast majority of deaths and injuries due to SALW use occur in violence and crime, not in armed conflict; and
- Ensure that civil society is able to participate fully, whatever format is chosen for First Committee proceedings, with the presumption that meetings will be open as the default procedure.

The seventh Biennial Meeting of States (BMS7) on the United Nations Programme of Action on small arms and light weapons took place this past July 2021 and provided an important opportunity to address armed violence. The final outcome document presented significant progress in several areas, such as the consideration of the intricate link between gender and SALW proliferation and the importance of the full and effective participation of women at all levels of peace and disarmament discussions and processes. Yet, despite the evident progress that such language reflects, said language needs to be translated into actions. In 2021, only 22 of the 193 member states are led by women. In the past 76 years, only 4 women have been elected as President of the United Nations General Assembly. In Guatemala, my home country, violence against women is perpetuated with impunity. Since the Law Against Femicide and Other Forms of Violence Against Women was enacted in 2008, the number of complaints has increased. However, Guatemala still ranks among the countries with one of the highest death tolls for women.

In order to achieve progress, states must work in close partnership with civil society organizations, women and underrepresented groups to curb the illicit proliferation of SALW and its ammunition, reduce demand for such weapons, improve firearm regulation and strengthen controls on arms transfers.

Beyond First Committee, IANSA urges States to:

- Ensure that they continue to make progress in implementing their commitments from BMS7 and RevCon3, and prepare reports to be considered at BMS8;
- Act unilaterally or in regional groups to implement more ambitious standards than agreed at the biennial meetings or the review conferences;
- Implement all of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that are related to arms control issues, not limiting efforts to SDG 16.
- Take advantage of and further develop synergies among the UNPoA, the Firearms Protocol, and the ATT.
- Demonstrate that they mean it when they say that civil society is an important partner in these efforts, by:
 - o including civil society representatives on national delegations,
 - o fully integrating civil society representatives into the work to reduce the human costs of armed violence,
 - o ensuring diverse leadership from survivors, youth, and other traditionally underrepresented groups, and
 - o committing to increasing funding for civil society's work to raise awareness of these issues.

I thank you for this opportunity to address you.