

Greenwood High Model United Nations (2020)

Disarmament and International Security Committee

Agenda: Illicit Arms Trade

Letter from the Chairperson

Dear Delegates,

It is my absolute honour to welcome you to the Disarmament and Security Council of the GWHMUN 2020, our first time being open on an international level and on an online forum.

Knowing that this is a junior committee, and all of your first conferences, I am excited to see how all of you perceive it. Model United Nations to me, has become the best platform to express and portray one's knowledge and hone their skills - especially at such a young age. It is a stage for you to showcase your true colours and an institution from which you will gain knowledge and exposure of the best kind.

As your Chair, I look forward to seeing what all of you have to offer to committee, and then a few years down the line to the world, as a global citizen. I expect everyone to be well prepared and vigilant at all times. Exude confidence and speak up, for your voice is one that is waiting to be heard. More than any of this, I want to see curiosity and inquisitiveness.

Look at this opportunity as a stepping stone to your path. Whatever that may be. Be as good a listener as you are a speaker. Show thoughtfulness in your approach and prioritize your solutions. We look forward to watching you step up and fight for what's right.

Feel free to contact us with any queries and we will respond as soon as possible.

Regards,
Eesha Gorti

Chairperson of the DISEC

GWHMUN 2020

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Introduction

The First Committee of the General Assembly, the Disarmament and International Security Committee (DISEC), is committed to the creation and

maintenance of global peace through the prevention and protection from weapons proliferation and illicit arms trade. SALW, an umbrella term referring to small arms and light weapons, poses conflicts at local and global levels and has demanded constant attention by the international community. The conflict of SALW has been a long-standing concern of DISEC, despite the global recognition of the issues and the numerous resolutions passed. SALW continues to be illegally traded, transported and used in hefty numbers around the world, and is the leading choice of weapons for civil conflicts. As a result of their small size, ease of concealing, and relative cost efficiency, they are the most feasible form of weapons to citizens, promoting proliferation and illicit arms trade around the world, particularly in eastern Europe, the Middle East and northern and western regions of Africa.

While the majority of SALW are industrially produced, there exists a sector of craft producers of firearms, and as they are civilian crafted, they are largely involved in illicit trade and crime. Many nations in West Africa, for example, are hotspots for craft gun production; though primarily pistols and shotguns are manufactured, some gunsmiths are skilled to produce even assault rifles. In most cases, these production facilities are small scale, however, if craft production goes unmonitored it could prove to have drastic consequences for the international community.¹

In addition, although most arms trafficking appears to be conducted by private entities, specific governments also contribute to the illicit trade by deliberately arming proxy groups involved in insurgencies against rival governments, terrorists with similar

¹ <http://www.apminebanconvention.org/overview-and-convention-text/>

ideological agendas, or other non-state armed groups. These types of transfers, which are prevalent in Africa and other regions where armed conflict is common, are often conducted in contravention of UN arms embargoes and have the potential to destabilize neighbouring countries. In recent years, governments have covertly delivered tens of thousands of small arms and light weapons to various armed groups despite a long-standing UN arms embargo.²

Furthermore, it is crucial to note that SALW is one of the greatest contributing factors to violence across the globe. Illicitly traded arms and the proliferation of weapons are directly linked to acts of terrorism, and an increased number of violations of human rights, including murder, maiming, rape, kidnappings, torture, child conscription, and other forms of subjugation.³ In addition, armed conflict has been acknowledged by the World Bank as the single greatest factor in undermining economic investment, playing a huge factor in increasing food insecurity and poverty.

Currently, the largest standing issues in achieving non-proliferation and the prevention of illicit arms trade is the lack of information that is shared. To date, no accurate figures exist with regards to the number of SALW in circulation globally. The United Nations estimates the total to fall around 875 million, with approximately three quarters of these weapons being privately owned.⁴ It should be of top priority to

² <http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/weapons-and-markets/transfers/illicit-trafficking.html>

³ [http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/2220\(2015\)](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/2220(2015))

⁴ <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/521b88b9e4b024f66a58adf9/t/54ceebffe4b0121d2fbd98ee/1422846975588/DISEC.pdf>

international bodies to continue to share importance towards the proliferation and illicit trade of arms in order to discuss potential resolutions and combat the increasing crime rate due to the respective conflict that is faced worldwide.

History & Origin

⁵The trafficking of arms is the illicit trade of both ammunition and small arms, and usually comprises a broad range of illegal activities being carried out, which is often directly or indirectly related to criminal organizations. This type of trafficking isn't carried out solely for profit purposes, but rather it is usually associated with exercising control in communities. However, there have still been transactions that add up to more than 1 billion US dollars. The illicit trafficking of arms is not just limited to areas of political

⁵ <https://www.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/kf/TerrorinShadows-Stohl.pdf>

turmoil. There are several other places where excessive trafficking is viewed across the world.

Background

During the Mexican revolution of 1910-1920, arms trafficking reached extreme levels wherein a majority of arms were being smuggled from the United States. Acquiring arms and bullets was the main aim for rebel bands as Mexico manufactured no weapons of its own. Buying arms with the intention of gun running into Mexico was not a criminal offense in the United States so the only way smugglers could be prosecuted was if caught in flagrante delicto crossing the border which means being caught in the act of committing a crime. There was gunrunning into Mexico even despite the arms embargo which was imposed by the US President Woodrow Wilson in 1913.

Such instances of arms trafficking can be seen in Africa during the civil war in Sierra Leone(1991-2002). Both small and large arms like handheld guns, grenades, and even missiles were shipped to both Sierra Leone and Liberia from abroad. Arms trafficking is mostly associated with regions of political turmoil and disturbances but it is not limited to such regions. For example, an estimate of 63 million guns have been smuggled into Pakistan and India in South Asia.

⁶According to the Small Arms survey, the 2003 Iraq war resulted in the transfer of atleast 4.2 million Small Arms and Light Weapons(SALW) ranging from the military to the normal civilians. Combined with transfers from neighbouring states and battlefield captures, these weapons formed the basis of the arsenals that fuelled the anti-coalition insurgency and internal conflicts in Iraq that began in 2003

These arms have led to regional instability and have enabled the reignition and spread of disputes. This kind of destabilization has caused the state to fail and lead to the creation of an environment in which terrorist groups and organizations grow and

⁶ https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2018-11/bp_1811_att_mena_1.pdf

thrive. National and regional measures are therefore needed to improve stockpile management of SALW and ammunition, strengthen border controls and ensure accountable destruction of surplus weapons after a war in order to reduce proliferation-related instability and security challenges.

Issues

The Illicit arms trade had been a major concern for several reasons. The trade of arms has been a big business for various individuals and has billions of dollars at stake. Corrupt politicians, officials, and criminals find different ways to manipulate and take advantage of the loopholes in the system to increase their revenue. The average value of international arms trade is estimated to be around \$80-90 billion, and this is a high figure considering it excludes domestic trade. In addition, there have been negative impacts on the enjoyment of human rights of individuals due to this. Several people have been abused due to the irresponsible use of arms. This can have a significant impact on the security of a nation, which has serious implications. Moreover, the easy availability of arms means that it can be available to those who are highly likely or threaten to violate human rights and abuse individuals. Mentioned below are a few such issues which have fostered such activity.

- **Globalization:** It has expedited the illicit arms trade by facultative informal and unlawful transactions. The networks have had a tremendous impact on the ability of the groups of terrorists to organize, learn, unleash propaganda, and act with freedom against states. The terrorist organizations are able to strategize, move finances, and execute operations from far-flung locations via networks. Due to this, the Pakistani handlers planned, directed and executed the 2008 Bombay Taj attack. Similarly, attacks as such have occurred around the world for issues regarding globalisation and illicit arms trade.
 - **Link between Illegal Weapons, Drugs, and Wildlife Trade:** A clear link exists between the illicit arms trade, drug traffic, and smuggling of wildlife. The illicitly
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listed weapons and munitions are extensively used by terrorist organizations, drug cartels, and wildlife smugglers. The illicitly procured weapons and munitions offer much-required protection to the drug cartels that, in turn, fuel the demand for additional weapons and munitions. As these have sky-rocketing profit margins, the unlawful trade continues to grow by the day.

- **Link between Politics and Arms Trade:** The link between politics and arms trade (including illicit trade) is strong and unresolvable. The Politicians, munitions industry, and Gun Lobbies have shaped an Iron Triangle that is tough to breach.
- **Support by Governments:** Governments of a few major arms manufacturing countries additionally overtly/covertly provide weapons and munitions to non-state actors. Arming of Taliban, Lashkar-e-Taiba, and Syrian rebels are cases that amply exhibit the role of Governments in fuelling the felonious arms trade for short term gains.

Steps Taken

There are several treaties and conventions discussed in order to maintain international peace which have been taken by the United Nations and a few other countries. Listed below are a few you can research upon.

- The 'Arms Trade Treaty' that regulates the international interchange of standard⁷ weapons, which entered into force on twenty-four December 2014.
- 'Firearms Protocol': the UN Protocol against banned production and trafficking of firearms, their elements, and ammunition, which entered into force in July 2005.

⁷ <http://www.indiandefencereview.com/illegal-arms-trade-issues-and-the-way-forward/>

- 'Trans-National Organized Crime Convention' entered into force, in Sep 2003. It covers trafficking of firearms too.
- Different measures have simultaneously been taken by the UN Organisation and a few states have contributed to forbid the banned arms trade to a limited extent.

Global Response to the Illicit Arms Trade

Arms Trafficking in Europe

Instability in European countries is one of the major factors that fuels the arms trade. National arsenals become vulnerable to looting in an unstable situation, such as in 1997, when over 500,000 weapons were stolen from the Albanian national arsenal and funnelled into trade the Balkans. Europe continues to be one of the major exporters in the trade, particularly by means of air freight shipments. Pilots flying planes from Belgium, Ukraine, or South Africa are known to carry illicit weapons from Eastern Europe to clients in Africa and South America.

Monitoring the prices of the illicit arms trade is an often neglected, but important subject. A 2013 Small Arms Survey found a clear link between the market prices of illicit ammunition in Lebanon and casualties in the Syrian conflict during the same time.

The EU has been making efforts to fight firearms trafficking for several years. On 24 July 2020, they adopted a new *Action Plan on Firearms Trafficking Search*. It includes guidelines for a strengthened legal framework, addressing the lack of data on arms trafficking and plans to coordinate with law enforcement on the ground, particularly in south-east Europe.⁸

Arms Trafficking in Africa

The monitoring of illicit arms trade in war zones poses an increased difficulty. The Small Arms Survey 2014 conducted a series of tracing investigations, and which led to the finding that the main source of weapons for non-state armed groups in Sudan and

⁸ https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/organized-crime-and-human-trafficking/trafficking-in-firearms_en

South Sudan was the Sudan government stockpiles. This was in part due to battlefield capture, and deliberate illicit arms trade. However, the production of unmarked ammunition and removal of weapons' markings by traders, makes these difficult to track.

Certain governments also deliberately contribute to the illicit trade in violation of UN arms embargoes. In Africa where armed conflict is widely prevalent, governments internationally supply ammunition to insurgent groups, terrorists, and others that they support. A prime example of this form of illicit trade occurs in Somalia, where governments have covertly delivered large amounts of weapons to various armed groups as uncovered by the Small Arms Survey.

Shipping legally produced weapons to and through debarred countries is the first method of diversion. Numerous violations of arms embargoes were found by the U.N. sanctions panel on Angola and Liberia. These were both by the supplier states and those that allowed weapons to be transshipped through their countries. Bribes are accepted in exchange for ineligible export licenses by 40 Government officials. In countries where government workers receive meagre salaries, cash payouts have proven to be particularly common.⁹

Arms trafficking in Mexico

A large portion of transnational black market trafficking on weapons takes place in Mexico. The 2013 Small Arms Survey showed that thousands of illicit firearms seized in Mexico per year can be traced back to gun shops the other side of the border. Mexican criminal organizations collect over ten billion dollars in profits from drug export to the US each year. This provides the resources to purchase ammunition in small numbers in the United States and then smuggle them into Mexico. In a large number of

⁹ <http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/weapons-and-markets/transfers/illicit-trafficking.html>

small instalments, shipments of weapons accumulate into a big percentage of the illicit arms trade – which is often described as ‘ant trade’.¹⁰

A part of the recent agreement reached by former U.S. and Mexican ambassadors called “A Vision for a Stronger U.S.-Mexico Partnership,” addresses this issue. It outlines co-operation from both sides as the key to restoring public security and rule of law.¹¹

¹⁰ <https://www.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/kf/TerrorinShadows-Stohl.pdf>

¹¹ <https://thehill.com/opinion/international/512194-enduring-problems-showcase-the-need-to-update-us-mexico-security>

QARMA

The QARMA, Questions A Resolution Must Answer, comprises inquiries that target addressing the main obstacles of the respective agenda. The questions include points that a delegate must consider in order to frame the most appropriate solution to the conflict discussed.

- How should nations set laws preventing the production and distribution of SALW?
 - How can manufacturers of illicit arms, like those in eastern Europe, Africa and the Middle Eastern be held accountable?
 - How can local law enforcement officials track the legitimate owner of small arms, and hold them accountable in order to form an effective measure against unlawful trade?
 - How can nations work together to trace arms, and reduce illicit arms trade?
 - How can nations establish conventions to safeguard citizen's human rights from the threat of illicit arms trade?
 - How can the Arms Trade Treaty be implemented as an efficient tool for the prevention of violent conflict?
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