



**Seventh 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
New York, 26 – 30 July 2021**

**Statement of the UN Coordinating Action on Small Arms
Wednesday, 28 July 2021**

Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Last year, the Secretary-General’s Executive Committee adopted the decision on “small arms, light weapons and their control”, in which CASA – the UN inter-agency coordination mechanism – is identified as having a critical role to play as the common platform for United Nations efforts on small arms and light weapons, a key component of his prevention agenda.

Twenty-four UN entities work together through the Coordinating Action on Small Arms, or ‘CASA’ mechanism¹ to ensure that United Nations policies and practices on assisting States to control small arms, light weapons, ammunition and the arms trade are coherent and of high quality. Implementing the EC decision is a top priority of CASA. The present statement provides an update on our implementation efforts.

UN system-wide responses to the increasing harm associated with the misuse, illicit transfer and circulation of arms and ammunition requires consistency across the board, from arms regulation, human rights, counter-terrorism, peacekeeping, peacebuilding and humanitarian aid, to aviation safety, economic development, refugees, organized crime and crime prevention, gender equality, women’s rights and children’s rights.

There is a growing need to create strong national programmes and to ensure national ownership as a guiding principle on issues related to small arms and light weapons. National ownership encompasses the “inclusive and consultative process, methodology and outcome that are predicated on the perspectives, priorities and vision of stakeholders within the society”. In this regard, the Secretary-General has initiated a review aimed at revitalizing and innovating CASA as the main platform for coordinating holistic UN action on assisting States in controlling small arms and light weapons. This will consolidate a wide spectrum of expertise of its 24 UN partners; strengthen our coordinated efforts; and spearhead the initiative to prioritize national ownership in dealing with multi-faceted small arms control issues. Increased emphasis on national ownership will help identify specific needs and gaps at the national level from stakeholders’ perspectives; support country-level programming and subsequent implementation of development-centered and gender-responsive small arms programmes; and facilitate the active engagement of UN Country Teams with States’ national authorities on the challenges raised by small arms and light weapons.

¹CTED, DESA, DGC, DPO, DPPA, ICAO, OCHA, ODA, OHCHR, OSAPG, OSRSG/CAAC, OSRSG/VAC, OSAA, UNDP, UNEP, UN-HABITAT, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNIDIR, UNMAS, UNODC, UNOCT, UN Women, WHO

In the service of providing most effective, efficient and coherent UN assistance, two concrete initiatives have been launched. Firstly, CASA partners are working together to revisit how best to support country-level programming by leveraging closer cooperation within the UN and with regional actors and civil society. Relatedly, CASA partners are also developing a UN system-wide guidance on country-level approaches to integrate small arms control into the Common Country Analysis and sustainable development frameworks, in line with the guiding principle of national ownership. This guidance on country-level approaches will constitute a module of “Modular Small-arms-control Implementation Compendium”, or MOSAIC, which has been developed under the auspices of CASA, as a set of voluntary, authoritative and comprehensive small arms control reference guidance.²

An important foundation of CASA’s efforts is the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and particularly Target 16.4 has offered a sound policy and programmatic basis for translating into concrete action the relationship between disarmament, arms control, criminal justice responses and development. Two CASA partners serve as the custodian agencies³ of the indicator under target 16.4 to significantly reduce illicit arms flows. They have been leading the collection and analysis of data from Member States provided through the Illicit Arms Flows Questionnaire in support of the Firearms Protocol,⁴ and the national reports under the PoA/ITI framework, and regularly submit coordinated data on weapons seized, traced and destroyed to the UN statistics office to be included in the SDG report.

As part of the Secretary-General’s disarmament agenda of 2018, and in response to requests from many States, the Saving Lives Entity (SALIENT) trust fund was launched within the Peacebuilding Fund and has begun the allocation of grants to ensure sustained, development-oriented programming, catalyzing more comprehensive approaches to small arms and armed violence reduction responding to national needs in priority countries. This year, SALIENT has thus far embarked on two scoping missions in Cameroon and Jamaica. And plans are under way for similar work in other countries most affected by the small arms issue.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Effective provision of international cooperation and assistance has been discussed at this meeting, as a pillar of the UN Programme of Action. CASA has continued to support partner agencies’ assistance to Member States at varying degrees and levels, including through capacity-building programmes research and action-oriented SALW-control projects.

Assistance provided by CASA partners in the area of weapons and ammunition management continues to expand in line with the needs and requests of Member States. Provision of support is happening on a number of fronts.

Firstly, CASA partners are supporting Member States in the conduct of comprehensive national weapons and ammunition management (WAM) baseline assessments in order for States

² <https://www.un.org/disarmament/convarms/mosaic/>

³ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and Office for Disarmament Affairs (ODA).

⁴ Based on this initiative, in 2020, UNODC published the first Global Study on Firearms Trafficking (<https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/firearms-protocol/firearms-study.html>) to enhance the understanding of illicit arms flows as a prerequisite for evidence-based policies.

to be able to identify concrete means of strengthening the governance, oversight, and control of arms and ammunition throughout their life-cycle. Such baseline assessments can help to pinpoint specific assistance needs, as well as support the development of national targets and indicators for PoA and ITI implementation.⁵

Secondly, CASA has continued to advocate for the strengthening of the UN SaferGuard Programme, which oversees development and implementation of the International Ammunition Technical Guidelines, or IATG. The IATG constitute the most comprehensive and authoritative set of guidelines for the safety and security of ammunition stockpiles. The UN SaferGuard Programme also operates a quick-response mechanism that provides technical support to interested States in accordance with the IATG. A quick-response mechanism mission was recently deployed in the aftermath of a series of explosions at a military camp in Equatorial Guinea in March 2021.

Thirdly, CASA partners have enhanced collaboration to better integrate conventional arms control into UN peace operations, including through development of a handbook on “Effective weapons and ammunition management in a changing Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration context.” This practitioners’ guide supports the work of United Nations DDR staff by providing practical guidance for both traditional disarmament operations as well as innovative transitional weapons and ammunition management and community violence reduction programming. To ensure the operationalization of the expert resources and guidance, a series of online and in-person training courses have taken place. Furthermore, a Technical Assistance Mechanism has been established to provide DDR-related WAM assistance at the strategic, policy and technical level.

In the context of counter-terrorism, relevant CASA partners jointly implemented a project on the nexus among SALW, terrorism and crime, to build national capacity with focus on Central Asia,⁶ and will soon make available Guidelines for Member States to facilitate the implementation of Security Council resolution 2370 (2017) and the relevant international standards and good practices on preventing terrorists from acquiring weapons.⁷

More effective arms control measures can trigger criminal creativity to sustain illicit arms flows. Therefore, relevant CASA partners⁸ have continued to support national authorities in identifying, investigating, prosecuting and adjudicating cases of arms diversion, to bring the perpetrators to justice and dismantle trafficking networks.

CASA partners’ efforts at the regional level is highlighted in the Western Balkans. Along with national ownership, regional cooperation and coordination has been instrumental in scaling up the fight to arms trafficking, misuse, and their illicit possession. The Western Balkans

⁵ The public release of the “Reference Methodology for National Weapons and Ammunition Management Baseline Assessments” on Monday July,26 is was intended to enable Member States, United Nations entities, regional organizations, and specialized non-governmental organizations to work together to undertake WAM baseline assessments.

⁶ UNOCT, UNODC, ODA

⁷ Co-implemented by United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre (UNCCT) of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) and the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), in close cooperation and collaboration with member entities of the United Nations Global Counter-terrorism Coordination Compact Working Group on Border Management and Law Enforcement (BMLE WG).

⁸ UNODC, UNDP, ODA, UNOCT

Roadmap⁹ with its seven goals and 14 Key Performance Indicators has been an example of an integrated response supported by a comprehensive coordination and monitoring mechanism, already used as a best practise for a similar approach in the European Union¹¹, the Caribbean¹² and West Africa.

CASA partners continue to be cognizant of the need to focus on and address the gendered impacts of small arms, including through disaggregated data and gender analysis, and the need to mainstreaming gender considerations into arms control measures. CASA partners contributed to the capacity building of regional organizations, national authorities and civil society organizations, including the capacity to collect sex-disaggregated data. CASA partners also continue to promote the equal, full and effective participation of women in all policymaking, planning and implementation efforts under the Programme of Action. CASA partners have also carried out research to understand gendered patterns of engagement in weapons and ammunition management, highlighting women's experiences in technical arms control and identifying good practices to improve gender diversity in the implementation of arms control commitments.¹³

The UN Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation¹⁴ or 'UNSCAR', provides financial assistance to CASA partners in support of implementation of the Programme of Action and other relevant global instruments. It was established in response to States' call for an improved funding mechanism for better matching of assistance needs with resources, as provided in the RevCon2 outcome.¹⁵ Since 2013, UNSCAR has funded 94 projects in all regions of the world for a total of 12.5 million dollars for 144 Member States. In partnership with CASA members¹⁶ and civil society organizations, UNSCAR supported a variety of focused, quick-impact small arms control measures. UNSCAR plans to open its annual call for proposals in the fall.

The UN system, coordinated by CASA, stands ready to provide coherent advice and support to Member States, with a view to ensuring the full and effective implementation of the Programme of Action and its International Tracing Instrument, as well as of the Firearms Protocol and the Arms Trade Treaty as one complementary and mutually reinforcing international framework on arms control. Such support will be, despite the challenge posed by the pandemic, better formulated in line with the development priorities at the global, regional and national levels and with the guiding principle of national ownership.

⁹ <https://www.seesac.org/f/docs/publications-salw-control-roadmap/Regional-Roadmap-for-a-sustainable-solution-to-the.pdf>

¹⁰ The Western Balkans SALW Control Roadmap Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MPTF) (<http://mptf.undp.org/factsheet/fund/SLW00>) established as a key funding mechanism for the implementation of the Roadmap, has accumulated US\$ 17 million since its establishment in 2019, with 10 projects currently under implementation.

¹¹ https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/default/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-security/20200724_com-2020-608-commission-communication_en.pdf

¹² <http://unlirec.screativa.com/en/publicaciones/caribbean-firearms-roadmap/>

¹³ Salama, Hana and Bjertén-Günther, Emma. 2021. *Women Managing Weapons: Perspectives for Increasing Women's Meaningful Participation in Weapons and Ammunition Management*. Geneva, Switzerland: United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research. <https://doi.org/10.37559/GEN/2021/02>

¹⁴ www.un.org/disarmament/unsscar

¹⁵ A/CONF.192/2012/RC/4

¹⁶ CASA partners include UNDP Ghana, UNDP Kosovo, UNIDIR, UNODC, UNWOMEN and 3 regional disarmament centres.