

28. Small arms

During the period under review, the Council held one meeting in connection with the item entitled “Small arms”, which took the form of an open debate.⁹¹⁵ More information on the meetings, including on participants and speakers, is given in the table below.⁹¹⁶

On 15 December, at the initiative of Ecuador, which held the presidency for the month,⁹¹⁷ the Council held a high-level open debate under the sub-item entitled “Addressing the threat posed by diversion, illicit trafficking and misuse of small arms and light weapons and their ammunition to peace and security”.⁹¹⁸ The Council heard briefings by the Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, the Deputy Director of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) and the Executive Director of the non-governmental organization Women’s Institute for Alternative Development.

In her briefing, the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs highlighted some points of the latest report of the Secretary-General, which provided an overview of the most significant trends and developments over the previous two years.⁹¹⁹ She reported that the Secretary-General lamented the deteriorating security environment, the escalation in armed conflicts and the related surge in civilian casualties, in addition to the continued rise in global military expenditure and the costs of small arms and light weapons for peace, security and sustainable development. Against that backdrop, in his policy brief on a New Agenda for Peace,⁹²⁰ the Secretary-General had identified arms regulation and control measures as critical for preventing conflict and called for actions to reduce the human cost of weapons.⁹²¹ The High Representative noted that implementation continued to be uneven and challenges persisted, and in that regard, outlined the three recommendations the Secretary-General had put forward to advance comprehensive

⁹¹⁵ For further information on the format of meetings, see part II, sect. II.

⁹¹⁶ See also [A/78/2](#), part II, chap. 15.

⁹¹⁷ A concept note was circulated by a letter dated 4 December ([S/2023/954](#)).

⁹¹⁸ See [S/PV.9509](#) and [S/PV.9509 \(Resumption 1\)](#).

⁹¹⁹ See [S/PV.9509](#). For the biennial report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council, see [S/2023/823](#). For more information on the report, requested by the Council in its presidential statement adopted on 29 June 2007 ([S/PRST/2007/24](#)), see *Repertoire, Supplement 2004-2007*, chap. VIII, sect. 40.

⁹²⁰ [A/77/CRP.1/Add.8](#).

⁹²¹ See [S/PV.9509](#).

approaches for small arms and light weapons control: namely, the development and strengthening of national and regional instruments and action plans to address the challenges related to diversion, proliferation and misuse; the setting of voluntary national and regional targets and measuring progress through data collection and monitoring; and the pursuit of whole-of-Government approaches that integrated small arms and light weapons control into development, prevention and peacebuilding initiatives. She also stressed the need for comprehensive and multidisciplinary approaches for the control of small arms, while addressing the drivers of supply and demand, and referred to the Saving Lives Entity within the Peacebuilding Fund, which supported United Nations country teams on arms control and armed violence reduction. She added that due to the cross-cutting and multidimensional impact of small arms and light weapons, the Secretary-General had consistently encouraged the Council to consider this issue in its country-specific and thematic agenda items and discussions, as well as in its linkages to transnational organized crime and terrorism. She encouraged the Council to mandate United Nations entities to systematically collect such data, including when recording casualties and monitoring incidents of conflict-related sexual violence. She added that small arms and light weapons control efforts played a crucial role in advancing the women and peace and security agenda and stressed the need to further strengthen those linkages and noted the Secretary-General's recommendation to identify good practices through a report on gender equality in national, regional and international institutions and organizations working on conventional arms control and disarmament.⁹²²

The High Representative commended the Council's increasing consideration of the issue of small arms, including the integration of weapons-related provisions into its resolutions in relevant country and regional contexts experiencing armed conflict and high-levels of armed violence. Regarding the work and mandates of peace operations, she encouraged the Council to ensure that missions were consistently and appropriately mandated to assist States in the effective, safe and secure management of weapons and ammunition. In addition, she reported that illicit flows of arms and ammunition in violation of arms embargoes remained a matter of grave concern, and in that regard, welcomed resolution [2616 \(2021\)](#) on combating the illicit

⁹²² For more information on the discussion on women and peace and security, see sect. 29 below.

transfer, destabilizing accumulation and diversion of arms and related materiel in violation of arms embargoes, which had been crucial in addressing that serious threat to international peace and security.⁹²³ She added that nonetheless, illicit arms trafficking and diversion in violation of Council-mandated arms embargoes continued to be documented, which demonstrated the ongoing need to improve implementation and enforcement of arms embargoes. At the same time, panels of experts continued to face challenges in identifying the origin and supply chain of seized weapons and ammunition. In his report, the Secretary-General offered a number of recommendations which could be considered by the Council, including to seek reports from Member States on steps taken to implement arms embargoes and efforts to cooperate and share information with the panels of experts.

The Deputy Director of UNIDIR stated that since 2021, an increase in conflict-related civilian deaths had contributed to a worrisome upwards trend, and small arms and light weapons had been the second most prevalent cause of such deaths. New technologies and innovation in the production and transfer of small arms and light weapons contributed to their illicit proliferation and destabilizing accumulation, as evidenced by the ongoing research of UNIDIR. Stating that the risks and impacts caused by illicit small arms and light weapons were multi-faceted, multidimensional and context specific, she recalled that for the previous ten years, the Council had increasingly included provisions for weapons and ammunition management in the mandates for United Nations peace operations and special political missions, as well as in resolutions relating to sanctions, including arms embargoes.⁹²⁴ She noted that recent research had found that the United Nations peace operations and special political missions continued to face challenges in addressing arms-related risks and needed to be better equipped to monitor illicit arms flows and determine the source of weapons, ammunition and explosives used to attack mission forces and convoys. She noted that the New Agenda for Peace provided a renewed impetus for increasing United Nations support to States seeking to strengthen weapons management as part of their broader efforts to deliver inclusive peace and security.

⁹²³ For more information on small arms and arms embargoes, see part VII, sect. III.

⁹²⁴ For additional information on mandates and decisions relevant to peacekeeping and political missions, see part X.

The Deputy Director also underscored the significant gendered, age-related and context-specific negative impacts of the diversion, illicit trafficking and misuse of small arms, light weapons and ammunition. Noting that women and girls suffered disproportionately from specific forms of armed violence, she stated that it was crucial that United Nations peacekeeping operations, special political missions and entities considered arms-related risks and impacts in its protection risk assessments and conflict-prevention activities. The systematic data collection could support early warnings of conflict-related sexual violence and inform actions by the Council in areas such as sanctions and arms embargoes. In that connection, she stated that while in resolution [2122 \(2013\)](#), the Council called for women's full and meaningful participation at all levels of decision-making on arms control, and in resolution [2242 \(2015\)](#) encouraged their participation in the design and implementation of such efforts, women still accounted for only a very small percentage working in technical roles involving weapons and ammunition management. Targeted efforts were needed to ensure women's full and meaningful participation in international security and to change perceptions of whose expertise was recognized. In conclusion, she recalled that twenty years after the adoption of resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#), the links between the women and peace and security agenda and the risks posed by the diversion, illicit trafficking and misuse of small arms could and must be further explored.

At the outset, the Executive Director of Women's Institute for Alternative Development stated that addressing the threat that the misuse of conventional arms posed to peace and security should be a priority of the Council as the effects became more apparent in States engaged in armed conflict or violence and in the resulting human suffering. It was incumbent on the Council to come up with new decisions and resolutions or to implement existing ones related to the prevention of violence against non-combatants in conflict zones where women and children featured too heavily in the fatalities resulting from the use of conventional weapons. She stated that despite resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#), the continuing fatalities of women and girls who were non-combatants, as well as their exclusion from the decision-making processes raised the question of whether the Council was failing to get Member States to implement its own resolutions. In that context, she urged the Council to execute its mandate and lead by example in calling on States to recognize, not breach, international human rights law and international humanitarian law

regarding the targeting of civilian infrastructure, the destruction of which militated against international peace and security, as well as States' ability to achieve the aims of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Furthermore, addressing the implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (Programme of Action) was a matter of urgency, as too many States had inadequate legislation, or the lack thereof, regulating small arms and light weapons.

Moreover, it was imperative that the Council accelerated its strong support for implementing all of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) provisions and that States developed national action plans for coordinating, implementing, monitoring and evaluating arms control measures, in accordance with resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#) and General Assembly resolution [77/55](#), which provided actionable pathways to women's inclusion. She also called for collaboration between the Council and the General Assembly, which was essential in reducing the proliferation and misuse of illicit small arms and their ammunition, as well as in capacity strengthening and transfer of technology to aid developing countries in the implementation of the provisions of the ATT. The Council must take all reasonable measures to ensure States' implementation of resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#) through the development of national action plans and capacity-strengthening measures.

In the discussion that followed, speakers highlighted the numerous threats in which illicit trafficking and diversion of small arms and light weapons and their ammunition posed to international peace and security. Among the most negative effects of the uncontrolled spread and easy availability of those weapons, speakers highlighted the aggravation of conflicts and the fueling of terrorism and organized crime, in addition to the undermining of human security, peacebuilding and development efforts. Speakers drew particular attention to the disproportionate impact that small arms and light weapons had on women and girls. In that connection, some Member States emphasized the need for implementation of resolutions [2122 \(2013\)](#) and [2242 \(2015\)](#) to minimize the negative impact of arms transfers and illicit trafficking on conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence.⁹²⁵ The representatives of Malta and Sierra

⁹²⁵ See [S/PV.9509](#) (Malta); and [S/PV.9509 \(Resumption 1\)](#) (Jordan, Belgium (on behalf of the Benelux countries), Uruguay and Sierra Leone).

Leone called for the inclusion of sexual violence as a stand-alone designation criterion for targeted sanctions regimes.⁹²⁶ In the same vein, many delegations underscored the need for full, equal and safe participation of women in national small arms and light weapons control processes.⁹²⁷

With regard to arms embargoes, several Member States emphasized that Council-mandates were a crucial tool for curbing the illicit flow of small arms and light weapons.⁹²⁸ A number of delegations also underlined how Council-mandated peacekeeping operations could support host Governments in monitoring the implementation of arms embargoes, detecting sources of illicit weapons and tracing seized weapons.⁹²⁹ A few Member States, however, voiced a note of caution on the use of Council-imposed sanctions, in order to enhance their effectiveness and to avoid the undermining influence that arms embargoes had on legitimate State defense and capacity-building efforts.⁹³⁰ The representative of the Russian Federation was of the view that there was no connection to specific violations of a Council embargo on the supply of weapons to individual countries and regions, and that the issue of strengthening control of small arms and light weapons was dealt with effectively and productively within the relevant Sanctions Committees.⁹³¹

Delegations emphasized their support for the relevant international instruments, including the Arms Trade Treaty and the Programme of Action, in the context of its fourth Review Conference on its implementation to be held in June 2024. Member States also welcomed the recent adoption of the Global Framework for Through-life Conventional Ammunition Management by the General Assembly.⁹³² In that connection, most speakers called for the role of

⁹²⁶ See [S/PV.9509 \(Malta\)](#); and [S/PV.9509 \(Resumption 1\)](#) (Sierra Leone).

⁹²⁷ See [S/PV.9509](#) (Ecuador, Albania, United Arab Emirates, Brazil, Japan, Malta and Republic of Korea); and [S/PV.9509 \(Resumption 1\)](#) (Poland, Colombia, Jordan, Belgium (on behalf of the Benelux countries), Germany, Slovenia, El Salvador and Sierra Leone).

⁹²⁸ See [S/PV.9509](#) (United Arab Emirates, Ghana, Switzerland, Malta, France, Türkiye and Republic of Korea); and [S/PV.9509 \(Resumption 1\)](#) (Jordan, Chile, Belgium (on behalf of the Benelux countries), El Salvador, Sierra Leone, Myanmar and Democratic Republic of the Congo).

⁹²⁹ See [S/PV.9509](#) (United Arab Emirates, Ghana and Mexico); and [S/PV.9509 \(Resumption 1\)](#) (Belgium (on behalf of the Benelux countries), Germany, Sierra Leone and India).

⁹³⁰ See [S/PV.9509](#) (Ghana, China and Republic of Korea); and [S/PV.9509 \(Resumption 1\)](#) (South Africa).

⁹³¹ See [S/PV.9509](#).

⁹³² See General Assembly resolution [78/47](#).

the United Nations, and particularly of the Council, in urging States to ratify and implement the relevant international instruments in the field of small arms and light weapons.

Meetings: Small arms, 2023

<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.9509 and S/PV.9509 (Resumption 1) 15 December	Addressing the threat posed by diversion, illicit trafficking and misuse of small arms and light weapons and their ammunition to peace and security Report of the Secretary-General on small arms and light weapons (S/2023/823) Letter dated 4 December 2023 from the Permanent Representative of Ecuador to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2023/954)		49 Member States ^a	Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Deputy Director of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, Executive Director of Women's Institute for Alternative Development, Chargée d'affaires a.i. of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations, Permanent Observer and Head of Delegation of the International Committee of the Red Cross to the United Nations	All Council members, ^b 46 Member States, ^c all Rule 39 invitees ^d	

^a Algeria, Australia, Austria, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belgium, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Guyana, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Israel, Italy, Jordan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Mauritania, Mexico, Morocco, Myanmar, Nigeria, Pakistan, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Romania, Sierra Leone, Slovenia, South Africa, Türkiye, Ukraine and Uruguay.

^b Albania was represented by its Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs; Ecuador (President of the Council) was represented by its Minister of Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility; the United Arab Emirates was represented by its Chief of Military Judiciary.

^c Algeria, Australia, Austria, Bahrain, Belgium, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Egypt, El Salvador, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Guyana, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Israel, Italy, Jordan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Mauritania, Mexico, Morocco, Myanmar, Nigeria, Pakistan, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Romania, Sierra Leone, Slovenia, South Africa, Türkiye, Ukraine and Uruguay.

^d The Executive Director of the Women's Institute for Alternative Development participated by videoconference. The representative of Denmark spoke also on behalf of the Nordic countries (Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden); the

representative of Egypt spoke on behalf of the Arab Group; and the representative of Belgium spoke also on behalf of Luxembourg and the Kingdom of the Netherlands.