

26. Small arms

During the period under review, the Security Council held two meetings in connection with the item entitled “Small arms”, one took the form of a briefing while the second one was held as an open debate.⁹⁴⁶ More information on the meetings, including on participants and speakers, is given in the table below.⁹⁴⁷

On 6 October 2021, the Council held a meeting under this item further to the biennial report of the Secretary-General.⁹⁴⁸ At the meeting, the Council heard briefings by the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, the Executive Secretary of the Regional Centre on Small Arms in the Great Lakes Region, the Horn of Africa and Bordering States and a Senior Researcher at Small Arms Survey. In her briefing, the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs focused on the need to address the threats posed by illicit flows of small arms and light weapons in the context of peace operations.⁹⁴⁹ In that regard, she stated that the misuse, illicit transfer and destabilizing accumulation of small arms and light weapons and their ammunition remained a defining factor in undermining peace and security at the national, regional and global levels and had deeply aggravated situations for vulnerable populations already suffering from conflict. She commended the Council’s increasing consideration of the issue of small arms in its work, including the inclusion of arms-related provisions in recent peace operations mandates, as well as the growing number of resolutions that considered weapons and ammunition management and control measures for small arms and light weapons. She also noted the Council’s efforts to support States in the strengthening of national security services through adjustments to relevant arms embargoes, as well as employment of weapons and ammunition management as part of the benchmark assessments of arms embargoes. In this regard, she encouraged the Council to fully integrate considerations of weapons and ammunition into its work on both country-specific and thematic discussions, including addressing the arms-crime-

⁹⁴⁶ For further information on the format of meetings, see part II, sect. II.

⁹⁴⁷ See also [A/76/2](#), part II, chap. 15.

⁹⁴⁸ See [S/PV.8874](#). For the report of the Secretary-General, see [S/2021/839](#). For further information on the biennial report of the Secretary-General requested by presidential statement [S/PRST/2007/24](#), see *Repertoire, Supplement 2004-2007*, chap. 8, sect. 40.

⁹⁴⁹ See [S/PV.8874](#).

terrorism nexus as one interrelated and multifaceted security threat that required complementary approaches and responses. The High Representative said that another dimension to consider was the nexus between sustainable development and small arms, which was firmly anchored in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Thematic discussions on issues such as children and armed conflict and the women and peace and security agenda were also important opportunities to reflect on convergence with small arms-related issues as part of Council's programme of work. In closing, she reiterated the need for mainstreaming small arms and light weapons considerations across the work of the Council, and highlighted a recommendation from the Secretary-General's report, namely, that wherever a mission was mandated to provide support to the host State in the processing of recovered weapons and the treatment of ammunition recovered from the illicit sphere, the Council should consider the establishment or designation of a dedicated component, unit or cell within the mission to support the systematic collection, centralization and analysis of small arms-related data and ensure evidence-based policymaking and programming on the ground.⁹⁵⁰

The Executive Secretary of the Regional Centre on Small Arms in the Great Lakes Region, the Horn of Africa and Bordering States gave a brief history on the Regional Centre on Small Arms and described the history and work of his organization in fighting against small arms' proliferation.⁹⁵¹ In addition to elaborating on the many drivers of the proliferation of illicit weapons in the African region, he addressed four guiding questions concerning (i) the trends in the illicit circulation, proliferation and misuse of small arms in the context of peace operations and the impact of those trends in shaping the mandates of the Security Council, (ii) the specific measures that the Security Council could take to prevent weapons in the possession of peacekeepers from falling into the hands of illicit armed groups, (iii) how United Nations peace operations could support enhanced weapons and ammunition management, and (iv) which regional or global mechanisms could be developed and/or strengthened to shore up the control of small arms and light weapons in conflict-affected situations. He stressed that it was important to recognize that small arms proliferation was a development issue and that it was is vital to

⁹⁵⁰ See [S/2021/839](#), para. 84.

⁹⁵¹ See [S/PV.8874](#).

package arms control interventions within wider development programming, as there was a nexus between sustainable development and security.

The Senior Researcher at Small Arms Survey affirmed that the unchecked proliferation of arms, ammunition and explosives posed one of the greatest challenges to peacekeeping. He then offered a summary of the trends in the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and their ammunition based on research. He first recounted that the availability of arms to non-State armed groups, criminals and terrorists in peacekeeping contexts was often a product of historical regional conflict. He noted secondly that in States and regions where the illegal use of small arms and light weapons had reached chronic and destabilizing proportions, direct interventions and operations to reduce flows were important. Lastly, he said that missions could be clear about designated responsibilities within a peacekeeping operation to identify and disrupt flows, which required a whole-of-mission effort, with clear benchmarks and reporting requirements. In his briefing, he also addressed some of the questions posed by the Council concerning, inter alia, preventing losses and connections with security sector reform and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and countering terrorism; weapons and ammunition management and existing tools and mechanisms as well as regional or global mechanisms to strengthen arms control in conflict-related situations. He also suggested that new technology could amplify and simplify the collection, analysis and sharing of illicit arms- and ammunition-related data, empowering law enforcement and customs officials and providing a global picture of such flows. In closing, the Senior Researcher elaborated on nine key elements that could help peacekeeping operations to mitigate the dangers associated with arms, ammunition and explosives proliferation.

Following the briefings, most Council members welcomed the report of the Secretary-General and its recommendations. The representative of the Russian Federation expressed support to the Kenyan presidency of the Council in conducting the meeting on small arms and light weapons not as a disarmament issue but in the context of peacekeeping operations. In this regard, he expressed the belief that the Secretary-General's biennial reports on small arms and light weapons should devote much more attention to peacekeeping. The representative of the Russian Federation saw no backdrop for the discussion of small arms and light weapons within the Council other than peacekeeping. He added that it could hardly be considered in the context

of various abstract topics such as sustainable development, gender or climate change. Discussions within that framework would not bring added value, especially not in the Council, since the priority forum for the discussion of issues relating to small arms and light weapons was the General Assembly. Many speakers emphasized that the proliferation of and illicit trade in small arms and light weapons posed a serious threat to international peace and security.⁹⁵² In that regard, they addressed the risks relating to the transfer and trafficking of arms and weapons to terrorists and terrorist groups in the context of peacekeeping as well as the impact of small weapons in exacerbating conflicts. Many Council members also called for the promotion of a gender perspective when addressing issues related to small arms and light weapons. Some Council members brought attention to the disproportionate impact of the proliferation of small arms on women and children, as reflected in the report of the Secretary-General.⁹⁵³ Additionally, speakers emphasized the need for effective implementation of several crucial international mechanisms intended to combat the illicit trade, such as the Arms Trade Treaty, the International Tracing Instrument, the Firearms Protocol and the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. The efforts of regional organizations, such as the African Union's Silencing the Guns in Africa initiative in dealing with the challenges of illicit flow of small arms and light weapons was commended by many Council members. They further called for strengthening the partnership between the United Nations and regional organizations. In that context, the representative of Ireland noted that regional road maps, such as those implemented by the Economic Community of West African States and in the Western Balkans, were also making important strides. Furthermore, the representative of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines also pointed out that the Caribbean Community had accelerated the Roadmap for Implementing the Caribbean Priority Actions on the Illicit Proliferation of Firearms and Ammunition across the Caribbean in a Sustainable Manner by 2030.

On 22 November 2021, at the initiative of Mexico which held the Presidency for the month,⁹⁵⁴ the Council held a high-level open debate under this item. The Council heard briefings

⁹⁵² Ibid., Viet Nam, Tunisia, France, India, Ireland, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, China, Niger and Norway.

⁹⁵³ Ibid., Mexico, Tunisia, India, United Kingdom, Ireland, Niger and Norway.

⁹⁵⁴ A concept note was circulated by letter dated 22 October 2021 ([S/2021/892](#)).

by the Director of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) and a Member of the Control Arms Governance Board. In his briefing, the Director of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research stated that the diversion of and trafficking in arms, including small arms and light weapons and ammunition, was a defining factor in undermining peace and security.⁹⁵⁵ Noting that national ownership was fundamental to effectively tackle diversion and arms trafficking, he said however that it would not achieve success without international cooperation and assistance. In this regard, he elaborated on the work of UNIDIR in developing and providing tools to strengthen national ownership of weapons and ammunition management throughout their entire life cycle. Noting that weapons and ammunition management was increasingly recognized as a fundamental component of conflict prevention and actions to tackle armed violence as well as also increasingly reflected in resolutions adopted by the Council on arms embargoes and peace operations, he described that the research conducted by UNIDIR in support of action 21 of the Secretary-General's Agenda for Disarmament, had found that peace operations often gathered and had access to critical information for supporting arms embargo implementation and enforcement but did not systematically integrate conventional arms control measures into their conflict prevention and management toolbox. He explained that UNIDIR was developing arms-related risk analysis tools that could help peace operations to better integrate conventional arms control measures into their conflict prevention, management and peacebuilding efforts. Advancing a United Nations strategic approach to weapons and ammunition management, he added, could further enhance multilateral efforts to deliver peace, security, stability and development around the world.

The Member of the Control Arms Governance Board, recalled that her organization which was integrated by 150 civil society member organizations, was created to influence the implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty. She outlined the various instruments, agreements and mechanisms at the disposal of States to detect, combat and prevent illicit trafficking and diversion of small arms and light weapons, including the Arms Trade Treaty in relation to which she noted that three of the five permanent members of the Council and six of the then elected members were States parties to it. To continue tackling the illicit trade in small arms and light

⁹⁵⁵ See [S/PV.8909](#).

weapons, she urged the Council to prioritize the effective implementation of the established global framework and mechanisms regulating the international trade in conventional arms; to promote and seek synergies between international and regional efforts to detect, combat and prevent the illicit trafficking and diversion of arms; and to review, revitalize and develop its commitment to resolution [2220 \(2015\)](#).

Following the briefings, Member States expressed their commitment in addressing the issue of illicit trade of small arms and light weapons and outlined their national efforts and initiatives in addressing this issue. They emphasized the need for political will in preventing the diversion and trafficking of small arms and light weapons and their ammunition in conflict situations. The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Mexico noted that it was precisely in the context of the Council that he believed serious discussions must be held on the tangible impacts of diversion and trafficking, as well as on the decisions that this organ could promote to strengthen cooperation and better implement international commitments. He clarified that the aim was not to replace but to strengthen the efforts already undertaken in other forums of the United Nations system. Many speakers stressed the importance of a collective action in the implementation of arms embargoes as well as mechanisms such as the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner. Several speakers underscored the importance of information-sharing,⁹⁵⁶ and the use of best practices,⁹⁵⁷ to combat and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. Many participants stressed the importance of an effective tracing of weapons while reiterating the need to incorporate a gender dimension in addressing the issues related to small arms and light weapons. Furthermore, speakers emphasized the need to strengthen the capacity of peacekeeping missions in the management of illegal flows of small arms and light weapons.

⁹⁵⁶ Ibid., India, Tunisia, Ireland, Kenya, China, Belgium and Iraq.

⁹⁵⁷ Ibid., United Kingdom, Russian Federation, Malta and Iraq.

In 2021, in connection with the item entitled “Maintenance of international peace and security”, the Council adopted resolution [2616 \(2021\)](#) concerning the illicit transfer, destabilizing accumulation and misuse of small arms and light weapons.⁹⁵⁸

Meetings: Small Arms

<i>Meeting record and date</i>	<i>Sub-item</i>	<i>Other documents</i>	<i>Rule 37 invitations</i>	<i>Rule 39 and other invitations</i>	<i>Speakers</i>	<i>Decision and vote (for-against-abstaining)</i>
S/PV.8874 6 October 2021	Report of the Secretary-General on small arms and light weapons (S/2021/839)			High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Executive Secretary of the Regional Centre on Small Arms in the Great Lakes Region, the Horn of Africa and Bordering States, Senior Researcher at Small Arms Survey	All Council members, all invitees	
S/PV.8909 22 November 2021	The impact of the diversion and trafficking of arms on peace and security. Letter dated 22 October 2021 from the Permanent Representative of Mexico to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2021/892)		34 Member States ^a	Director of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research; Member of the Control Arms Governance Board; Deputy Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations; Permanent Observer of the International Committee of the Red Cross to the United Nations	All Council members ^b , all invitees ^c	

^a Albania, Argentina, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Hungary, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Malta, Morocco, Philippines, Portugal, Qatar, Slovakia, South Africa, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Turkey and Ukraine.

^b Mexico was represented by its Secretary of Foreign Affairs. India was represented by its Secretary (CPV & OIA), Ministry of External Affairs.

^c The Deputy Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations spoke on behalf of the European Union and its member States, as well as Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia. Sweden spoke on behalf of the Nordic countries. Qatar spoke on behalf of the Group of Arab States.

⁹⁵⁸ For further details, see part I, sect. 34.