



Promoting Dialogue and a Culture of Peace: Taking Action to End Gun Proliferation and Violence

In all world regions, small arms and light weapons (SALW) are being used to commit crimes against humanity, war crimes, and acts of gender-based and other violence, including serious violations of human rights and acts of terror, which together undermine peace and sustainable development.

To help stop such atrocities and widespread human suffering, the International Action Network on Small Arms, IANSA, which is a global network with over 500 non-governmental organisation members, promotes advocacy work appealing to all governments to take effective measures to prevent the illicit trade and misuse of small arms and light weapons.

One way to do this is to urge all governments to strengthen and strictly implement the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (UNPoA) as well as the other international and regional agreements they have developed to control SALW and prevent gun violence.

Join the Global Week of Action Against Gun Violence: 26 June – 2 July 2023

IANSA is calling on all its members to redouble their efforts to help end to the illicit proliferation and misuse of SALW and for states to fulfil their promise in the UNPoA to promote a Culture of Peace! With the support of the [Parliamentary Forum on Small Arms and Light Weapons \(PFSALW\)](#) network of parliamentarians, IANSA is inviting members of civil society to join in solidarity and participate in the Global Week of Action Against Gun Violence (GWOA). This year the GWOA will take place from 26 June to 2 July 2023.

The goal of this campaign action is to raise awareness of the widespread killing, destruction of livelihoods and further threats of violence arising from the proliferation and misuse of guns and to urge governments and parliaments to take effective measures to prevent and eradicate gun violence and armed conflicts.

The GWOA is an opportunity for civil society organisations to start mobilising in the lead up to the *Fourth Review Conference on the UNPoA (RevCon4)*, which is set to take place 17–28 June 2024. Advocacy work by IANSA members helped generate important progress in the lead-up to, and during, the UN Review Conference on the PoA in June 2018 (RevCon3). PFSALW gathered support from MPs prior and at the RevCon3 to identify parliamentary priorities to address the problem.

Strengthen the global Programme of Action on SALW

All the world's governments made numerous commitments in the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (UNPoA), which was adopted by the General Assembly in June 2001. Within the PoA framework, the General Assembly adopted the International Tracing Instrument (ITI) in 2005, a global instrument for cooperation in weapons tracing. Improving weapons marking, record keeping and tracing is now also part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The global framework of treaties and instruments also includes the UN [Firearms Protocol](#) which supplements the Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime, and the [Arms Trade Treaty](#) (ATT) which provides an over-arching legal framework for States to control transfers of conventional arms and prevent their diversion. The [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs) also commit all States to significantly reduce illicit arms flows by 2030. In addition, there are some regional instruments and regional roadmaps to control and regulate small arms and light weapons.

Under the review process for the UNPoA most governments have made further commitments since 2001. Every six years, States participate in a global conference to review the PoA (RevCon) and are given an opportunity to strengthen the PoA's ongoing implementation. In 2018, the third Review Conference, RevCon3, was held in New York under the auspices of the UN General Assembly – see [here](#) for the outcomes of RevCon3. In addition, every two years Member States convene to “consider the national, regional and global implementation of the PoA” These meetings are called the Biennial Meeting of States (BMS). The [eighth BMS](#) was held in 2022, one year after the previous one because of the COVID pandemic.

The UN Charter – A Reminder

The opening words of the UN Charter are often forgotten but serve as a reminder that the solemn duty of all is “to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind, and to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small, and to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained, and to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom.” The UN Charter sets out key rules for state conduct, including that states are prohibited from conducting acts of aggression or using force that violates the territorial integrity or political independence of another state.

Why promote a Culture of Peace?

It is vital to also include cultural change to curb the illicit trade of SALW and not only changes in legislation and enforcement. A culture of peace framework is one that addresses fundamental values in society and in governance which are important for seeking effective solutions.

One of the commitments made in the UN Programme of Action on SALW is that “Member States should submit proposals to the Secretary General which can be circulated and are designed to promote dialogue and a culture of peace by encouraging, as appropriate, education and public awareness programmes on the problems of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects, involving all sectors of society.” Member States need to put this commitment into practice.

Therefore, IANSA's theme for this year's GWOA is "Promoting Dialogue and a Culture of Peace: Taking Action to End Gun Proliferation and Violence!" By encouraging, as appropriate, education and public awareness programmes as well as meetings involving representatives from key sectors of society with governments officials and parliamentarians, we hope to encourage more discussions of the problems of the illicit trade of SALW in all its aspects and how to develop viable solutions.

How the United Nations defined a 'Culture of Peace'

The United Nations defined a "Culture of Peace" as a "*set of values, attitudes, modes of behaviour and ways of life that reject violence and prevent conflicts by tackling their root causes to solve problems through dialogue and negotiation among individuals, groups and nations.*" The General Assembly invited Member States to take the necessary steps during 2001-2010 to ensure that the practice of peace and non-violence is taught at all levels in their respective societies, including educational institutions, and called on relevant UN bodies as well as non-governmental organisations, religious bodies and groups, educational institutions, artists, and the media for support.

Within the Culture of Peace framework, peace embraces far more than an absence of conflict. It encompasses tolerance, disarmament, sustainable economic and social development, democratic participation, gender equality, freedom of expression and respect for human rights. Peace requires non-military approaches to achieve human security including justice that is fair to all, and law enforcement to provide protection which does not use violence or cause harm. To help end gun proliferation and violence, all governments and civil society organisations must strive to promote the UN Culture of Peace framework to that it strengthens their mandates to implement the PoA.

Framework of Key Advocacy Points and Actions

The following framework of key advocacy points and actions is recommended by IANSA for the Global Week of Action. Members and supporters are encouraged to promote these and to use supportive publications, taking into account their national circumstances. Civil society organisations joining in the GWOA are invited to adapt these to their priorities:

Responsibility of States to implement strict controls on the transfer and use of SALW

The proliferation of small arms and light weapons, especially in situations of instability and inadequate State regulation, has contributed to their use in civilian and political violence, organised crime, and terrorism. Such gross misuses of SALW all too frequently escalate into warfare where the parties also deploy major conventional weapons to commit atrocities, mass displacements of population, and the destruction of civilian infrastructure and markets. It is urgent that all States intensify their efforts to help end to the illicit proliferation and misuse of SALW and take appropriate measures to fulfil the commitments they made in the UNPoA. We urge states to:

- Ensure respect for the rule of law and human rights;
- Implement international and regional instruments including with national targets;
- Promote humane policing and non-military solutions to security.

Implementing specific measures to regulate the SALW trade

Member States should redouble their efforts to accurately reflect in strict national laws and regulations their international legal obligations pertaining to the control of SALW, and should also adopt administrative as well as enforcement procedures and capacities that will ensure consistent application of those laws and regulations in a manner that avoids ambiguities and scope for malpractice. We urge States to:

- Adopt pre and post shipment measures to prevent SALW diversion;
- Ensure comprehensive record keeping, marking and tracing of all SALW and ammunition;
- Strengthen controls on civilian-held SALW and ammunition.

Building public and political support for the UNPoA

Preventing and eradicating the proliferation and misuse of SALW requires not only strengthening of legislation, administrative practices and law enforcement consistent with UN standards, but also changes in cultural norms and attitudes towards armed violence. Such programmes will require the development of appropriate materials guided by specialist expertise and analysis as well as the allocation of adequate resources. We urge States to:

- Promote gender mainstreaming;
- Engage with SALW violence-affected communities;
- Support civil society to actively participate in the UNPoA process at home and in UN meetings;
- Mobilise for active and constructive participation in RevCon4 in June 2024.

Transparency in reporting and international cooperation and assistance

There is a culture of excessive secrecy and non-transparency around arms trading in many countries worldwide which is contributing to corruption, illicit trafficking, and irresponsible transfers. To help prevent, mitigate, and remedy harmful impacts of SALW proliferation on human rights, States should report regularly on all their international trade in SALW and related ammunition, parts and components. We urge States to:

- Fulfil their SALW reporting obligations under the UNPoA, the ATT and other instruments;
- Support parliamentary oversight of SALW manufacturing, trade and uses;
- Press donor States to increase international assistance to affected countries.

Recommended publications to support this advocacy

- **The Americas Region: Complementarities in Small Arms and Light Weapons Control Instruments:** This briefing paper focuses on synergies regarding marking and tracing, record keeping, brokering and enforcement measures. It concludes with some recommendations on policy and legislative choices that states can consider for application at the national level.
- **The Africa Region: Complementarities in Small Arms and Light Weapons Control Instruments:** After providing a brief overview of the instruments, the focus of this paper is on the subject matter of each instrument, especially import requirements and criminal offences. It concludes with some recommendations on policy and legislative choices that states can consider for application at the national level.
- **IANSA Infographic on Effective UNPoA Implementation: Setting national targets to prevent the illicit trade in small arms:** This is a brief introduction to the UN Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects.
- **IANSA Infographic on Building civil society dialogues with governments to promote national UNPoA priorities:** This is an introduction to the idea of civil society actors working with their home government to develop national targets for the implementation of the UNPoA, providing examples from Pakistan and Cameroon.
- **International Standards to Prevent Police Gun Violence:** This briefing paper cites important international standards developed by states in the United Nations regarding the use of weapons by law enforcement agencies in order to highlight what key measures governments should take to help control firearms and prevent gun violence.
- Other IANSA publications relevant to this advocacy can be found on the IANSA website here: <https://iansa.org/publications/>
- An introduction to key issues concerning the control of small arms and light weapons can be found here: <https://iansa.org/small-arms-and-light-weapons-why-strict-controls-are-urgently-needed-may-2022/>