

Towards RevCon4: Seven Advocacy Points on the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms

The Fourth Review Conference of the UN Programme of Action (UNPoA) on Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (RevCon4) will be held from 18–28 June 2024.¹ It commits all participating States to cooperate on measures that will help achieve the purpose of the UNPoA, including “to reduce the human suffering caused by the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects and to enhance the respect for life and the dignity of the human person through the promotion of a culture of peace.”²

This paper highlights the seven key advocacy issues identified by IANSA as priority issues to focus advocacy on in the lead up to RevCon4, with suggested action points for States.³ The issues are:

- 1) Strengthening transfer controls
- 2) Controlling SALW ammunition
- 3) Collecting, destroying, and safely disposing of surplus SALW and ammunition
- 4) Mainstreaming gender
- 5) Engaging with youth
- 6) Setting national and regional targets
- 7) Controlling the civilian possession of SALW

1. Strengthening transfer controls

The weak regulation of international transfers, which include the export, import, transit and brokering of SALW and ammunition, is a major problem contributing to their illicit and irresponsible trade.⁴ This needs to be urgently addressed by States, including by both the exporting States as well as by import-dependent States.⁵

During RevCon4, States should commit to:

- Maximising complementarities between measures in the UNPoA-ITI and in other relevant instruments to which a State is a party, including the Arms Trade Treaty, the UN Firearms Protocol, and other regional and sub-regional instruments.
- Establishing national control systems which require that, prior to each transfer of SALW and ammunition, the intended end-uses and end-users are verified and that all documents related to the transfer are authenticated. End-use/user certificates or other documents should include signed undertakings not to re-transfer or re-circulate the SALW and ammunition to another State or end-user without the agreement of the sending authority.
- Adopting pre- and post-shipment measures. Pre-shipment measures should include risk assessments of potential diversion and misuse of each transfer of SALW and ammunition, as well as secure physical security and reporting systems related to their brokering, transport, storage, and deployment. Post-shipment measures by the exporting and importing States should include sharing a Delivery Verification Certificate (DVC) and facilitating follow up on-site inspections.

¹ This briefing paper is one of a series being published by IANSA for the Fourth Review Conference of the UN Programme of Action that deals with issues that need additional attention in the UNPoA process.

² Report of the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, para. 4.

³ Dr. Natalie Goldring, “[An Analysis of Outcomes from BMS8 and Looking Forward to RevCon4](#)” (September 2023) ; Emily Callsen and IANSA team, “[Towards RevCon4: Civil Society Advocacy Guide on the Programme of Action on Small Arms](#)” (February 2024).

⁴ Dr. Brian Wood, “[Ten Goals to Prevent the Diversion of Small Arms and Light Weapons](#)” (May 2022).

⁵ Peter Danssaert and Dr. Markus Fahlbusch, “[Post-Shipment Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons](#)” (October 2022).

- Supporting a national system of parliamentary oversight of SALW manufacturing, trade and uses.
- Adopting legislation at the national level to control the production, sale, and purchase of technologies that would contribute to the illegal production, sale, and trade of SALW.

2. Controlling SALW ammunition

Small arms and light weapons can last for decades, but without continuing supplies of ammunition, SALW will become essentially useless. This is why ammunition must be included in the UNPoA. Unsecured and inadequately marked ammunition contribute considerably to global diversion into illicit markets, becoming a key factor in crime, terrorism, the escalation of armed conflict, and gender-based violence.⁶

During RevCon4, States should:

- Acknowledge in the outcome document that SALW without ammunition are ineffective and that the strict regulation and management of ammunition including the transfer, deployment, collection, destruction, and safe disposal of ammunition are essential to prevent armed violence.
- Commit to formulating and setting national and regional targets in relation to ammunition.
- Recognise in the RevCon4 outcome document that the production of ammunition is affected by new technology applications and develop new measures to address this matter.

3. Collecting, destroying and safely disposing of surplus SALW and ammunition

States often fail to destroy and safely dispose of redundant, obsolete, unserviceable, and confiscated SALW and ammunition held in police and military stockpiles and illegally in civilian possession. One of the negative consequences of failing to destroy and safely dispose of SALW and ammunition has been the diversion of such weapons and ammunition for illicit purposes.⁷

During RevCon4, States should commit to:

- Destroying illicit and surplus SALW and ammunition as well as preventing the reactivation and conversion of firearms to enable firing without official authorisation. The unauthorised possession of deactivated SALW, which had not been rendered inoperable and can be reactivated, or of readily convertible weapons, should also be made a criminal offence.
- Adjusting inventory records, after the destruction has safely been carried out. The number and serial numbers of weapons destroyed, as well as the tracking numbers of destroyed SALW, must be included in the inventory records.
- Conducting an audit after the destruction programme, especially if it was funded by States. The audit should include a review of the programme budget and expenditure, and the checking of weapons destroyed against the lists of weapons scheduled for destruction, as well as interviews with personnel involved in the programme and investigation of any irregularities.

⁶ Emily Callsen, [IANSA Statement to the Third Open-Ended Working Group on Conventional Ammunition](#) (February 2023); IANSA and other [NGO Statements to the Fourth Substantive Session on the OEWG on Conventional Ammunition](#) (June 2023); IANSA, [Towards BMS7: Stockpile management of small arms and light weapons \(SALW\) and ammunition](#) (July 2021) and Teresa Dybeck, [The UN Programme of Action on Small Arms: Why Ammunition Must be Included](#) (June 2021).

⁷ IANSA, [Towards BMS7: Stockpile management of small arms and light weapons \(SALW\) and ammunition](#) (July 2021).

- Involving civil society stakeholders, in particular women, youth, survivors, and other underrepresented groups in support of collection, destruction, and safe disposal activities.
- Developing environmentally-friendly safe disposal programmes and cooperating with other States to exchange information and technologies to do so.

4. Mainstreaming gender

Evidence shows that armed violence and gun violence impact people of different genders in distinct ways. When gender dimensions are not adequately dealt with in legislative and policy frameworks governing small arms control and regulation, the success and effectiveness of interventions are limited.⁸ Addressing gender shouldn't be narrowly focusing on men, boys, women, and girls, while excluding gender-diverse individuals. Gender intersects with many factors such as race, ethnicity, class, and disability, among others, which results in unique combinations of discrimination and oppression or privilege.⁹

During RevCon4, States should:

- Adopt a more comprehensive, broad and inclusive understanding of gender and gender mainstreaming and reflect this perspective in the outcome document.
- Commit to making certain that efforts to ensure gender equality in decision-making and implementation processes also include people of diverse sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, and sexual characteristics- SOGIESC.¹⁰
- Ensure in the RevCon4 outcome document that gender mainstreaming also takes into account other factors that intersect with gender to fully account for the differential impacts of the SALW trade and misuse on men, women, girls, boys, and gender-diverse individuals, and emphasising the need for greater inclusive participation and representation.
- Ensure in the RevCon4 outcome document that efforts towards representation include men, women and gender-diverse individuals from all backgrounds and walks of life.

5. Engaging with youth

Children and youth represent the majority of the population in most countries suffering from armed conflicts and armed violence. Yet they are not sufficiently and adequately represented in UN meetings on small arms, or in discussions on disarmament and peace and security. The international community has a special responsibility to ensure that young people can share their perspectives and concerns about existential threats to current and future generations.¹¹

⁸ United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, [Gender and Small Arms Control](#).

⁹ Sarah Masters and Jasmine Nario-Galace, [Effective civil society engagement to inform and influence gender mainstreaming in small arms trafficking and misuse: the experience of IANSA](#) (January 2024); Sarah Masters: [Strength in Diversity: Amplifying the Voices of Women Campaigners Against Gun Violence](#), IANSA briefing paper with interviews conducted by Jenny Morgan (May 2022).

¹⁰ amelie namuroy and Callum Watson: [Ending armed violence perpetrated against people on the basis of real or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity or expression and sexual characteristics \(SOGIESC\) within the framework of the UNPoA](#), IANSA Factsheet (December 2023).

¹¹ Hetva Joshi and Sebastian Zuba, [IANSA Factsheet: Youth Mainstreaming in Small Arms and Light Weapons Control](#) (February 2024), [Youth are the Future: United Nations Resources on Small Arms Control and Disarmament](#) (April 2021).

During RevCon4, States should:

- Agree to fund and carry out a thorough analysis of the role of youth in developing small arms control policies, programmes and activities at community, national, and regional levels, including addressing the nature of the ownership and use of small arms by young people and the differentiated effects of small arms on youth.
- Commit to the full, meaningful, and effective participation of youth in policymaking, planning, and implementation processes related to SALW control, in formal disarmament initiatives, and in peace processes and negotiations.
- Include in the RevCon4 outcome document a commitment to adequately fund civil society organisations that are youth-led or focused on youth and small arms issues, and also include national officials working on youth issues in the work of national commissions on small arms.
- Consider ways in which new technologies are likely to make SALW even more accessible to youth (for example, 3D printed firearms), and include specific language in the outcome document to address these new control challenges.

6. Setting national and regional targets

The uncontrolled spread, abuse, and misuse of SALW continue to have devastating effects on sustainable and socio-economic development, the environment, human rights, and people's livelihoods. Meaningful progress towards the full and effective implementation of the UNPoA requires clearly defined national and regional targets aligned with existing regional and international instruments and roadmaps.¹²

During RevCon4, States should commit to:

- Using existing international and regional instruments to update national laws and legislation on SALW or to strengthen them.
- Developing and setting national and regional targets in relation to gender-responsive arms control for the effective implementation of the UNPoA, as well as engaging with civil society and other stakeholders.
- Facilitate international cooperation and assistance to answer institutional needs and share the resources that are required to build capacities through the development of national and regional targets for the effective implementation of the UNPoA.

7. Controlling the civilian possession of SALW

Vast quantities of unlicensed and unregistered guns are in the hands of civilians in many countries.¹³ In conflict and post-conflict settings, civilian possession of SALW can deepen, exacerbate, or prolong conflicts, trigger displacement, erode social capital, undermine public institutions, and violate human rights. Gun violence is also pervasive in many non-conflict situations involving armed gangs and

¹² Teresa Dybeck, [Setting national and regional targets in implementing the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons](#) (November 2023); Teresa Dybeck, [Building Civil Society Dialogues with Governments to Promote National PoA Priorities](#) (October 2022).

¹³ Small Arms Survey, [Global Firearms Holdings](#) (29 March 2020).

organised crime, as well as those involving police violations of standards on the use of force and firearms.¹⁴ Stricter controls on civilian possession of SALW and ammunition are urgently needed.¹⁵

During RevCon4, States should:

- Commit to ensuring that national legislation and law enforcement agencies only allow the possession and use of a firearm and ammunition by a civilian if the individual has met strict eligibility criteria and has been granted an official licence or permit specifying the lawful purpose that includes an expiry/renewal date.
- Commit to developing strong institutional capacities, including through the maintenance of a comprehensive civilian firearms registry, national action plans and targets, as well as international cooperation, to regulate and monitor the possession of firearms and ammunition by civilians.
- Strictly regulate commercial producers and dealers trading in firearms and ammunition, parts, and components, and prohibit the re-activation of decommissioned weapons for sale, to prevent their diversion to unauthorised users.
- Commit to regulating the supply and development of new technologies that could facilitate the illegal manufacture and possession of firearms and their ammunition by civilians.

¹⁴ Such professional standards include the UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force by Law Enforcement Officials and the UN Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials. See Dr. Brian Wood, [International Standards to Prevent Police Gun Violence](#), IANSA briefing paper (September 2023).

¹⁵ Dr. Natalie Goldring, [Strengthening controls on civilian-held small arms to decrease the human costs of armed violence](#) (October 2022).