



Security Council Open Debate on Small Arms: Addressing the threat posed by diversion, illicit trafficking and misuse of small arms and light weapons and their ammunition to peace and security, 15 December 2023

Malta Statement delivered by Her Excellency Ambassador Vanessa Frazier
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President

At the outset, I thank Ecuador for convening this important open debate. I also thank USG Nakamitsu, Ms Aptel, and Ms Mutota for their insightful briefings.

This discussion comes at a time of heightened geopolitical tensions, an escalation of armed conflicts, and widespread violence. At this pivotal moment, we must not forget that small arms and light weapons are the second most prevalent cause for civilian casualties in conflict-related situations. As the data shows, the illicit trade and misuse of these weapons is a clear and direct threat to international peace and security.

We are encouraged by the Council's active consideration of this item. This was demonstrated by the inclusion of language on the negative impacts of these weapons in multiple resolutions, including on Haiti and Libya. Weapons and ammunition management were also integrated into the work of peace operations. In this regard, we welcome the mandate given to UNAMA to support regional and international efforts to tackle the illicit trade of small arms and light weapons from and into the country.



Council-mandated arms embargoes are a crucial tool to address the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. The Council recognised this when it adopted resolution 2616 to address their violations. While we welcome these efforts, we are also concerned that circumventions of arms embargoes continue to be documented in several countries.

We call on all member states to cooperate with panels of experts and to ensure that adequate legislation and measures are in place to trace these weapons. We also urge the Security Council to include sexual violence as a stand-alone designation criterion in all targeted sanctions regimes.

The Secretary-General's report highlighted that misuses of small arms and light weapons contribute to violations of international humanitarian law, as well as violations and abuses of international human rights law, including by terrorist groups. Terrorist groups can have close links to transnational organised criminal groups. The illicit trade of small arms and light weapons often serves as enabler of such mutually reinforcing relationships.

This multifaceted issue cannot be solved by weapons embargoes alone. As emphasised by the Secretary-General in the 'New Agenda for Peace', we need holistic and whole-of-society approaches. We echo his call for the consideration of this issue within broader development efforts.

President



Arms control and disarmament are at the heart of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda. We welcome the call for a report on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 2242 and 2212. This would help outline measures and identify best practices to minimise the negative impact of arms transfers and illicit trafficking on conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence. We must also ensure the full, equal, meaningful, and safe participation of women and the integration of gender equality concerns in the field of small arms and light weapons control.

Conventional arms, including small arms and light weapons, also play a clear role in facilitating grave violations against children. These include their killing and maiming, and attacks on schools and hospitals. Such interlinkages must be considered and addressed throughout the Council's work.

In closing, President, I reiterate that Malta remains fully committed to all efforts aimed at addressing this collective challenge, including through the Programme of Work. We reaffirm our full support for the Arms Trade Treaty and will continue our work through the European Union's small arms and light weapons strategy, including its assistance programs.

The Council has acknowledged that these weapons are a major driver of conflict and a threat to international peace and security. It is now time to take decisive action to make sure that all embargoes and legislation are respected.

I thank you.