



# General Assembly

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## Seventy-eighth session

Agenda item 99 (p)

**General and complete disarmament: the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects**

### **Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 4 December 2023**

[*on the report of the First Committee (A/78/409, para. 89)*]

#### **78/46. The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects**

*The General Assembly,*

*Recalling* its resolution 77/71 of 7 December 2022, as well as all previous resolutions on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects, including resolution 56/24 V of 24 December 2001,

*Emphasizing* the importance of the continued and full implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, adopted by the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects,<sup>1</sup> and recognizing its important contribution to international efforts on this matter,

*Emphasizing also* the importance of the continued and full implementation of the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons (the International Tracing Instrument),<sup>2</sup>

*Recalling* the commitment of States to the Programme of Action as the main framework for measures within the activities of the international community to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects,

*Underlining* the need for States to enhance their efforts to build national capacity for the effective implementation of the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument,

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<sup>1</sup> Report of the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, New York, 9–20 July 2001 (A/CONF.192/15), chap. IV, para. 24.

<sup>2</sup> See decision 60/519 and A/60/88 and A/60/88/Corr.2, annex.



*Mindful* of the implementation of the outcomes adopted by the follow-up meetings on the Programme of Action,

*Welcoming* the successful conclusion of the Eighth 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, held in New York from 27 June to 1 July 2022, to consider the full and effective implementation of the Programme of Action, and the outcome document adopted at the Meeting,<sup>3</sup>

*Recognizing* the need for the strengthened participation of women in decision-making and implementation processes relating to the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument, and reaffirming the need for States to mainstream gender dimensions into their implementation efforts,

*Noting* that web-based tools developed by the Secretariat, including its searchable database and the Modular Small-arms-control Implementation Compendium, and the tools developed by Member States could be used to assess progress made in the implementation of the Programme of Action,

*Reaffirming* the decision taken by the General Assembly in its resolution 77/71 to establish a dedicated fellowship training programme on small arms and light weapons in order to strengthen technical knowledge and expertise in areas relating to the implementation of the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument, in particular in developing countries,

*Noting* that voluntary national reports on the implementation of the Programme of Action can serve, *inter alia*, to provide a baseline for measuring progress in its implementation, build confidence and promote transparency, provide a basis for information exchange and action and serve to identify needs and opportunities for international assistance and cooperation, including the matching of needs with available resources and expertise,

*Noting with satisfaction* regional and subregional efforts being undertaken in support of the implementation of the Programme of Action, and commending the progress that has already been made in this regard, including the tackling of both supply and demand factors that are relevant to addressing the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons,

*Recognizing* that sharing and applying best practices, on a voluntary basis, at the regional, subregional and national levels support the full and effective implementation of the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument and should therefore be an ongoing effort, in order to address ongoing challenges associated with the diversion of and illicit trade in small arms and light weapons,

*Reaffirming* that international cooperation and assistance are an essential aspect of the full and effective implementation of the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument,

*Recognizing* the efforts undertaken by civil society in the provision of assistance to States for the implementation of the Programme of Action,

*Recalling* that Governments bear the primary responsibility for preventing, combating and eradicating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects, in accordance with the sovereignty of States and their relevant international obligations,

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<sup>3</sup> A/CONF.192/BMS/2022/1, annex.

*Reiterating* that illicit brokering in small arms and light weapons is a serious problem that the international community should address urgently,

*Highlighting* new challenges and potential opportunities with regard to effective marking, record-keeping and tracing resulting from developments in the manufacturing, technology and design of small arms and light weapons, and bearing in mind the different situations, capacities and priorities of States and regions,

*Recognizing* that the opportunities and challenges associated with these developments in the manufacturing, technology and design of small arms and light weapons, including polymer and modular weapons, and firearms produced using 3D printing, must be addressed in a timely manner,

*Recalling* the recommendation of the Eighth Biennial Meeting of States that the fourth Review Conference discuss the establishment of an open-ended technical expert group, focusing on including, *inter alia*, realizing international cooperation in a concrete manner, scope, objectives, participation and modalities of the group, to develop agreed recommendations by consensus to ensure the full implementation of the International Tracing Instrument and the Programme of Action in the light of recent developments in small arms and light weapons manufacturing, technology and design, in particular polymer and modular weapons, and firearms produced using 3D printing,<sup>4</sup>

*Taking note* of the report of the Secretary-General,<sup>5</sup> which contains an overview of recent developments in the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and contains information on the main outcomes of the Eighth Biennial Meeting of States and the International Tracing Instrument,

*Welcoming* the inclusion of small arms and light weapons in the scope of the Arms Trade Treaty,<sup>6</sup>

*Acknowledging* that effective national control systems for the transfer of conventional arms contribute to the prevention and eradication of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects,

*Taking note* of the adoption, without a vote, of the final report<sup>7</sup> of the open-ended working group established pursuant to General Assembly resolution [76/233](#) of 24 December 2021, and the Global Framework for Through-life Conventional Ammunition Management, which is a cooperative framework that is voluntary and contains a set of political commitments for strengthening and promoting existing initiatives on, and addressing existing gaps in, through-life conventional ammunition management, as contained in the annex to the report,

1. *Underlines* the fact that the issue of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects requires concerted efforts at the national, regional and international levels to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit manufacture, brokering, transfer and circulation of small arms and light weapons, and that their uncontrolled proliferation in many regions of the world has a wide range of humanitarian and socioeconomic consequences and poses a serious threat to peace, reconciliation, safety, security, stability and sustainable development at the individual, local, national, regional and international levels;

2. *Recognizes* the urgent need to maintain and enhance national controls, in accordance with the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, to prevent, combat and

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., para. 75.

<sup>5</sup> [A/78/126](#).

<sup>6</sup> United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 3013, No. 52373.

<sup>7</sup> [A/78/111](#).

eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, including their diversion to illicit trade, illegal armed groups, terrorists and other unauthorized recipients, taking into account, inter alia, their adverse humanitarian and socioeconomic consequences for the affected States;

3. *Emphasizes* the need for States to redouble national efforts to provide for the safe, secure, comprehensive and effective management of stockpiles of small arms and light weapons held by Governments to prevent, combat and eradicate the diversion of those weapons;

4. *Calls upon* all States to implement the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons (the International Tracing Instrument) by, inter alia, including in their national reports the name and contact information of the national points of contact and information on national marking practices used to indicate country of manufacture and/or country of import, as applicable;

5. *Encourages* all relevant initiatives, including those of the United Nations, other international organizations, regional and subregional organizations and civil society, for the successful implementation of the Programme of Action, and calls upon all Member States to contribute towards the continued implementation of the Programme of Action at the national, regional and global levels;

6. *Encourages* States to implement the recommendations contained in the report of the Group of Governmental Experts established pursuant to resolution 60/81 of 8 December 2005 to consider further steps to enhance international cooperation in preventing, combating and eradicating illicit brokering in small arms and light weapons;<sup>8</sup>

7. *Reaffirms* the outcome of the third United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made in 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, held in New York from 18 to 29 June 2018 (the third Review Conference);

8. *Endorses* the outcome of the Eighth 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, held in New York from 27 June to 1 July 2022;

9. *Decides* to convene the fourth United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made in 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 in New York from 17 to 28 June 2024, to be preceded by the meeting of the preparatory committee in New York from 12 to 16 February 2024;

10. *Underlines* the importance of the full and effective implementation of the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument for attaining Goal 16 and target 16.4 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;<sup>9</sup>

11. *Emphasizes* the need for the equal, full and effective participation of women in all decision-making and implementation processes relating to the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument;

12. *Encourages* States to take into account recent developments in small arms and light weapons manufacturing, technology and design, in particular polymer and modular weapons, in the implementation of the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument and to strengthen normative frameworks, where

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<sup>8</sup> See A/62/163 and A/62/163/Corr.1.

<sup>9</sup> Resolution 70/1.

needed, and cooperation between law enforcement agencies so as to prevent unauthorized recipients, including criminals and terrorists, from acquiring small arms and light weapons;

13. *Emphasizes* that international cooperation and assistance remain essential to the full and effective implementation of the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument, while being mindful of the need to ensure the adequacy, accessibility, effectiveness and sustainability of international cooperation and assistance measures, including, as appropriate, improved funding arrangements, technology transfer and adequate training and support programmes, as well as strong national ownership;

14. *Also emphasizes* the fact that initiatives by the international community with respect to international cooperation and assistance remain essential and complementary to national implementation efforts, as well as to those at the regional and global levels;

15. *Recognizes* the necessity for interested States to develop effective coordination mechanisms, where they do not exist, in order to match the needs of States with existing resources to enhance the implementation of the Programme of Action and to make international cooperation and assistance more effective, and in this regard encourages States to make use, as appropriate, of the Programme of Action Implementation Support System;

16. *Encourages* States to consider, among other mechanisms, the coherent identification of needs, priorities, national plans and programmes that may require international cooperation and assistance from States and regional and international organizations in a position to do so;

17. *Encourages* States, with the assistance of the Secretariat, where applicable, to develop options for enhancing the effectiveness of the existing international assistance frameworks in support of the effective implementation of the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument, including by establishing, within existing resources, a structured procedure within the Secretariat to process requests for assistance submitted under the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument, for consideration and appropriate follow-up by Member States at the fourth Review Conference;<sup>10</sup>

18. *Also encourages* States, on a voluntary basis, to make increasing use of their national reports as a tool for communicating assistance needs and information on the resources and mechanisms available to address such needs, and encourages States in a position to render such assistance to make use of those national reports;

19. *Encourages* States, relevant international and regional organizations and civil society with the capacity to do so to cooperate with and provide assistance to other States, upon request, in the preparation of comprehensive national reports on their implementation of the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument;

20. *Encourages* States to reinforce, as necessary, cross-border cooperation at the national, subregional and regional levels in addressing the common problem of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects, with full respect for each State's sovereignty over its own borders;

21. *Also encourages* States to take full advantage of the benefits of cooperation with the United Nations regional centres for peace and disarmament, the World Customs Organization, the International Criminal Police Organization

<sup>10</sup> See A/CONF.192/BMS/2022/1, annex, para. 87.

(INTERPOL) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, in accordance with their mandates and consistent with national priorities;

22. *Encourages* all efforts to build national capacity for the effective implementation of the Programme of Action, including those highlighted in the outcome document of the third Review Conference;

23. *Recalls* its decision to establish, within the regular budget of the United Nations, a standing dedicated fellowship training programme on small arms and light weapons in order to strengthen the technical and practical knowledge and expertise of government officials directly responsible for the implementation of the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument, particularly in developing countries, to be implemented annually starting in 2024 for a duration of four weeks in-person in four regions, respectively, preceded by a preparatory self-paced online course, with the participation of 15 fellows per region, and requests the Secretary-General to operationalize this decision and to report thereon to the General Assembly at its eightieth session, and periodically thereafter for follow-up;<sup>11</sup>

24. *Encourages* States to submit, on a voluntary basis, national reports on their implementation of the Programme of Action, notes that States will submit national reports on their implementation of the International Tracing Instrument, encourages those States in a position to do so to use the reporting template made available by the Office for Disarmament Affairs of the Secretariat, and reaffirms the utility of synchronizing such reports with biennial meetings of States and review conferences as a means of increasing the submission rate and improving the utility of reports, as well as contributing substantively to meeting discussions;

25. *Encourages* States in a position to do so to provide financial assistance, through a voluntary sponsorship fund, that could be distributed, upon request, to States otherwise unable to participate in meetings on the Programme of Action;

26. *Welcomes* the establishment of the Saving Lives Entity fund to ensure sustained financing for coordinated, integrated small arms control measures in countries most affected by the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, and encourages States in a position to do so to make voluntary financial contributions to the fund;

27. *Encourages* interested States and relevant international and regional organizations in a position to do so to convene regional meetings to consider and advance the implementation of the Programme of Action, as well as the International Tracing Instrument, including in preparation for the meetings on the Programme of Action;

28. *Encourages* civil society, industry and relevant organizations to strengthen their cooperation and work with States at the respective national and regional levels to achieve the implementation of the Programme of Action;

29. *Reaffirms* the importance of States undertaking to identify, where applicable, groups and individuals engaged in the illegal manufacture, trade, stockpiling, transfer, possession, as well as financing for acquisition, of illicit small arms and light weapons, and take action under appropriate national law against such groups and individuals;<sup>12</sup>

30. *Requests* the Secretariat to prepare a comprehensive analysis, within existing resources, of progress in the trends, challenges and opportunities related to

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., para. 83.

<sup>12</sup> Report of the United Nations Conference on Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, New York, 9–20 July 2001 ([A/CONF.192/15](#)), chap. IV, para. 24, sect. II, para. 6.

the implementation of the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument, including with regard to national frameworks, based on available credible information, including information submitted and/or provided by Member States, for presentation at the fourth Review Conference for consideration and appropriate follow-up, prior to which the findings and recommendations of the analysis will be shared with Member States in one or more informal meetings;<sup>13</sup>

31. *Also requests* the Secretariat to report on support provided by the United Nations system for the implementation of the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument, including experiences, best practices and lessons learned regarding the efficient use of available resources, for presentation at upcoming meetings on the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument;

32. *Encourages* Member States to discuss at the fourth Review Conference the establishment of an open-ended technical expert group, focusing on including, inter alia, realizing international cooperation in a concrete manner, scope, objectives, participation and modalities of the group, to develop agreed recommendations by consensus to ensure the full implementation of the International Tracing Instrument and the Programme of Action in the light of recent developments in small arms and light weapons manufacturing, technology and design, in particular polymer and modular weapons, and firearms produced using 3D printing, and requests the Secretariat, within existing resources, to prepare and circulate proposals for the above-mentioned focus issues and any other necessary administrative arrangements in a timely manner prior to the fourth Review Conference so as to facilitate its discussion and to initiate discussions on the mandate of such a group during the preparatory process leading up to the fourth Review Conference;<sup>14</sup>

33. *Requests* the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly at its seventy-ninth session on the implementation of the present resolution;

34. *Decides* to include in the provisional agenda of its seventy-ninth session, under the item entitled “General and complete disarmament”, the sub-item entitled “The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects”.

42nd plenary meeting  
4 December 2023

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<sup>13</sup> See A/CONF.192/BMS/2022/1, annex, para. 60.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., para. 75.