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General Assembly First Committee Background Guide

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Alejandro Better Corral, and Filippo Maria Margheritini



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Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the 2023 National Model United Nations New York Conference (NMUN•NY)! We are pleased to introduce you to our committee, the General Assembly First Committee (GA1). The topics under discussion are:

1. Youth Disarmament, Non-Proliferation, and Peace
2. Addressing the Illicit Supply of Weapons to Non-State Actors

Members of our dais this year include:



Anthony Bassey, Director, studied Biology at Arkansas State University, and currently works for the American Red Cross.



Vikram Sakkia, Director, works as a Systems Test Engineer at Qualcomm testing technologies for universal internet access. Vikram holds a Bachelor's in Computer Engineering from the American University of Sharjah and Master's in Computer Engineering specializing in Communication Networks from New York University.



Alejandro Better Coral, Assistant Director, is currently a law student at Universidad San Francisco de Quito, Ecuador. He currently works at a fundraising company with a focus on public-private social projects.



Filippo Maria Margheritini, Assistant Director, works as a political risk consultant. He holds a Bachelor's in Int'l Studies from Pepperdine and a Master's in Middle East, Caucasus and Central Asian Security Studies from the University of St Andrews.

This Background Guide serves as an introduction to the topics for this committee. However, it is not intended to replace individual research. We encourage you to explore your Member State's policies in depth and use the Annotated Bibliography and Bibliography to further your knowledge on these topics. In preparation for the Conference, each delegation will submit a Position Paper by 11:59 p.m. (Eastern Time) on 1 March 2023 in accordance with the guidelines in the [Position Paper Guide](#) and the NMUN•NY [Position Papers website](#).

Two resources, available to download from the [NMUN website](#), serve as essential instruments in preparing for the Conference and as a reference during committee sessions:

1. [NMUN Delegate Preparation Guide](#) - explains each step in the delegate process, from pre-Conference research to the committee debate and resolution drafting processes. Please take note of the information on plagiarism, and the prohibition on pre-written working papers and resolutions. Delegates should not start discussion on the topics with other members of their committee until the first committee session.
2. [NMUN Rules of Procedure](#) - include the long and short form of the rules, as well as an explanatory narrative and example script of the flow of procedure.

In addition, please review the mandatory [NMUN Conduct Expectations](#) on the NMUN website. They include the Conference dress code and other expectations of all attendees. We want to emphasize that any instances of sexual harassment or discrimination based on race, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, religion, age, or disability will not be tolerated. If you have any questions concerning your preparation for this committee, please contact the General Assembly Department, Dr. Vincent Carrier (Conference A) and Chase Mitchell (Conference B), at usg.ga@nmun.org.

We wish you all the best in your preparations and look forward to seeing you at the Conference!

Anthony Bassey, Director
Alejandro Better Coral, Assistant Director
Conference A

Vikram Sakkia, Director
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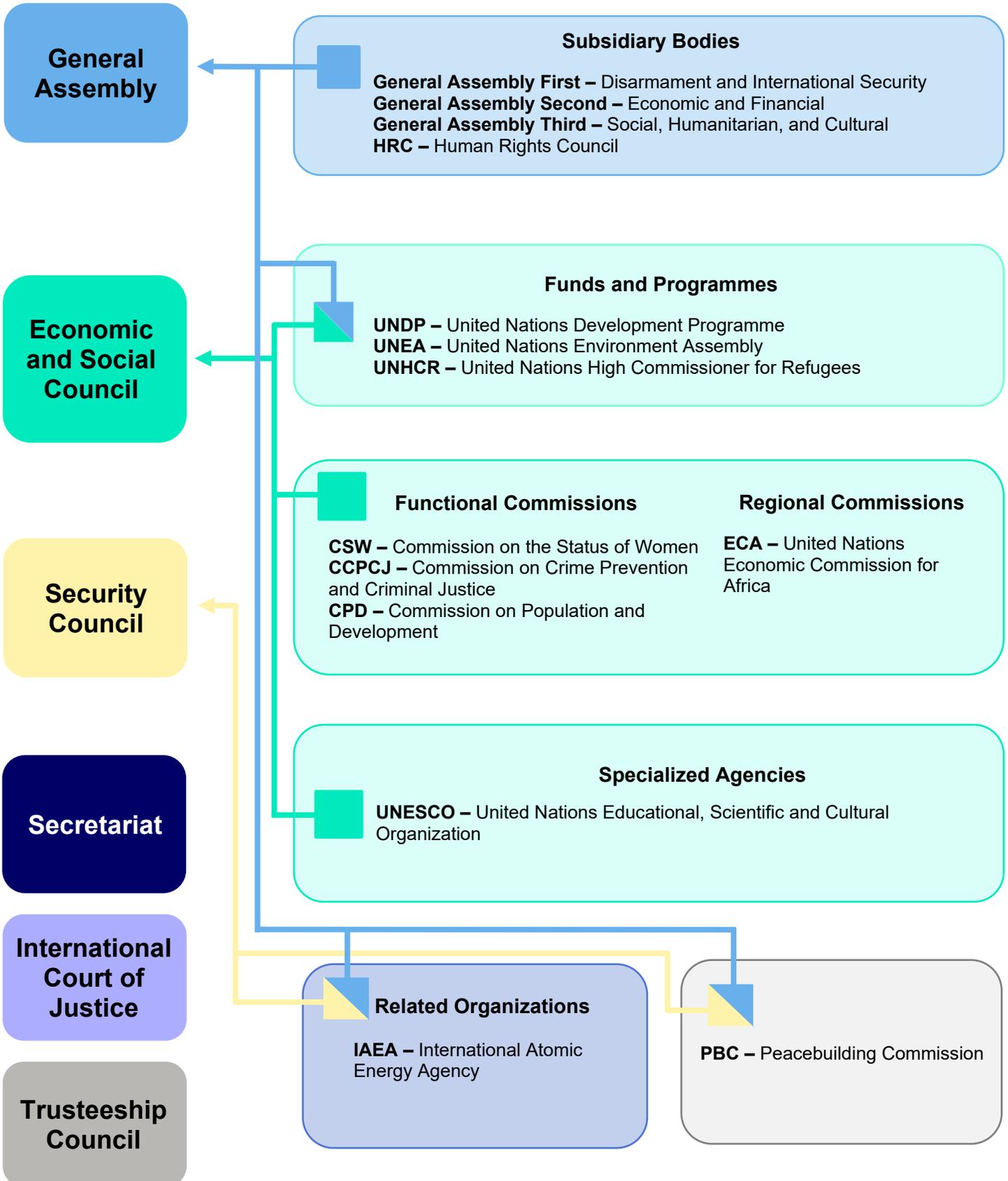


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United Nations System at NMUN•NY

This diagram illustrates the UN system simulated at NMUN•NY. It shows where each committee “sits” within the system to demonstrate the reportage and relationships between entities. Examine the diagram alongside the Committee Overview to gain a clear picture of the committee’s position, purpose, and powers within the UN system.



Committee Overview

Introduction

The General Assembly is the main deliberative and policy-making body of the United Nations (UN) and one of the six principal organs established by the *Charter of the United Nations* (1945).¹ The work of the General Assembly is undertaken in subsidiary committees, each of which debates and adopts draft resolutions on their thematic areas and allocated agenda items.²

The General Assembly First Committee considers matters relating to disarmament and international peace and security.³ It considers agenda items under several thematic clusters, namely: nuclear weapons, other weapons of mass destruction, the disarmament aspects of outer space, conventional weapons, regional disarmament and security, other disarmament measures and international security, and the disarmament machinery.⁴

Mandate, Function and Powers

The General Assembly acts as a forum for dialogue and cooperation, providing general policy recommendations rather than carrying out operative tasks.⁵ Its policy recommendations are non-binding and their implementation is conducted by Member States, the UN Secretariat, and other UN bodies, each of which independently align their work with General Assembly resolutions.⁶ The *Charter of the United Nations* provides the General Assembly with a broad mandate to discuss and make recommendations on any topic within the scope of the UN.⁷

The General Assembly adopts resolutions, which are formal documents expressing the agreement and will of the international community.⁸ The majority of these resolutions are adopted by consensus, meaning no vote is taken and that no Member State has specific cause to object.⁹ In line with the *Charter of the United Nations*, the mandate of the General Assembly can be summarized as:

- The General Assembly **will generally**: make recommendations to Member States, the Security Council, other UN bodies and organs, UN specialized agencies, and other international actors; initiate studies and advance efforts to promote international cooperation in the economic, social, cultural, educational, and health fields and in the realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms; consider or request reports from other UN bodies and specialized agencies; establish UN observance days, create expert groups or commissions, formulate mechanisms for treaty negotiation, or refer an issue to the International Court of Justice.¹⁰
- The General Assembly **will not generally**: dictate the specific actions required for implementation of policies it recommends, allowing Member States and other bodies to determine operational details; create new bodies, except for in those rare instances where ubiquitous international demand requires the consolidation of existing bodies and/or a concept and mandate have been fully developed, typically through years of

¹ United Nations Conference on International Organization. *Charter of the United Nations*. 1945.

² Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the UN. *The GA Handbook: A Practical Guide to the United Nations General Assembly*. 2017. p. 68.

³ *Ibid.* p. 69.

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 69.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.* p. 52.

⁷ United Nations Conference on International Organization. *Charter of the United Nations*. 1945.

⁸ Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations. *The GA Handbook: A Practical Guide to the United Nations General Assembly*. 2017. p. 52.

⁹ *Ibid.* pp. 37, 52.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* p. 36; United Nations Conference on International Organization. *Charter of the United Nations*. 1945; UNFOLD ZERO. *UN Bodies*. n.d.

negotiations; make recommendations on situations under consideration by the Security Council.¹¹

The First Committee's mandate flows down from that provided to the General Assembly by the *Charter of the United Nations*.¹² The First Committee adopts around 50-70 resolutions each year, around half of which are adopted by consensus, after which they are sent to the General Assembly Plenary.¹³

Governance, Funding, and Structure

The General Assembly meets annually and is comprised of all 193 UN Member States.¹⁴ Observer status can be granted to intergovernmental organizations and states without full UN membership.¹⁵ In the General Assembly, each Member State has one equal vote and most decisions require a simple majority.¹⁶ As a principal organ of the United Nations, the General Assembly is largely self-governing, determining its own agenda, procedures, officers, and subsidiary bodies.¹⁷ General Assembly meetings and events are funded through the United Nations regular budget.¹⁸

The First Committee's procedures are managed by its Secretariat and an elected bureau.¹⁹ The bureau of the committee assists with opening and closing each meeting, managing the discussions, pronouncing decisions, assisting with drafts and documents, and ensuring compliance with the rules of procedure.²⁰ The UN Secretariat assists the First Committee by delivering substantive and logistical support.²¹ The First Committee receives substantive and organizational support from three entities: the General Committee, the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, and the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management.²²

The First Committee also works in close cooperation with the Conference on Disarmament (CD) and the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC).²³ The CD is an independent entity and the only recognized "multilateral disarmament negotiating forum of the international community."²⁴ UNDC is a subsidiary organ of the First Committee and makes recommendations on various issues in the field of disarmament and following up on past decisions.²⁵ Both the CD and UNDC report to the First Committee.²⁶

¹¹ United Nations, Dag Hammarskjöld Library. *Are UN resolutions binding?* n.d.; United Nations, Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth. *UN Women: The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women*. n.d.; United Nations, Human Rights Council. *Welcome to the Human Rights Council*. n.d.; United Nations Conference on International Organization. *Charter of the United Nations*. 1945.

¹² Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the UN. *The GA Handbook: A Practical Guide to the United Nations General Assembly*. 2017. p. 70.

¹³ Ibid. pp. 68-70.

¹⁴ United Nations Conference on International Organization. *Charter of the United Nations*. 1945.

¹⁵ United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *About Permanent Observers*. n.d.

¹⁶ United Nations Conference on International Organization. *Charter of the United Nations*. 1945.

¹⁷ Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations. *The GA Handbook: A Practical Guide to the United Nations General Assembly*. 2017. pp. 13, 15, 44.

¹⁸ New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. *United Nations Handbook 2022-23*. 2022. p. 412.

¹⁹ Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the UN. *The GA Handbook: A Practical Guide to the United Nations General Assembly*. 2017.

²⁰ United Nations, General Assembly. *Rules of Procedure of the General Assembly (A/520/Rev.18*)*. 2016. pp. 30-31.

²¹ Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations. *The GA Handbook: A Practical Guide to the United Nations General Assembly*. 2017.

²² United Nations, General Assembly. *Disarmament and International Security (First Committee)*. n.d.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Conference on Disarmament*. n.d.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ United Nations, General Assembly. *Disarmament and International Security (First Committee)*. n.d.

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Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations. *The GA Handbook: A Practical Guide to the United Nations General Assembly*. 2017. Retrieved 9 June September 2022 from:

https://www.eda.admin.ch/dam/mission-new-york/en/documents/UN_GA_Final.pdf

This handbook was published by the Permanent Mission to the United Nations of Switzerland. It is a very good introduction to the General Assembly and its First Committee, including its processes, and structure. This source will support delegates in better understanding the General Assembly in its entirety as well as gaining more information on existing rules of procedure, the structure of resolutions, and the workflow of the General Assembly as they begin their research.

United Nations Conference on International Organization. *Charter of the United Nations*. 1945. Retrieved 10 September 2022 from: <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/un-charter/full-text>

The Charter of the United Nations is the document that created the organization and laid the framework for its main organs, including the General Assembly. It is a relatively short but dense document. Delegates may want to read the entire document to gain a general understanding of the foundational mechanics of the United Nations, but should certainly read the preamble, which established the justification for the organization's creation, and Chapter VI, which established the mandate of the General Assembly.

United Nations, General Assembly. *Disarmament and International Security (First Committee)*. n.d. Retrieved 9 September 2022 from: <https://www.un.org/en/ga/first/>

This website provides a concise and high-level overview of the General Assembly First Committee and what issues it is mandated to discuss. Albeit short, this website succinctly positions the Committee within the larger General Assembly environment and highlights recent trends within the Committee. Moreover, this website is a good introductory resource for accessing more detailed aspects about the Committee, which delegates will find useful in better understanding the activities, purpose, and history of the General Assembly First Committee.

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1. Youth for Disarmament, Non-Proliferation, and Peace

“Young people around the world have a critical role to play in raising awareness and developing new strategies to reduce threats from weapons of mass destruction and conventional arms, including their proliferation. It is imperative to listen, engage and work with this generation in discussions on disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control issues.”²⁷

Introduction

The United Nations (UN) defines disarmament as the elimination of nuclear weapons, weapons of mass destruction, chemical weapons, and the strengthening of the elimination of such, because of their threat to humankind.²⁸ The UN does not prohibit the use of conventional weapons by Member States.²⁹ In regard to conventional weapons, the UN generally uses the terms “arms control”, and “arms limitations” when referring to them – usually in instances where their use violates peace and/or international law.³⁰ These weapons bring untold hardship to civilians, and disproportionately affect women, youth, and children.³¹ The objectives of disarmament are a main focus within the UN system with additional efforts on disseminating new information on the impacts of the control, and use of these weapons and technologies, and their impacts on international peace and security.³² Non-proliferation seeks to prevent the manufacture, use, and expansion of weapons of mass destruction, chemical, biological weapons, and nuclear weapons programs worldwide, while acknowledging the existential threat they pose to humankind.³³ UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, echoes the efforts of the General Assembly when he emphasized the contribution of young people to positively change the world, including regarding issues of disarmament.³⁴ Secretary-General Guterres has also prioritized the inclusion and engagement of youth for planning and implementation of common goals of the international community, such as the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (2015) (2030 Agenda).³⁵ The General Assembly encourages the inclusion, empowerment, and engagement of youth at all levels of government globally to work towards non-proliferation, peacebuilding, and disarmament.³⁶

The UN defines youth as those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years.³⁷ Youth comprise 1.8 billion of the entire human population at present, with approximately 90% of them living in developing countries.³⁸ The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) also prioritize the inclusion of youth in global development and peace initiatives as youth are “the leaders of tomorrow”.³⁹ Within the UN system, the General Assembly First Committee specifically deals with issues of disarmament and international peace and security and works with other UN entities to foster global peace.⁴⁰ In 2022, the General Assembly created the United Nations Youth Office in General Assembly resolution 76/306 entitled “Establishment of the United Nations Youth Office.”⁴¹ This resolution emphasizes the importance of youth in promoting peace and security, sustainable development, and human rights, in addition to their inclusion in all levels of decision-making.⁴²

²⁷ United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Disarmament and Youth*. n.d.

²⁸ United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Global Issues: Disarmament*. n.d.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.; United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Arms Trade*. n.d.

³¹ United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Global Issues: Disarmament*. n.d.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Disarmament and Youth*. n.d.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Definition of Youth*. n.d.

³⁸ United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Disarmament and Youth*. n.d.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ United Nations, General Assembly. *Disarmament and International Security (First Committee)*. n.d.

⁴¹ United Nations, General Assembly. *Establishment of the United Nations Youth Office (A/RES/76/306)*. 2022.

⁴² Ibid.

International and Regional Framework

In 2015, the General Assembly adopted resolution 70/1 on “Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”.⁴³ The relationship between disarmament and the SDGs are especially outlined in SDG 16 (peace, justice, and strong institutions), SDG 10 (reduced inequalities), SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth), SDG 3 (good health and well-being), SDG 5 (gender equality), and SDG 11 (sustainable cities and communities).⁴⁴ These goals show that disarmament and peacebuilding are important to the implementation of the SDGs and their focus on inclusivity emphasizes the importance of engaging youth in achieving them.⁴⁵

In 1968, the UN General Assembly adopted the *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons* (NPT) with the objective of preventing the spread of nuclear weapons and nuclear weapons technology, while promoting the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.⁴⁶ The treaty was built on the premise of global non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, and has its goals mainstreamed into the mandate of the International Atomic Energy Agency.⁴⁷ In 2010, the review of the NPT concluded with Member States committing to uphold the three pillars of the treaty, which are non-proliferation, disarmament, and peaceful uses of nuclear energy.⁴⁸

In 2015, the UN Security Council adopted resolution 2250 (2015) on “Maintenance of international peace and security” in which it recognized the role of young people in the prevention of conflict, disarmament, and global peacebuilding.⁴⁹ The resolution forms a framework for Member States to better engage their youth in peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts, as it emphasizes that youth engagement is critical to the sustenance of global peace.⁵⁰ The Security Council also emphasized the positive contributions of youth to peacebuilding, and called on Member States and stakeholders at all levels to engage with youth on issues of disarmament, non-proliferation, and peace.⁵¹ In 2018, building on the report of the General Assembly First Committee, the General Assembly adopted resolution 73/59 on “United Nations Study on Disarmament and Non-proliferation Education,” in which it acknowledged the importance of civil society, academia, and non-governmental organizations, and how youth can bring a fresh perspective into disarmament policies.⁵² The resolution emphasizes the need to utilize UN system web platforms for knowledge sharing and information collation for easy access, utilizing as many Member States official languages as possible, to reach youth across the world, as well as other relevant stakeholders.⁵³ In 2015, the Global Forum on Youth, Peace and Security was held in Amman where youth from around the world adopted the *Amman Youth Declaration on Youth, Peace, and Security*.⁵⁴ The forum was held as a platform for youth representatives to commit to building peace, and fostering cooperation to ensure youth inclusivity in global affairs.⁵⁵ This declaration was developed by young people, and centered on SDG 16 (peace, justice, and strong institutions).⁵⁶ The declaration called on the UN to create a global policy

⁴³ United Nations, General Assembly. *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*. 2015.

⁴⁴ United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Disarmament and Sustainable Development*. n.d.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ United Nations, General Assembly. *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (A/RES/2373 (XXII))*. 1968.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Disarmament and Youth*. n.d.; United Nations, Security Council. *Maintenance of international peace and security (S/RES/2250 (2015)*)*. p. 1.

⁵⁰ Ibid. p. 1.

⁵¹ United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Disarmament and Youth*. n.d.

⁵² United Nations, General Assembly. *United Nations study on disarmament and non-proliferation education (A/RES/73/59)*. 2018. p. 2; United Nations, General Assembly. *General and complete disarmament (A/73/510)*.

⁵³ United Nations, General Assembly. *United Nations study on disarmament and non-proliferation education (A/RES/73/59)*. 2018. p. 2.

⁵⁴ Global Forum on Youth, Peace, and Security. *Amman Youth Declaration on Youth, Peace, and Security*. 2015.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

framework to recognize and address the different impacts of youth on conflict remediation, disarmament, and peacebuilding.⁵⁷ It called for youth mainstreaming in all levels of government, youth engagement and empowerment in policymaking, and partnerships for sustainable policymaking and implementation of the ideals of SDG 16.⁵⁸ Some of the ambitions of this declaration have led to the creation of the UN Youth office in 2022 to better streamline youth engagement in global disarmament.⁵⁹

Role of the International System

The General Assembly through its First Committee, utilizes its powers to provide guidance on disarmament, and addresses challenges to peace and security.⁶⁰ It urges Member States to utilize platforms for action that are inclusive for youth, and promote dialogue with youth in addressing disarmament.⁶¹ In 2021, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution entitled “Youth, Disarmament, and Non-Proliferation”, in which it recognized that youth from all parts of the world are important agents for enacting change in social and economic development, as well as in economic and technological advancements.⁶² This resolution also emphasizes that youth bring innovative and inclusive insights towards disarmament and peacebuilding.⁶³ In line with SDG 4, the General Assembly also emphasized the importance of education to teach youth about the dangers of arms proliferation, and capacity building for youth as a means to making sustainable change in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation.⁶⁴

In 2018, the UN launched the *United Nations Youth Strategy* (Youth2030) as a UN system-wide framework for guidance towards youth engagement in peace and security, human rights, and sustainable development.⁶⁵ The framework seeks to enhance the capability of the UN to engage youth and incorporate their ideas in an inclusive manner into its work, including on disarmament and peacebuilding.⁶⁶ In 2022, the UN released a global progress report on the framework which highlighted key areas in which the Youth2030 strategy had been implemented.⁶⁷ The report also highlighted that in 2021, 97% of UN entities facilitated intergovernmental forums, and global and regional summits and conferences “for and with youth.”⁶⁸ Youth2030 has seven focus areas which include “leave no youth behind”, and other focus areas which deal with financing, policy alignment with the SDGs, youth mainstreaming, and domestic youth coordination.⁶⁹

In 2019, the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA), launched its #Youth4Disarmament initiative to engage, mobilize, and support youth in becoming engaged with disarmament and non-proliferation.⁷⁰ UNODA utilizes web platforms to facilitate conversation among youth globally on issues pertaining to disarmament, non-proliferation, and peace.⁷¹ Through its education initiatives, UNODA seeks to educate and train youth to facilitate their contribution to complete disarmament and better international control of arms.⁷² In 2018, UNODA published *Securing Our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament* as a tool for peacebuilding and disarmament, while ensuring that innovations in science and technology are used for the betterment of humankind, rather than conflict and destruction.⁷³ The

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ United Nations, General Assembly. *Establishment of the United Nations Youth Office (A/RES/76/306)*. 2022.

⁶⁰ United Nations, General Assembly. *Youth, disarmament, and non-proliferation (A/RES/76/45)*. 2021.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² United Nations, General Assembly. *Youth, disarmament, and non-proliferation (A/RES/74/64)*. 2019.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ United Nations Office of the Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth. *Youth2030: About the Strategy*. n.d.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ United Nations Office of the Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth. *Youth2030: A Global Progress Report*. 2022.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Disarmament and Youth*. n.d.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Education*. n.d.

⁷³ United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Securing Our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament*. 2018. p. vii.

agenda also fosters cooperation among regional organizations, and promotes inclusivity, ensuring full and effective participation of women.⁷⁴ As part of its efforts towards including youth in discourse and disarmament programs, UNODA, in partnership with the Republic of Korea, organized the Youth Forum on Disarmament and Non-proliferation, which took place in 2021.⁷⁵ The forum included 25 youth delegates from several Member States and adopted the *Seoul Youth Declaration for Disarmament and Non-proliferation (2021)*, which includes policy recommendations to facilitate disarmament and non-proliferation globally.⁷⁶ Some of the policy recommendations emphasized establishment of youth-led disarmament initiatives, youth empowerment funds, and inclusivity in gender, as it pertains to youth involvement in peacebuilding and disarmament.⁷⁷ In 2021, UNODA released a *Joint Civil Society Statement on Youth Engagement and Peace, Disarmament, and Non-proliferation* in which it called for increased funding and support for youth inclusion in education initiatives aimed at promoting disarmament and peacebuilding.⁷⁸ The statement also emphasized the importance of gender mainstreaming, and inclusion of minority populations while engaging youth in disarmament and peacebuilding forums.⁷⁹

The UN Regional Center for Peace and Disarmament in Africa (UNREC) was established in 1986, and has since supported the work of African states towards disarmament and non-proliferation on the continent.⁸⁰ UNREC supports individual African states, the African Union, and other sub-regional organizations through capacity building, legal aid, and technical assistance in line with the SDGs.⁸¹ UNREC's capacity building efforts in Africa include providing training on how to address arms proliferation, institutional review and standard setting, specialized support to national governments, sub-regional groups and organizations through policymaking, action plans, and legislation.⁸² UNREC also works through advocacy by organizing seminars for youth, disarmament education in partnership with schools and universities, gender mainstreaming in disarmament initiatives, and educational material.⁸³ These initiatives are directed to youth, and other members of society to better participate in disarmament initiatives, share ideas, consult, and remediate disarmament issues across Africa.⁸⁴ They have yielded results such as the project to end the acquisition of arms by violent extremist and terrorist groups in the Lake Chad Basin.⁸⁵

Education of Youth Towards Disarmament, Non-proliferation, and Peacebuilding

In 2002, the UN Secretary-General highlighted to the General Assembly that there has never been a greater need for disarmament education, which must include different approaches and methods for each culture and age group.⁸⁶ His report emphasizes the changing concepts of security since the Cold War, generating a need for new thinking and the inclusion of youth in decision-making.⁸⁷ The report also contains the conclusions of the work of the Group of Governmental Experts (GGE), including 34 policy recommendations to improve the education and training of the youth population regarding disarmament

⁷⁴ United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *The Four Pillars of the Agenda: Strengthening Partnerships for Disarmament*. n.d.

⁷⁵ Republic of Korea, Ministry of Foreign Affairs. *Youth Forum on Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Takes place*. 2021.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *2021 Joint Civil Society Statement on Youth Engagement and Peace, Disarmament, and Non-proliferation Education*. 2021.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *United Nations Regional Center for Peace and Disarmament in Africa*. 2022.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ United Nations, General Assembly. *United Nations study on disarmament and non-proliferation education (A/57/124)*. 2002. p. 1.

⁸⁷ Ibid. p. 1.

and non-proliferation.⁸⁸ The recommendations included developing intensive courses on disarmament and non-proliferation for students, as well as encouraging Member States to fund and offer scholarships to advanced university students so that more research on disarmament and non-proliferation is conducted from an academic perspective.⁸⁹ The GGE also concluded that disarmament and non-proliferation education is a multifaceted process, in which schools and universities need to participate, and educational tools need to be developed that are aimed at children and youth, students, and educators.⁹⁰ In 2017, the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters submitted a report to the Secretary-General which included an in-depth review of the previously mentioned recommendations.⁹¹ The advisory board expressed concerns on the decreasing interest of young people regarding disarmament education, and emphasized the need to focus and adjust said education to be more inclusive of different generations and cultures.⁹² The report also highlights the importance of having concrete quantitative and qualitative analyses of the impact of disarmament education on youth.⁹³ The advisory board specifically recommended introducing creative ways of implementing disarmament education, such as a system of “awards” for the best educators or online seminars.⁹⁴ In this regard, UNODA has a webpage dedicated exclusively to disarmament education, which contains resources such as reports of the Secretary-General, peace and disarmament education activities, infographics, videos, podcasts, courses and degrees, and a specific resource aimed at teachers and students.⁹⁵

In 2019, the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific (UNRCPD) published an executive summary entitled *Baseline Assessment for Disarmament Education in Asia and the Pacific*.⁹⁶ The assessment acknowledges that underestimating the importance and value of disarmament education and its results can result in its exclusion from activities, discussions, and prioritization.⁹⁷ It also emphasizes that the educational content for disarmament can be aimed for youth, as well as made with the involvement of the youth population.⁹⁸ In 2017, the Agency for Peacebuilding, a European non-profit organization focused on promoting conflict resolution and sustainable peace, conducted an analysis consisting of several questionnaires, focus groups, events and activities, which showed that the best tool for youth involvement in disarmament is to more actively engage, connecting them to issues they may feel distant from, and making them feel that their involvement is meaningful, which encourages other people to be active as well.⁹⁹ A 2022 Report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly, which contains a further review of the 34 policy recommendations from the GGE, highlights that said recommendations are being applied around the world, but that awareness, promotion, implementation, and expansion of disarmament education is still a challenge that needs to be addressed.¹⁰⁰

Inclusion, Empowerment, and Engagement of Youth at all Levels of Government

According to UNODA’s *Agenda for Disarmament* (2018), youth are the ultimate force for disarmament, because of their higher tendency to reject xenophobia, racism, and intolerance.¹⁰¹ Yet, in 2020, only 2.6% of the world’s parliamentarians were under 30, representing an increase of only 0.4% when compared

⁸⁸ Ibid. p. 16.

⁸⁹ Ibid. p. 18.

⁹⁰ Ibid. p. 12.

⁹¹ United Nations, General Assembly. *Work of the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters: Report of the Secretary General (A/72/185)*. 2017. p. 1.

⁹² Ibid. p. 8.

⁹³ Ibid. p. 8.

⁹⁴ Ibid. p. 9.

⁹⁵ United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Disarmament Education*. 2022.

⁹⁶ United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific. *Baseline Assessment for Disarmament Education in Asia and the Pacific Executive Summary*. n.d. p. 2.

⁹⁷ Ibid. p. 2.

⁹⁸ Ibid. p. 2.

⁹⁹ Ikeda. Agency for Peacebuilding. *Youth Engagement in Nuclear Disarmament: Rethinking Peace and Security*. 2019.

¹⁰⁰ United Nations, General Assembly. *Disarmament and non-proliferation education (A/77/133)*. 2022. p. 11.

¹⁰¹ United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Securing Our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament*. 2018.

with 2018.¹⁰² The 2020 *Youth, Peace and Security* report highlights the structural and institutional barriers that young people face to be included and engaged at all levels of government.¹⁰³ Some of these barriers include the gap between the minimum voting age and the age required to be elected for government, a gap which exists in 69% of countries in the world, discouraging young people to run for office and to participate in political processes, as well as the double discrimination that young women suffer because of age and gender.¹⁰⁴ The same document emphasizes the need for more education and capacity building for youth.¹⁰⁵

The United Nations *System-Wide Action Plan on Youth* (Youth-SWAP), is a blueprint for actions that can be taken for the benefit of youth.¹⁰⁶ One of the main goals of Youth-SWAP is to make sure that the rights of youth are recognized, and that they are respected so that youth can participate and engage in all levels of government.¹⁰⁷ In this regard, the United Nations Youth Volunteer was created by the General Assembly, with the purpose of supporting legislation, national and international policies, frameworks, and budgets that ensured the participation, inclusion and engagement of youth in governments.¹⁰⁸ In 2014, more than 1,000 volunteers were under the age of 29, and 70% of these volunteers were from developing countries.¹⁰⁹ Youth-SWAP has five thematic areas, peacebuilding being one of them, with the purpose of promoting youth participation in peacebuilding efforts at local and national levels.¹¹⁰ In this sense, UNRCPD is one of the several centers where the youth are volunteering.¹¹¹ For example, in the 14th annual International Youth Media Summit, more than 70 young filmmakers (between the age of 14 and 24), presented their Public Service Announcements short films, which included issues such as disarmament, with three of them being sponsored by UNRCPD.¹¹² Additionally, several UN agencies and offices have implemented actions for youth engagement in government.¹¹³ For example, the United Nations Population Fund coordinated the project Youth Peer Education Network, a youth-to-youth initiative that consists of more than 500 non-governmental organizations and governmental institutions with the objective of advocating and developing policies and services which benefits the youth.¹¹⁴ The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), educates young people about their electoral rights, in an attempt to reduce electoral violence and to increase youth participation.¹¹⁵ In 2019, MINUSMA strengthened over 150 civil society organizations, resulting in the establishment of Youth Ambassadors, who are young people committed to local governance and civic responsibility, specifically in building lasting peace.¹¹⁶

Conclusion

In the last 15 years, there has only been a 0.95% increase in participation in parliament of people under 30 years old.¹¹⁷ For its seventy-seventh session, the General Assembly First Committee has prioritized

¹⁰² United Nations, Security Council. *Youth, Peace and Security: Report of the Secretary-General (S/2022/220)*. 2022.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.* p. 5.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.* p. 5.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.* p. 5.

¹⁰⁶ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *United Nations System-Wide Action Plan on Youth Report*. 2014.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.* p. 17.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.* p. 17.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.* p. 17.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.* p. 39.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.* p. 17.

¹¹² United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific. *International Youth Media Summit Collaboration*. 2022.

¹¹³ United Nations Population Fund. *Youth participation & leadership*. 2022.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ United Nations, Security Council. *Youth, Peace and Security: Report of the Secretary-General (S/2022/220)*. 2022.

¹¹⁶ United Nations Department of Peace Operations. *Promoting Youth, Peace and Security*. n.d.

¹¹⁷ United Nations, Security Council. *Youth, Peace and Security: Report of the Secretary-General (S/2022/220)*. 2022.

thematic discussions on nuclear weapons, weapons of mass destruction, as well as international and regional disarmament frameworks.¹¹⁸ As the UN continues to engage with civil society and national governments to increase the participation and engagement of youth in matters of disarmament, initiatives such as the *United Nations System-Wide Action Plan on Youth* are a tool for implementing change and ensuring inclusivity and youth mainstreaming at all levels of policymaking.¹¹⁹ While current efforts on youth mainstreaming, youth inclusivity, youth education, and empowerment serve as tools for disarmament, non-proliferation, and peacebuilding, more action is needed by Member States and other international actors to ensure sustainability in line with the SDGs.¹²⁰ As the UN recently established the United Nations Youth Office, there is now a clear need for mainstreaming of youth into disarmament initiatives, engagement of youth for peacebuilding.¹²¹

Further Research

While researching this topic, delegates should consider the following: How can youth be better empowered to enact change in issues of disarmament, non-proliferation, and peacebuilding? How can national, regional, and local efforts on disarmament be supported? How can the UN system, civil society, non-governmental organizations, and other relevant stakeholders improve inclusivity in engaging youth for disarmament, and peacebuilding?

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The Youth, Political Participation and Decision-Making Fact Sheet, published by UNODA, explains the current situation for youth involvement in government at all levels, highlighting the distinct problems that said involvement carries, as well as objectives to improve the current situation. This fact sheet highlights several initiatives that are being done around the globe to improve this situation. Delegates will find this useful as a source that can give a broad and general overview, including statistics, of the involvement of youth in government and their involvement in disarmament and peace.

United Nations, General Assembly. *Work of the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters: Report of the Secretary-General (A/72/185)*. 2017. Retrieved 6 August 2022 from: <http://undocs.org/en/A/72/185>

15 years after the 34 recommendations on disarmament education made to the General Assembly, the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters submitted their reviews and further recommendations. This document highlights the most relevant recommendations regarding disarmament education, as well as what has been accomplished in the 15 years that had passed since the recommendations were made. Delegates will find this useful since it contains information on the actual state of disarmament education, as well as ideas to further include the youth populations on disarmament education, such as the tailoring of education to specific cultures and age groups.

United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Securing Our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament*. 2018. Retrieved 24 June 2022 from: <https://s3.amazonaws.com/unoda-web/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/sg-disarmament-agenda-pubs-page.pdf#view=Fit>

This document was launched in 2018 by United Nations Secretary-General, António Guterres, as a guideline for disarmament globally. Unlike most disarmament-related guidelines, this document is all-encompassing as it includes all kinds of arms. Since

¹¹⁸ United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *First Committee Approves Work Program, Elects Chair for Seventy-Seventh Session*. 2022.

¹¹⁹ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *United Nations System-Wide Action Plan on Youth Report*. 2014.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ United Nations, General Assembly. *Establishment of the United Nations Youth Office (A/RES/76/306)*. 2022.

negotiations on disarmament and non-proliferations tend to be specific or fragmented, this agenda provides an all-inclusive platform for dialogue. Delegates will find this useful when seeking common ground for dialogue on disarmament and analyzing its suggestions for action.

United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *United Nations Regional Center for Peace and Disarmament in Africa*. 2022. Retrieved 24 June 2022 from: <https://front.un-arm.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/UNREC-Fact-Sheet-Jan2022.pdf>

The mandate of the United Nations Regional Center for Peace and Disarmament in Africa caters specifically to African states. It serves as a knowledge sharing platform that is easily accessible to African states, and works as an intermediary between national governments, donors, the private sector, and civil society. It is unique in that it includes an online platform that is easily accessible to youth across the continent, while also offering African youth the resources needed to partake in disarmament initiatives such as meeting spaces, and local action groups. It also oversees country-specific, and sub-regional projects related to disarmament which improves the logistics of implementation by each stakeholder. Delegates will find this useful when researching regional efforts on disarmament, and how sub-regional and national government goals on disarmament and peacebuilding are being implemented.

United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific. *Peace and Disarmament Education*. 2022. Retrieved 5 July 2022 from: <https://unrcpd.org/peace-and-disarmament-education/>

The Peace and Disarmament Education UNRCPD webpage offers a great amount of information on what is currently being done to educate the youth regarding peace and disarmament. This webpage is the main tool that the UNRCPD uses to inform people on what is being done regarding disarmament education, as well as a portal where one can find information about said efforts. It highlights the most important documents regarding this issue, as well as past and future events. Delegates can utilize this information to understand the current situation in Asia and the Pacific, as well as the challenges that need to be faced in this regard.

United Nations, Security Council. *Youth, Peace and Security: Report of the Secretary-General (S/2022/220)*. 2022. Retrieved 26 June 2022 from: <https://undocs.org/en/S/2022/220>

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, youth have faced challenges in staying engaged in policy-making and advocacy for disarmament and peacebuilding. This report highlights how young people from across the world have continued to utilize new platforms to continue their contribution to global peacebuilding. The report also shows how youth have been left behind due to access to reliable internet that would facilitate their meetings on virtual platforms. It shows how the safety and security of youth worldwide has not improved, and yet still faces new challenges in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Delegates will find this useful when doing their research as it includes information on how inclusivity can be a tool for youth empowerment in all areas of peacebuilding and development.

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2. Addressing the Illicit Supply of Weapons to Non-State Actors

“There are over 550 million firearms in worldwide circulation. That’s one firearm for every twelve people on the planet.”¹²²

Introduction

As of 2022, the value of the global licit or legal trade in small arms and light weapons and their ammunition is estimated at more than \$ 7 billion per year and the value of illicit trade, which includes intentionally subversive and difficult to track transactions, is also estimated to have a value in the billions.¹²³ These flows of weapons and ammunition to non-state actors can lead to human suffering, political repression, crime, and the carrying out of terrorist acts, causing destabilization, enabling violations of arms embargoes, and contributing to human rights abuses.¹²⁴ The International Network for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights provides a broad definition of non-state actors (NSAs) as organizations or individuals that are not affiliated with, directed by, or funded through Member States’ governments.¹²⁵ This could include corporations, private financial institutions, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), as well as paramilitary and armed resistance groups.¹²⁶ The Security Council provides a more pertinent definition for non-state actors to the issue at hand as it defines an NSA as an “individual or entity not acting under the lawful authority of any state.”¹²⁷ This was built upon by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), which defined non-state armed groups as “groups that have the potential to employ arms in the use of force to achieve political, ideological or economic objectives; are not within the formal military structures of states, state-alliances or intergovernmental organizations; and are not under the control of the state(s) in which they operate.”¹²⁸

For decades, the United Nations (UN) has sought to address the flows of various weapons into the hands of non-state actors, including weapons of mass destruction, biological and chemical weapons, and, especially, small arms and light weapons, which some international experts have referred to as “the real weapons of mass destruction.”¹²⁹ As of 2020, about one billion small arms are in circulation worldwide and nearly 50% of all violent deaths between 2010 and 2015, more than 200,000 each year, involved small arms and light weapons.¹³⁰ The United Nations Office to the African Union defined Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) as weapons that can be carried and operated by no more than three persons without the use of a vehicle.¹³¹ The General Assembly has categorized illicit trade of SALW as the transfer, manufacturing, or assembly without a national authority’s notice or authorization, and without ensuring the adequate application of provisions.¹³² SALW may also be considered as illicitly traded if they violate a UN Security Council arms embargo or if defined as illicit according to the laws of a Member State within whose territory they are found.¹³³ The trade in SALW is currently not as well-regulated as the trade of other weapons and is considered the least transparent form of weapons trading.¹³⁴ In much of the Global South, largely due to a lacking legal regime and capacity to enforce regulations, SALW regularly find their way into the hands of NSAs who use them for nefarious purposes, often engaging in armed

¹²² Niccol. *Lord of War*. 2005.

¹²³ United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Small arms: Trade and Brokering*. n.d.

¹²⁴ United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Arms Trade*. n.d.

¹²⁵ International Network for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. *Non-State Actors*. n.d.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ United Nations, Security Council. *Non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (S/RES/1540 (2004))*. 2004.

¹²⁸ United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. *Humanitarian Negotiations with Armed Groups: A Manual for Practitioners*. 2006.

¹²⁹ United Nations, Security Council. *Non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (S/RES/1540 (2004))*. 2004.

¹³⁰ United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Half of all violent deaths involve small arms and light weapons*. 2020.

¹³¹ United Nations Office to the African Union. *Small arms and light weapons*. n.d.

¹³² United Nations, General Assembly. *Report of the Open-ended Working Group to Negotiate an International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons (A/60/88)*. 2005.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Small arms: Trade and Brokering*. n.d.

conflict, kidnapping, or armed resistance and violating international humanitarian law.¹³⁵ Some SALW are diverted from legal transactions to the illicit market through theft, leakage, corruption, or pilferage.¹³⁶ The international community has sought to address the illicit supply of SALW to non-state actors by considering several factors including but not limited to marking, tracking & tracing, collection/stockpile security, and destruction of SALW.¹³⁷

International and Regional Framework

The 1948 *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* was the first document to establish rights for all people, including the right to life, liberty, and security, each of which may be threatened as a result of the illicit trade of weapons.¹³⁸ Since the turn of the century, the General Assembly has adopted several documents to confront the illicit trade of SALW, starting in 2001 with the *UN Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects* (PoA).¹³⁹ The PoA highlighted the need for tracking, tracing, stockpiling, and destruction of SALW at regional, national, and international levels, and led to the adoption of the *International Tracing Instrument* (ITI) in 2005.¹⁴⁰ The ITI was designed to enforce the recommendations established by the PoA with respect to marking, record-keeping, stockpile management, and tracing.¹⁴¹

The latest international framework regarding the illicit trade of SALW is the *Arms Trade Treaty* (ATT), which was adopted by the General Assembly in 2013 and entered into force in December 2014.¹⁴² The ATT established an international legal framework regulating international trade in conventional arms and aims to prevent their illicit trade and diversion by requiring States parties to adopt effective measures and strategies for regulated international trade of SALW.¹⁴³ The ATT was the first treaty to establish a duty for arms exporters to prevent weapons from flowing into the hands of entities that commit human rights violations.¹⁴⁴ To facilitate the reporting of trade information, the ATT also required regular reports to the ATT Secretariat from States parties, which must describe their efforts to implement the treaty and any additional measures they may take in the future.¹⁴⁵ As of August 2022, 111 Member States have ratified, accepted, approved, or acceded to the treaty, making them legally bound to its provisions.¹⁴⁶

One year after the adoption of the ATT, the supply and trade of illicit weapons was addressed in the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (2015) (2030 Agenda), which was adopted by the General Assembly and included the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).¹⁴⁷ Several of the 17 goals and their targets are affected by the illicit trade of SALW.¹⁴⁸ SDG 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions)

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Small Arms and Light Weapons*. n.d.

¹³⁸ United Nations, General Assembly. *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (A/RES/217A (III))*. 1948.

¹³⁹ United Nations, General Assembly. *Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (A/CONF.192/15)*. 2001; United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Arms Trade*. n.d.

¹⁴⁰ United Nations, General Assembly. *Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (A/CONF.192/15)*. 2001; United Nations, General Assembly. *International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons*. 2005.

¹⁴¹ United Nations, General Assembly. *International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons*. 2005.

¹⁴² United Nations, General Assembly. *Arms Trade Treaty*. 2013.

¹⁴³ Arms Trade Treaty Secretariat. *Treaty Status*. 2022; United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Arms Trade Treaty Implementation Toolkit: Module 2*. 2015.

¹⁴⁴ United Nations, General Assembly. *Arms Trade Treaty*. 2013.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Arms Trade Treaty Secretariat. *Treaty Status*. 2022; United Nations, General Assembly. *Arms Trade Treaty*. 2013.

¹⁴⁷ United Nations, General Assembly. *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*. 2015.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

includes as its fourth target the objective to “significantly reduce illicit financial and arms flows, strengthen the recovery and return of stolen assets and combat all forms of organized crime.”¹⁴⁹

At the regional level, the Organization of American States passed the *Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials* (1997) and the *Inter-American Convention on Transparency in Conventional Weapons Acquisitions* (1999), which sought to establish policies to monitor and control the supply of weapons.¹⁵⁰ In Africa, the African Union issued the *Bamako Declaration on an African Common Position on the Illicit Proliferation, Circulation and Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons* (2000) (Bamako Declaration), which called for the establishment of national coordination agencies to monitor, track, and control the trade of illicit SALW, and the conducting of research on security and safety-related policymaking.¹⁵¹ In 2006, the League of Arab States adopted resolution 6625 on *Arab Coordination for Combating the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons*, which encourages states to improve their methods of combating the illicit trade of SALW through regional information sharing.¹⁵² The European Union (EU) adopted the *EU Strategy Against Illicit Firearms, Small Arms & Light Weapons & Their Ammunition* (2018), which aimed to provide support to programs and agencies combating security threats posed by the illegal trade of SALW.¹⁵³

Role of the International System

The First Committee has addressed the illicit trade of SALW since its inception and adopts a resolution almost every year discussing it.¹⁵⁴ These have included resolution 59/82 on “Consolidation of peace through practical disarmament measures,” (2004) which directly addressed the importance of tackling illicit weapons in consolidating peace and security and resolution 60/68 on “Addressing the negative humanitarian and development impact of the illicit manufacture, transfer and circulation of small arms and light weapons and their excessive accumulation,” (2006) which highlighted the importance of hampering illicit transfers of weapons in order to promote development and socio-economic conditions.¹⁵⁵ The General Assembly has also passed a number of resolutions reviewing implementation of the PoA and related efforts, such as the 2020 resolution 75/241 on “The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects.”¹⁵⁶ Additionally, the General Assembly has promoted inter-agency cooperation, especially with centers for peace and disarmament, as well as the World Customs Organization, the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), and the United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime (UNODC).¹⁵⁷

The First Committee closely cooperates with the UN Office of Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) and the UN Disarmament Committee.¹⁵⁸ UNODA also serves as one of the main UN bodies to set norms and advance multilateral agreements that directly address the control of conventional weapons.¹⁵⁹ Both bodies actively provide substantive and organizational support in establishing international disarmament

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Berman et al. *Small Arms Survey. Regional instruments and organizations*. 2016.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Duquet. European Union. *The 2018 EU SALW Strategy: Towards an integrated and comprehensive approach*. 2019.

¹⁵⁴ United Nations, General Assembly. *Disarmament and International Security (First Committee)*. n.d.

¹⁵⁵ United Nations, General Assembly. *Consolidation of peace through practical disarmament measures (A/RES/59/82)*. 2004; United Nations, General Assembly. *Addressing the negative humanitarian and development impact of the illicit manufacture, transfer and circulation of small arms and light weapons and their excessive accumulation (A/RES/60/68)*. 2006.

¹⁵⁶ United Nations, General Assembly. *The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects (A/RES/75/241)*. 2020.

¹⁵⁷ United Nations, General Assembly. *The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects (A/RES/72/57)*. 2017.

¹⁵⁸ United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *About Us*. n.d.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

norms.¹⁶⁰ UNODA supports the implementation of the UN PoA and ITI through the collection of national reports and recommendation of policies.¹⁶¹ UNODA also maintains the UN Register of Conventional Arms, which aims to increase transparency by reporting arms trade sales, monitoring SALW trade, and aiding in the detection of illegal activities.¹⁶² Its Saving Lives Entity is a funding facility within the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund that seeks to provide states with assistance in the implementation of frameworks and measures to address the issue of illicit small and conventional weapons transfers.¹⁶³ In April 2020, the UN Secretary-General published a report that emphasized the importance of implementing the PoA to combat diversion, with the goal of preventing SALW acquisition by non-state actors and working regionally to address arms supply and trade.¹⁶⁴

The Security Council has also addressed the illicit trade of weapons.¹⁶⁵ Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) on “Non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction,” provided guidelines on combating the illegal trade of nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons, with particular concern about diversion of arms to non-state actors.¹⁶⁶ This document addressed the illicit trade of weapons of mass destruction as a whole and is a foundational document for further Security Council resolutions.¹⁶⁷ Following this, Security Council resolution 2117 (2013) on “Small arms and light weapons” called for greater cooperation and information sharing on this issue.¹⁶⁸ In 2015, Security Council resolution 2220 on “Small arms” implemented new provisions including specifications on arms embargoes in the context of SALW disarmament.¹⁶⁹

Tracing and Marking Protocols

The ITI calls on Member States and regional actors to prevent SALW from being illicitly traded by enforcing the marking and documentation of firearms at manufacture, import, and transfer of ownership.¹⁷⁰ The instrument defines tracing as “the systematic tracking of illicit SALW found or seized on the territory of a state from the point of manufacture or the point of importation through the lines of supply to the point at which they become illicit”, and marking as an agreement by which individual firearms can be differentiated among any parties or Member States involved in the transfer of these arms.¹⁷¹

The ITI recommends that each weapon undergo a marking process for their tracing and tracking to be effective in making sure the actors are held accountable.¹⁷² There are several obstacles to fully effective global marking and tracing, which include: governments’ inability to enforce tracing protocols, lack of effective oversight in areas of conflict, and instances in which peacekeeping staff for missions involving arms embargoes are inadequately equipped to maintain correct weapon tracking records.¹⁷³ Additionally, marking for ammunition can be especially difficult since it usually does not carry a unique marking and is produced in such large quantities.¹⁷⁴ The lack of tracing and tracking can result in arms being diverted to

¹⁶⁰ United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Regional Disarmament Overview*. n.d.

¹⁶¹ United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *About Us*. n.d.

¹⁶² United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *UN Register of Conventional Arms*. n.d.

¹⁶³ United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Conventional arms funds*. n.d.

¹⁶⁴ United Nations, General Assembly. *The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects and assistance to States for curbing the illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons and collecting them: Report of the Secretary-General (A/75/78)*. 2020.

¹⁶⁵ United Nations, Security Council. *Non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (S/RES/1540 (2004))*. 2004.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁸ United Nations, Security Council. *Small arms and light weapons (S/RES/2117 (2013))*. 2013.

¹⁶⁹ United Nations, Security Council. *Small arms (S/RES/2220 (2015))*. 2015.

¹⁷⁰ United Nations, General Assembly. *International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons*. 2005.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷² *Ibid.*

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁴ United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Small arms: Ammunition*. n.d.

NSAs when they cross borders.¹⁷⁵ Several Member States of the Global South do not have the capacity to secure their borders, further enabling the untracked transportation of weapons.¹⁷⁶ The UN and its specialized agencies have both directly provided and asked that Member States provide technical and other assistance to developing countries such that they can set up effective marking and tracing systems.¹⁷⁷

One such effort is the Container Control Programme (CCP), which was established by UNODC and the World Customs Organization in 2004.¹⁷⁸ The mission of the CCP is to enable Member States to improve risk management, supply chain security, and trade facilitation in seaports, airports, and land border crossings to prevent the cross-border movement of illicit goods.¹⁷⁹ The CCP establishes and trains Port Control Units and Air Cargo Control Units comprised of customs, national police, and other law enforcement agencies to identify and inspect high-risk shipments with minimum disruption to legitimate trade.¹⁸⁰ The CCP delivers a core curriculum of theoretical, practical and advanced specialized training followed up by regular mentoring.¹⁸¹ The CCP delivers advanced specialized training programs, according to country risk assessments and availability of funds.¹⁸² The CCP is operational in over 70 Member States and its efforts have resulted in seizures of a wide range of prohibited goods, including SALW and ammunition, as it continues to support security in the weapons supply chain by building national border administrations' capacities.¹⁸³

Regional Efforts to Combat the Illicit Trade of Weapons

In recent decades there has been a shift towards regionalization of security efforts, with greater involvement of regional organizations, which can prioritize specific regional issues and often respond more quickly than international actors.¹⁸⁴ In the context of illicit transfer of weapons to NSAs, regional organizations, such as the Caribbean Community and the Economic Community of West African States, have strongly supported greater restrictions on international transfers to NSAs.¹⁸⁵ The UN Regional Center for Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific (UNRCPD) works closely with the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Oceania Customs Organisation, and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, among others, to implement the PoA.¹⁸⁶ The African Union (AU) has stood firmly behind its Bamako Declaration, working to curb illicit SALW transfers and urging its Member States to follow the declaration's principles.¹⁸⁷ In 2011, the AU built upon its framework with the *AU Strategy on Control of Illicit Proliferation, Circulation and Trafficking SALW*.¹⁸⁸ More recently, in 2016, the AU-sponsored declaration, *Silencing the Guns Owning the Future*, sought to "end all forms of conflict and violence" by 2020.¹⁸⁹ In its 8909th meeting, the United Nations Security Council hosted an open debate on "The Impact of the Diversion and Trafficking of Arms on Peace and Security," during which numerous

¹⁷⁵ United Nations, General Assembly. *International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons*. 2005.

¹⁷⁶ United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Small arms: Tracing*. n.d.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *UNODC-WCO Container Control Programme: Programme Details*. n.d.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Jackson. Europe-Asia Studies. *Trans-Regional Security Organisations and Statist Multilateralism in Eurasia*. 2014; Tavares. Routledge. *Regional Security: The Capacity of International Organizations*. 2010.

¹⁸⁵ Holtom. United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research. *Prohibiting Arms Transfers to Non-State Actors and the Arms Trade Treaty*. 2012.

¹⁸⁶ United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific. *Programme of Action*. n.d.

¹⁸⁷ Alaraby. Friedrich Ebert Stiftung. *Countering Illicit Arms Transfers in the MENA region: the Case of Yemen and Libya*. 2020.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid. p. 6.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid. p. 6.

Member States and civil society representatives highlighted the importance of a regional approach and the importance of cooperation with regional organizations.¹⁹⁰

In Southeast Asia, the proliferation of SALW is widespread in part due to conflicts and wars that took place in the region in the second half of the 1990s.¹⁹¹ Even prior to the 1990s, arms leftover from conflict were a significant issue, partially because at the end of the major conflict in Viet Nam in 1975, the United States left behind about 1.8 million SALW.¹⁹² Proliferation in the region is also fueled by the informal domestic gun-craft industry.¹⁹³ Proliferation of SALW not only has directly armed NSAs, but its illegal trade has also helped to finance sub-national and terrorist groups.¹⁹⁴

Within this context, ASEAN sought to curb the illicit trade of SALW by progressively adopting stricter regional measures to combat illegal smuggling of SALW.¹⁹⁵ These efforts led to the establishment of contact points among the ASEAN Member States as well as the collection and destruction of SALW in Cambodia, Indonesia, and the Philippines, three countries that also reviewed gun ownership laws, and similar efforts were undertaken in other Member States in different capacities.¹⁹⁶ With the assistance of the European Union, the Cambodian government was able to dismantle 142,000 SALW that remained from the country's civil war.¹⁹⁷ While ASEAN, as a regional organization, can and does provide tools to combat the illicit trade of SALW, single countries generally have to ratify international agreements or pass domestic laws in order to curb this phenomenon.¹⁹⁸ Although there has been progress on this issue in the last decades, assessments have indicated that greater collaboration and the ratification of the ATT by more ASEAN Member States would advance the ability of the region to combat the illicit trade of weapons.¹⁹⁹

Conclusion

With the global illicit trade of SALW estimated to be in the billions, the General Assembly has ascertained that small arms and light weapons are a cause of harm and suffering in several regions due to their illicit use by NSAs.²⁰⁰ The United Nations, especially through the General Assembly and the Security Council, have highlighted this issue, making the disarmament and combating illicit trade of SALW a priority.²⁰¹ Among the measures advanced by the UN, the ITI details steps that Member States can take to track the illicit SALW flow among Member States.²⁰² The UN has directly supported Member States, including through formal efforts such as the CCP.²⁰³ To curb the illicit trade of SALW, regional organizations are

¹⁹⁰ United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Political Will Along with Weapons-Control Management Critical in Stemming Illicit Trafficking of Small Arms, Speakers Tell Security Council (SC/14708)*. 2021.

¹⁹¹ Bergema et al. International Centre for Counter-Terrorism. *The Use of Small Arms & Light Weapons by Terrorist Organisations as a Source of Finance*. 2020. p. 12.

¹⁹² Ibid. p. 12.

¹⁹³ Ibid. p. 13.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid. pp. 14-15.

¹⁹⁵ Capie. Security Dialogue. *Localization as Resistance: The Contested Diffusion of Small Arms Norms in Southeast Asia*. 2008.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid. pp. 645-646.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid. p. 645.

¹⁹⁸ Hiswi. Otoritas: Jurnal Ilmu Pemerintahan. *Resolving the Illicit Trade of Small Arms and Light Weapon through ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime (AMMTC)*. 2018.

¹⁹⁹ Syahmin et al. Sriwijaya Law Review. *The International Cooperation to Eradicate Illicit Firearms Trafficking in Southeast Asian Region*. 2018. p. 190.

²⁰⁰ United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Small arms: Trade and Brokering*. n.d.; United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Arms Trade*. n.d.

²⁰¹ United Nations, General Assembly. *The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects (A/RES/75/241)*. 2020; United Nations, Security Council. *Non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (S/RES/1540 (2004))*. 2004; United Nations, Security Council. *Small Arms and Light Weapons (S/RES/2117 (2013))*. 2013.

²⁰² United Nations, General Assembly. *International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons*. 2005.

²⁰³ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *UNODC-WCO Container Control Programme*. n.d.

spearheading reforms and dialogues among their members.²⁰⁴ While much progress has been achieved worldwide, Member States have recognized that additional efforts are needed to combat the flow of weapons into the hands of NSAs.²⁰⁵

Further Research

In advancing their understanding of the topic, delegates may consider the following questions: What instruments does the General Assembly have to ensure that frameworks and treaties such as the PoA and ATT can be followed and ratified by a larger number of Member States? How can the General Assembly promote tracing and tracking, to the scope of curbing illicit SALW traffic, while respecting Member States sovereignty and territorial integrity? What role do regional organizations have in promoting international frameworks and treaties to a regional level, what approach should they take to curb SALW's illegal trade?

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This guide to regional organizations is compiled by the Small Arms Survey and demonstrates how they provide resources and services to Member States to address illicit trade of small arms in different parts of the world. Delegates will gain a clearer understanding of important regional players associated with this topic and better comprehend the ways in which actions may be taken on a regional level.

Holtem. United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research. *Prohibiting Arms Transfers to Non-State Actors and the Arms Trade Treaty*. 2012. Retrieved 13 September 2022 from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/265643292_Prohibiting_Arms_Transfers_to_Non-State_Actors_and_the_Arms_Trade_Treaty

This article commissioned by the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research focuses on uncontrolled arms flows and non-state actors, exploring international approaches to tackle the issue, including the ATT. The author also mentions previous multilateral efforts to curb illegal arm trafficking while addressing the ATT and future challenges. Delegates can use this source to contextualize the nexus between illegal arms trafficking and non-state actors while also learning about past endeavors to tackle this issue, which will be crucial to propose nuanced and effective policies.

United Nations, General Assembly. *Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (A/CONF.192/15)*. 2001. Retrieved 13 September 2022 from: [https://undocs.org/en/A/CONF.192/15\(SUPP\)](https://undocs.org/en/A/CONF.192/15(SUPP))

This document provides delegates with a great overview of what the General Assembly has done so far and what the recommendations have been made. The Programme of Action (PoA) was adopted in 2001 and has been a defining document in the actions of the committee and the UN on the topic of illicit trade among non-state actors. Delegates will gain a comprehensive understanding of small arms regulation and be able to better understand how they can create policies to further prevent the illicit trade of SALW.

United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Arms Trade*. n.d. Retrieved 13 September 2022 from: <https://www.un.org/disarmament/convarms/att>

The ideal starting point for delegates, this resource has all the previous policies and documents on the topic at hand. It also highlights UN actors that have contributed and developed policies to stop the supply and trade of illicit weapons. Delegates would find

²⁰⁴ Tavares. Routledge. *Regional Security: The Capacity of International Organizations*. 2010.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

this useful as well to understand the full extent of the existing Arms Trade Treaty and why it still has room for improvement.

United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Small arms: Tracing*. n.d. Retrieved 13 September 2022 from: <https://www.un.org/disarmament/convarms/small-arms-tracing/>

UNODA's website provides extensive information and data on small arms tracing. It highlights the importance of developing universal protocols, the obstacles faced, and the issue of ammunition. It also describes and links to previous reports, resolutions, and regional initiatives concerning the tracing of SALW. Delegates can use this source to understand the previous work completed by the international community with respect to tracing of SALW and as a starting point for considering what their own Member State's policy recommendations could be.

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