

UPDATE #5:
**77th Session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) First Committee on
Disarmament and International Security**

Small Arms and Light Weapons

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In this last week of discussions, the majority of delegations reiterated their grave concern with the impact that the illicit trade, transfer, and uncontrolled proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW) has on international peace and security, as well as on humanitarian and socio-economic development. During the course of the general and thematic debates, many states urged to fully implement the key instruments in curbing the illicit trade of small arms, namely the UN Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons (UNPoA) and the International Tracing Instrument (ITI). Going further, states highlighted the importance of multilateral efforts and international cooperation and assistance as necessary for the full and effective implementation of these instruments.

States took action on several resolutions related to SALW.

Action on cluster 4 resolutions: conventional weapons

L.50, "[The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects](#)," is the omnibus resolution on SALW tabled annually by Colombia, South Africa, and Japan. L.50 was adopted without a vote. However, states [voted](#) on one of its paragraphs, preambular paragraph (PP) 23, which welcomes the inclusion of small arms and light weapons in the scope of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). 150 states voted in favour of PP23, and 22 abstained.

After the vote on L.50, Cuba and Indonesia shared their explanation of votes with the Committee. Cuba dissociated itself from opening paragraph (OP) 12, stating that there is a lack of consensus on the issue of polymer and modular weapons and it will be up to the Review Conference to decide by consensus the future steps to be taken with regard to the recent developments in the manufacture, technology, and design of polymer and modular weapons as well as 3D printed weapons. Cuba abstained from voting on PP23 as such, reaffirming its position on the Arms Trade Treaty. Cuba expressed its concern about the increasing emphasis on synergies between the UNPoA and other instruments that do not have international consensus, as well as the excessive emphasis made on issues related to specific indicators within the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), human rights and gender-based rights frameworks, which should be considered within their own platforms. Cuba stated that it was not in favour of including language on risk assessment, based on ambiguous or politically manipulated criteria, for instance in regards to international human rights law and international humanitarian law.

Referencing L.50, Indonesia welcomed the inclusion of the decision to establish a fellowship training program on SALW underlining that it was much needed to strengthen knowledge and expertise for the implementation of the

PoA and ITI - particularly for developing countries. Indonesia also welcomed the successful conclusion of the Eighth Biennial Meeting of States (BMS8) and looks forward to the Fourth Review Conference in 2024 (RevCon4).

L.51, “[Problems arising from the accumulation of conventional ammunition stockpiles in surplus](#),” was adopted by [vote](#) with 173 member states voting in favour, zero voting against, and six abstaining (Cuba, Equatorial Guinea, Iran, Nicaragua, Russia, and Syria). After the vote, Israel stated its support to the draft resolution but reiterated its position on conventional ammunition underlining that the UNPoA does not have the mandate to discuss ammunition as this is now overseen by the Open-ended Working Group on conventional ammunition.

L.76, “[Assistance to States for curbing the illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons and collecting them](#),” was adopted without a vote. Member states [voted](#) on one of its paragraphs, PP 16, which welcomes the inclusion of SALW in the scope of the ATT, as well as the inclusion of international assistance in its provisions. 152 states voted in favour, while 22 abstained.

After the vote, Indonesia shared their explanation of vote with the Committee stating that they abstained from voting on all draft resolutions that referenced the ATT emphasising that Indonesia’s position on the Treaty was well-known. They underlined that Indonesia supports the Treaty’s overall goal to regulate the trade of conventional weapons for the purpose of contributing to international peace and security. However, Indonesia stated that the ATT should not generate potential restrictions, especially for developing countries.

Action on cluster 6 resolutions: regional disarmament and security

L.35, “[Conventional arms control at the regional and subregional levels](#),” which recognises the crucial role of conventional arms control in promoting regional and international peace and security, which recognises the crucial role of conventional arms control in promoting regional and international peace and security, was [adopted](#) as a whole with 174 states in favour, one against (India) and 1 abstaining. Voting on PP7, which posits that “militarily significant states and states with larger military capabilities have a special responsibility in promoting such agreements for regional security”, and OP2, which “requests the Conference on Disarmament to consider the formulation of principles that can serve as a framework for regional agreements on conventional arms control, and looks forward to a report of the Conference on this subject” also occurred. 166 states [voted](#) in favour of PP7, two (India and the Russian Federation) voted against it, and one state abstained. Regarding OP2, 115 [voted](#) in its favour, India voted against, and 49 abstained.

After the vote, India explained why they voted against OP2 stating that the United Nations Conference on Disarmament had already adopted by consensus recommendations on disarmament. As such, India emphasised that there was no need for the conference to engage on this subject while there are other priority issues to address. Furthermore, India expressed that they were not convinced that addressing arms control at the regional level was a global issue of concern.

The Russian Federation stated that they could not agree on language in PP7 as it includes language on the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE), which has long become irrelevant. The Russian Federation emphasised that they initiated negotiations to update the CFE. However, in 2007, they ceased activities under the CFE.

L.33, “[Regional Disarmament](#),” and **L.34**, “[Confidence-building measures in the regional and subregional context](#),” were both adopted without a vote. L.30 stresses that sustained efforts are needed to make progress on the entire range of disarmament issues, and L.32 emphasises that the objective of confidence-building measures should be to

help strengthen international peace and security. The resolution also encourages the promotion of bilateral and regional confidence-building measures to avoid conflict.

Regional centres

All the resolutions on the regional disarmament centres were adopted without a vote:

L.31, [“United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa;”](#) **L.37**, [“United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific;”](#) **L.44**, [“United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean;”](#) and **L.9**, [“United Nations regional centres for peace and disarmament”](#).

A positive outcome of First Committee statements on SALW is the support that states expressed for the inclusion of gender dimensions in the UNPoA, for the importance of including women as decision makers in small arms processes, and for the linkage between SALW and the SDGs. IANSA also welcomes statements acknowledging the contributions of civil society to preventing arms trafficking and armed violence.

It was promising that a number of states reported on efforts they are undertaking in their countries to address SALW issues—including the strengthening of national legislation on firearms, destruction of illicit guns, and improving registration and record-keeping of guns and ammunition. However, discussions fell short on some issues at the 2022 First Committee—namely addressing the excessive accumulation and production of SALW; addressing the issue of civilian possession of SALW; and providing support for survivors of gun violence.

During this First Committee, it was also encouraging to hear states mention the 2024 Review Conference on the UNPoA, an indication that they are beginning to prepare for the conference. Based on this year’s First Committee discussions and the outcome of BMS8, it is likely that gender, the SDGs, ammunition, and international assistance and cooperation will be key issues at the conference. As the official coordinator for civil society participation in UN meetings on small arms, IANSA looks forward to working with member states to build momentum over the next couple of years toward a Review Conference that does review and revise the UNPoA.