



General Assembly

DISEC Background Guide

Dear Delegates, My name is Saanvi Katireddy, and it is my honour to serve as your Director of the

Disarmament

and International Security Committee at SMUSMUN 2025. Your dais team has been working tirelessly to create a memorable weekend of debate and negotiation; on behalf of your Chairs, Josephine Quon and Crystal Cai, your Assistant Director, Manon Denux, and your Staff, Leila Mostachfi and Kimberly Koo, I would like to welcome you to DISEC.

As a grade 11 student at St. Michaels University School, this will be my third year in the world of Model United Nations. I still vividly remember my first conference, stepping into a committee room filled with excitement and uncertainty. That experience marked the beginning of my MUN journey, where I discovered my passion for critical thinking, diplomacy, and international relations. Over the years, MUN has given me invaluable experiences—countless hours of debate, negotiation, and collaboration that have shaped my perspective on global issues.

To new delegates, I encourage you to take the leap and engage fully in the world of MUN. Every seasoned delegate started where you are now—nervous, excited, and unsure of what to expect. Trust that through participation, you will gain confidence, develop skills, and make lasting memories. To experienced delegates, I urge you to challenge yourselves and serve as mentors to others, fostering an environment of constructive debate and diplomacy.

This year, DISEC will be tackling the pressing issue of Illicit Weapon Trafficking. The illegal trade of arms poses a significant threat to global security, fueling conflicts, enabling organized crime, and undermining international stability. I encourage all delegates to use the background guide as a starting point but also to conduct independent research to deepen their understanding of the topic and formulate strong policy positions.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at saanvi.katireddy@smus.ca. I look forward to an engaging and thought-provoking weekend of debate. Best of luck in your preparations, and I can't wait to see you all in committee!

Sincerely,
Saanvi Katireddy
Director | DISEC
SMUSMUN 2025

Position Paper Policy

What is a Position Paper?

A position paper is a brief overview of a country's stance on the topics being discussed by a particular committee. Though there is no specific format the position paper must follow, it should include a description of the positions your country holds on the issues on the agenda, relevant actions that your country has taken, and potential solutions that your country would support.

At St. Michaels University School Model United Nations, delegates should write a position paper for the committee's topic. The position paper should not exceed one page and should all be combined into a single document per delegate. For DISEC, position papers, although strongly recommended, are not required. However, delegates who wish to be considered for an award must submit position papers.

Formatting

Position papers should:

- Include the name of the delegate, his/her country, and the committee
- Be in a standard font (e.g. Times New Roman) with a 12-point font size and 1-inch document margins
- Not include illustrations, diagrams, decorations, national symbols, watermarks, or page borders
- Include citations and a bibliography, in any format, giving due credit to the sources used in research (not included in the 1-page limit)

Due Dates and Submission Procedure

Position papers for this committee must be submitted by April 2nd, 2025, at 23:59 PST. Once your position paper is complete, please save the file as "your last name, your first name" and send it as an attachment in an email to your committee's email address, with the subject heading as "[last name] [first name] — Position Paper". Please do not add any other attachments to the email. Please have your position paper in PDF form or as a Word document file; position papers submitted in another format will not be accepted. Each position paper will be manually reviewed and considered for the Best Position Paper award. Position papers should be sent to saanvi.katireddy@smus.ca.

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Illicit Weapon Trafficking

Overview

Illicit weapon trafficking represents one of the most pressing challenges to global peace and security, perpetuating cycles of violence, destabilizing nations, and enabling transnational organized crime and terrorism. This covert trade encompasses the illegal production, sale, and distribution of small arms, light weapons, and, in some cases, more sophisticated military equipment, often bypassing national regulatory frameworks and international legal instruments. The proliferation of these weapons heightens armed conflicts, undermines state sovereignty, and

deepens humanitarian crises, particularly in regions already grappling with fragility and instability. The transnational nature of the illicit arms trade, facilitated by weak borders, corrupt officials, and intricate supply chains, renders it a complex and multifaceted issue that demands a coordinated global response.

Certain regions and states are disproportionately affected by or implicated in the illicit weapon trade, serving as either sources, transit points, or destinations for illegal arms. In Africa, countries such as Libya, Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of Congo have become centers of illicit arms flows, with weapons often diverted to non-state actors, insurgent groups, and criminal networks. In the Middle East, protracted conflicts in Syria and Yemen have created fertile ground for the unchecked circulation of arms, fueling violence and prolonging instability. Similarly, in Latin America, nations like Mexico and Colombia face significant challenges from weapons smuggled to drug cartels and other organized crime syndicates, contributing to high levels of violence and insecurity. On the supply side, major arms-producing states, including the United States, Russia, China, and several European nations, are frequently implicated in the diversion of legally manufactured weapons into illicit markets or the unauthorized production of arms. These dynamics underscore the interconnected and globalized nature of the illicit arms trade, necessitating a holistic and collaborative approach to address its root causes and consequences.

The United Nations has been at the forefront of international efforts to combat illicit weapon trafficking, leveraging its multilateral platforms to promote disarmament, regulate arms transfers, and strengthen global security architecture. The UN Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) and the Disarmament and International Security Committee (DISEC) have been major involvements in advancing initiatives such as the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) and the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms, which seek to establish robust international standards for arms exports, enhance transparency, and prevent the diversion of weapons to illicit markets. Despite these efforts, significant challenges persist, including gaps in enforcement, the resilience of trafficking networks, and the political complexities of balancing national sovereignty with international oversight. As members of DISEC, addressing the issue of illicit weapon trafficking will require innovative, pragmatic, and inclusive solutions that prioritize collective security, foster international cooperation, and uphold the principles of sustainable peace and development.

Timeline and Historical Analysis

The roots of illicit weapon trafficking trace back to the early 20th century. However, the phenomenon has gained prominence in recent decades due to increased global conflicts, especially in regions with weak governance structures.

Cold War Era: 1947-1991

During the Cold War, arms trafficking became an integral part of superpower rivalry, as the U.S. and the Soviet Union supported proxy wars by supplying weapons to allied factions. Many of these arms eventually entered illicit markets after the conflicts ended or when they were diverted from official supply chains.

Post Cold War Era: 1991-1999

After the Cold War, numerous conflicts in Africa, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia saw a dramatic increase in illicit arms trafficking. Weak post-conflict governance, combined with the availability of surplus weapons, contributed to the proliferation of illicit arms in unstable regions. However, this would quickly change with the rise of non-state actors.

21st Century:

In the 21st century, the growth of non-state actors, including terrorist organizations and criminal syndicates, has driven the demand for illicit weapons. Armed groups in regions such as the Sahel, the Middle East, and Central America have capitalized on weak borders and illicit trafficking routes to arm themselves and destabilize governments.

Example: The Syrian Civil War (2011–present)

The Syrian Civil War has been one of the most significant and devastating conflicts of the 21st century, and illicit weapon trafficking has played a major role in perpetuating the violence. Various armed groups, including the Syrian government, rebel factions, and extremist organizations, have relied on illicit arms supplies to fuel the conflict.

Over the years, awareness of the dangers of illicit arms trade has grown, with multiple international organizations recognizing its role in undermining global peace efforts. The United Nations and other international bodies have increasingly focused on controlling and monitoring arms trade to reduce illicit trafficking and its impacts.

Past International Involvement

The United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons (PoA)

Established in 2001, the PoA stands as one of the UN's most comprehensive frameworks to address the global scourge of illicit weapon trafficking. This initiative encourages member states to adopt a range of measures, from bolstering border controls and improving stockpile management to promoting international cooperation aimed at preventing the diversion of small arms into illegal markets. By promoting transparency in arms transfers and supporting capacity-building efforts in vulnerable regions, the PoA serves as a cornerstone in the global fight against the illicit arms trade.

Arms Trade Treaty (ATT)

In 2013, the UN took a major step with the adoption of the ATT, a landmark agreement designed to regulate the international trade in conventional weapons and curb their diversion to illicit markets. The treaty mandates that member states establish rigorous controls on arms exports and imports, assess the risk of weapons being used to violate human rights, and maintain transparency through regular reporting on arms transfers. While over 110 countries have ratified the ATT, its impact is somewhat constrained by the absence of key arms-exporting nations, such as the United States, Russia, and China, from its list of signatories.

The UN Security Council

This council has exerted sanctions and arms embargoes as critical tools to disrupt the flow of illicit weapons to conflict zones and rogue states. For instance, the Council has imposed arms embargoes on countries like Somalia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Libya, aiming to stem the supply of weapons to armed groups and militias. These measures are often reinforced by monitoring mechanisms, such as the UN Panel of Experts, which investigates violations, identifies perpetrators, and provides actionable intelligence to curb illicit trafficking networks.

UN Regional Centres for Peace and Disarmament

At the regional level, the UN Regional Centres for Peace and Disarmament play a key role in addressing the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. These centers, located strategically in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, collaborate with member states to implement targeted programs that enhance border security, support weapon collection and destruction initiatives, and encourage regional cooperation to combat cross-border arms smuggling.

The UN SaferGuard Programme

Representing another critical effort, the UN SaferGuard Programme focuses on the safe management of ammunition stockpiles to prevent catastrophic explosions and the diversion of weapons to illicit markets. By providing technical assistance and disseminating best practices, the program helps member states secure their stockpiles, thereby reducing the risk of weapons and ammunition falling into the hands of criminal or terrorist organizations. This initiative is particularly vital in post-conflict regions, where poorly managed stockpiles are often exploited by illicit networks.

The UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)

Having made significant contributions through its Global Firearms Programme, UNODC supports member states in strengthening legal and regulatory frameworks, enhancing law enforcement capabilities, and improving international cooperation to track and dismantle illicit arms networks. The program also addresses the intersection of organized crime, terrorism, and illicit weapon trafficking, offering a holistic approach to a multifaceted challenge.

UN Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR)

These programs tackle the demand side of illicit weapon trafficking by supporting former combatants in transitioning to civilian life. Through incentives for the voluntary surrender of weapons and initiatives to reintegrate ex-fighters into society, these programs help stabilize post-conflict communities and reduce the circulation of illegal arms. Implemented in countries such as Sierra Leone, Liberia, and South Sudan, DDR initiatives have proven essential to long-term peacebuilding and sustainable development.

Current Situation

Illicit weapon trafficking remains a critical global security challenge, exacerbating conflicts, fueling organized crime, and undermining state sovereignty. Despite international efforts such as the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) and the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms, the illicit flow of weapons persists due to weak enforcement, corruption, and the adaptability of trafficking networks.

Recent geopolitical developments have further complicated the situation. The ongoing war in Ukraine has intensified global arms flows, with concerns over weapons from military aid being diverted into illicit markets. Similarly, instability in the Sahel region of Africa and escalating violence in Latin America due to cartel warfare have highlighted the persistent demand for illicit arms. In the Middle East, conflicts in Syria and Yemen continue to see the illegal proliferation of weapons among state and non-state actors.

Technological advancements have also posed new challenges. The rise of 3D-printed firearms and the dark web has made arms trafficking more accessible, allowing non-state actors, including terrorist organizations, to bypass traditional arms control mechanisms. Additionally, private military companies and paramilitary groups have increasingly contributed to the unauthorized movement of weapons across borders.

While major arms-producing nations continue to debate the balance between economic interests and security concerns, developing countries remain the most vulnerable to the consequences of illicit arms trade. As DISEC convenes to address this issue, the challenge lies in strengthening international cooperation, closing legal loopholes, and improving enforcement mechanisms while respecting national sovereignty and geopolitical realities.

Possible Solutions and Controversies

Addressing illicit arms trafficking requires a combination of stronger international regulations, improved enforcement mechanisms, and enhanced cooperation between nations. One key approach is reinforcing international treaties such as the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) and the UN Firearms Protocol, which aim to establish stricter export controls and prevent arms from falling into the hands of non-state actors. Additionally, strengthening border and customs control through advanced surveillance technology, including AI-powered scanning systems, can help detect and intercept illegal arms shipments. Increased cooperation between nations in tracking smuggling routes and sharing intelligence is also essential in curbing the flow of illicit weapons.

Another major challenge is the rise of online and dark web arms sales, where unregulated marketplaces facilitate illegal transactions. Governments and technology companies must collaborate to monitor and dismantle these platforms while enhancing cybersecurity measures to track digital transactions. Similarly, the proliferation of 3D-printed firearms poses a growing threat, as these weapons can be produced without serial numbers, making them untraceable. Governments may need to enforce strict regulations on the distribution of firearm blueprints and develop detection technologies for 3D-printed components.

Disarmament initiatives, such as weapon buyback programs, have been proposed as a way to reduce the number of illegal firearms in circulation. By offering incentives for civilians and ex-combatants to surrender illicit weapons, these programs can help mitigate violence and crime. Public awareness campaigns on the dangers of illegal arms trafficking can further support disarmament efforts. Strengthening law enforcement and intelligence cooperation is another crucial solution, with specialized transnational task forces and increased collaboration between agencies like INTERPOL playing a significant role in dismantling illicit arms networks.

Despite these proposed solutions, several controversies and challenges complicate efforts to combat illicit arms trafficking. National sovereignty concerns often arise when international bodies seek to impose arms regulations, as some countries resist external oversight of their domestic arms policies. Additionally, many governments, particularly those with large arms industries, face economic and political conflicts of interest, as restricting arms trade could impact their defence sectors and foreign relations. The debate over civilian gun ownership rights also fuels controversy, especially in countries where firearm access is constitutionally protected, making it difficult to introduce stricter regulations. Moreover, corruption within law enforcement and government agencies in some regions enables the illegal arms trade to persist, undermining global efforts to combat the issue.

Ultimately, while multiple solutions exist, addressing illicit arms trafficking requires a balanced approach that considers security needs, economic factors, and human rights concerns. International cooperation, technological advancements, and political willpower will be crucial in effectively tackling this global challenge.

Bloc Positions

Western Bloc (e.g., United States, United Kingdom, France, Germany, Canada, Australia, Spain):

The Western Bloc would likely support stronger international regulations on arms exports, including increased transparency and the enforcement of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). They favour mechanisms that ensure accountability, and transparency in arms transfers and will advocate for strict controls to reduce illicit trafficking. While they agree on robust controls, some countries, like the United States and Australia, may prioritize the right to self-defence and economic interests in their defence industries. The United Kingdom and France may have concerns about maintaining relationships with arms-exporting nations like Saudi Arabia and Turkey, which may complicate full participation in certain arms treaties. Overall, these countries tend to push for multilateral solutions and increased international cooperation, but will emphasize fair trade and the balance between national security and international oversight.

Eastern Bloc (e.g., China, Russia, Iran, India):

The Eastern Bloc would tend to oppose stricter international regulations like the ATT due to concerns about national sovereignty and reluctance to impose stringent export controls. Russia and China, being major arms exporters, may resist international treaties that limit their ability to sell arms. They often argue that global control measures infringe on their national sovereignty, with China prioritizing its economic interests in arms production and Russia valuing flexibility in international arms deals. India and Iran may be more inclined to support a degree of regulation, but they would prioritize the flexibility to defend their own interests. China may advocate for regional security approaches rather than global regulations, focusing on strengthening bilateral and regional agreements to prevent arms trafficking. These countries will stress regional solutions and less global oversight, particularly when it comes to arms sales to allies or states with shared security interests.

Developing Nations Bloc (e.g., Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, South Africa, Nigeria, Egypt, Indonesia, Malaysia, Ethiopia, Vietnam):

Developing countries in this group are highly affected by the consequences of illicit arms trafficking, and they generally support efforts to curb the trade and limit its negative effects on peace and stability. Nations like Argentina and Brazil would likely advocate for international agreements like the ATT and the Programme of Action on Small Arms (PoA), focusing on transparency and shared responsibility for arms control. While they support international initiatives, Mexico and Nigeria may push for stronger capacity-building measures, arguing that developing nations need more resources and assistance to strengthen border controls and monitor

the illegal movement of arms. South Africa and Ethiopia may call for the international community to support DDR programs in post-conflict regions. Generally, developing countries would push for more equitable implementation of arms control measures, ensuring that international cooperation includes support for capacity-building, border security, and post-conflict disarmament efforts.

Middle Eastern Bloc (e.g., Saudi Arabia, Israel, Turkey, Iran):

Middle Eastern countries like Saudi Arabia and Israel are major players in the arms trade and would prioritize their own security concerns. They may be less inclined to support universal participation in the ATT, instead favouring bilateral agreements that allow them to continue arming themselves and their allies. Turkey would likely support efforts to reduce illicit trafficking but may push back on measures that hinder its role as a regional military power. However, Iran, a key regional actor, is likely to resist strict arms controls due to its own geopolitical interests, especially given its involvement in regional conflicts and support for non-state actors. Saudi Arabia would resist any action that undermines its arms trade with major powers. These countries will prioritize regional security arrangements, emphasizing the role of the UN Security Council in imposing targeted sanctions and arms embargoes on specific countries or non-state actors that threaten regional peace.

African Bloc (e.g., Nigeria, South Africa, Ethiopia, Egypt):

African nations are often at the forefront of the fight against illicit arms trafficking due to the destabilizing impact on the continent. Countries like Nigeria and South Africa will advocate for stronger international cooperation on border security and better monitoring of arms transfers, emphasizing the need for the global community to support efforts to prevent weapons from reaching armed groups in fragile states. Ethiopia and South Africa might focus on disarmament initiatives and supporting DDR programs to curb the circulation of illicit weapons after conflicts. Egypt may be more cautious about international interventions, balancing regional security concerns with its national interests. The African bloc would strongly support disarmament efforts but also call for enhanced capacity-building to address regional specificities, addressing the ongoing conflicts in Central Africa.

Asia-Pacific Bloc (e.g., Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, Indonesia, Vietnam):

This Bloc is likely to support strong international regulations on arms exports, with a focus on preventing the illicit trade from reaching their shores. Japan and South Korea, with their strong commitment to international peace, would support frameworks like the ATT and the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms. However, there are challenges in countries like Vietnam and Indonesia that may stress the need for support in controlling the influx of illicit weapons into their regions while ensuring that their own security needs are not compromised. They may also advocate for stronger regional cooperation in the Southeast Asian context. The Asia-Pacific bloc

is likely to prioritize regional cooperation alongside global initiatives, advocating for both preventative and enforcement mechanisms to stop illicit weapons trafficking.

Summary of Bloc Positions

- Western Bloc: Supports stronger international arms control, transparency, and enforcement but prioritizes sovereignty and economic interests.
- Eastern Bloc: Opposes strict regulations like the ATT, focusing on regional solutions and sovereignty concerns.
- Developing Nations: Advocates for international cooperation, capacity-building, and post-conflict disarmament efforts.
- Middle Eastern Bloc: Prioritizes regional security and maintains flexibility in arms deals, resisting international control measures.
- African Bloc: Strongly supports arms control measures, transparency, and capacity-building to address illicit trafficking.
- Asia-Pacific Bloc: Advocates for strong regional and global cooperation to combat illicit arms trafficking while balancing national security needs.

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