



**Sixth Biennial Meeting of States  
to Consider 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**

**Opening Remarks**

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Mr. Chairman,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations to you, Ambassador Rattray, on your assumption of this important task. Let me wish you success in this important endeavour and assure you of the support and full cooperation of the Secretariat.

Let me start with some key facts that we should all be aware of.

First: More than 1.5 billion human beings live in fragile and conflict-affected states or in countries with high levels of criminal violence. This devastation is fuelled, in part, by the fact that the number of civil wars in the world has tripled over the past decade: from four in 2007 to eleven in 2014. As of today, we maintain peace operations in 16 countries.

Second: More people than at any other time since records began, are fleeing their homes and seeking refuge and safety elsewhere. Some 60 million women, men and children are now forcibly on the move, almost triple the 24 million of a decade ago.

Third: The number of direct conflict deaths is sharply on the rise: from 56,000 in 2008, to 180,000 in 2014 – more than triple again.<sup>1</sup> Nowadays, when explosive weapons are used in populated areas, 90% of the resulting casualties are civilians.<sup>2</sup> Over half a million people die violently each year, including from non-conflict related homicides<sup>3</sup>.

This tells us that the widespread availability of illicit small arms and light weapons, and their ammunition, is a key driver of violent deaths. Weapons are the toxic lubricant allowing the engine of conflict to run.

The historic 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognised this. For the first time states established a link between sustainable development and the reduction of illicit arms flows, through target # 4 of Goal 16.

The indicator selected for this target is the proportion of seized small arms and light weapons that are recorded and traced. This directly associates the Programme of Action and its International Tracing Instrument, or 'ITI', as tools for monitoring the progress of the 2030 Agenda.

It is why the Programme of Action and its ITI are crucial to not only preventing conflict but also to facilitating sustainable development.

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<sup>1</sup> IISS Armed Conflict Survey 2015. [www.iiss.org/en/Topics/armed-conflict-survey/armed-conflict-survey-2015-46e5](http://www.iiss.org/en/Topics/armed-conflict-survey/armed-conflict-survey-2015-46e5).

<sup>2</sup> Action on Armed Violence, Explosive Weapon Survey. [aoav.org.uk/explosive-weapon-survey](http://aoav.org.uk/explosive-weapon-survey).

<sup>3</sup> Small Arms Survey, Global Burden of Armed Violence 2015. [www.genevadeclaration.org/measurability/global-burden-of-armed-violence/global-burden-of-armed-violence-2015.html](http://www.genevadeclaration.org/measurability/global-burden-of-armed-violence/global-burden-of-armed-violence-2015.html).

Unfortunately, we must acknowledge that, despite good progress made in adopting the POA and ITI, gaps remain in their universal implementation.

This is why I believe the Sixth Biennial Meeting of States is an important opportunity to strengthen the Programme of Action in the lead-up to the third Review Conference in 2018.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

I want to take a moment to outline what I believe to be three of the bigger gaps in the regime and suggest possible strategies for addressing them for consideration by member states.

The first gap is in stockpile management. Reducing illicit arms flows requires enhanced national efforts in securing arms and ammunition stockpiles. Too often, weaponry used in conflict turns out to have been diverted from close-by warehouses and depots.

It is every state's full responsibility to safeguard properly the weapons needed for its national defence and law enforcement. A large number of States have adopted good practices and are applying recognized standards on this issue. Unfortunately, as you know, many states – due to capacity and capability constraints – have not.

Strengthening states capacities for safe and secure weapons stockpiling will contribute to the realisation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Authoritative guidance such as the International Small Arms Control Standards and the International Ammunition Technical Guidelines are available to assist all states in improving their stockpile security.

Regional organizations are making great strides to improve the safety and security of citizens in their regions together with their member states. States should continue to use – and fund – these partnerships to build on existing gains.

The second gap is in weapons marking and tracing. Agenda 2030 underlined that when it comes to countering the illicit arms trade, “data and information from existing reporting mechanisms should be used where possible”.

This is a direct link to the ITI and its reporting mechanism on tracing. However, reporting under the PoA and ITI is not as universal as it should be. Now is the time for those nearly 120 states that have not reported to do so. We will work with member states to update the reporting template to reflect the Agenda for Sustainable Development indicator.

I want to remind all member states that UNODA's regional centres in Lima, Lomé and Kathmandu are available to work on practical implementation of the POA and its ITI. We are ready to assist with stockpile management and marking and tracing. We are also available to help build capacity to draft legislation, and for record-keeping and weapons destruction. I look forward to continuing our partnerships with member states in these areas.

The final issue I wish to highlight is the potential negative impact of new materials and technologies on both stockpile management and marking and tracing.

Technologies such as the modularity of weapons, increased use of plastics, 3-D printing and the application of biometrics are profoundly changing arms manufacturing and control.

Some of these developments, if used properly, can contribute to stemming the flow of illicit weaponry. Fingerprint technology and microstamping can assist in the tracing and marking of weapons.

But many of these new technologies may also constitute a threat. Large-scale, uncontrolled do-it-yourself manufacturing, including through 3D printing, could not only create untraceable weaponry but also increase access to weapons. The use of plastics and other materials can make weapons undetectable and make erasing of markings easier.

It is now critical that the international community develops the mechanisms that will maximise the positive benefits of technological advances while minimizing the risks. We have to catch up with the technology curve.

One first step could be to agree to a technical annex to the ITI. This would allow the ITI to include new technologies and ways of regulating them.

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

This meeting takes place at a crucial time to prepare for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Review Conference. You have the opportunity now, to shape the road ahead and ensure success in 2018. I count on you all, under the leadership of Chairman Rattray, to rise to the challenge of confronting one of the most pervasive global threats, the illicit flows of small arms and light weapons. Let us rededicate ourselves to our common journey to build a safer, more secure and better world for all.

I wish you a very fruitful session this week.