MAG inputs to the 2022 report of the Secretary-General on Resolution 76/232 “The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects”

On enhancing international cooperation and assistance modalities and procedures in the framework of the Programme of Action

31 March 2022

MAG recommendations

1. **International cooperation and assistance can and should be used as a conflict prevention tool.** MAG works with multiple states across all regions to support implementation of the Programme of Action (PoA) and other arms control mechanisms. We have observed increased interest in supporting initiatives in conflict-affected contexts, while states and regions that are perceived as relatively stable are neglected. By mitigating the destabilising effects of illicit weapons circulation, proactive implementation of the PoA can contribute to broader armed violence reduction and conflict prevention. MAG encourages more balanced delivery of cooperation and assistance between countries and regions.

2. **There is a need for increased coordination of international cooperation and assistance.** In relation to point 1.) above, increased donor interest to support activities in conflict-affected states means that more stakeholders are involved and coordination at a country level is essential to avoid duplication. Coordination is also required to ensure an even spread of cooperation and assistance geographically and avoid concentration of funding in certain countries and region, at the cost of preventative activities in others.

3. **International cooperation and assistance should prioritise sustainable initiatives.** With needs outweighing resources, donors should prioritise activities that are embedded in sustainable capacity development initiatives that provide positive outcomes in the long run and avoid the need to repeatedly fund the same activities in a given context.

4. **Donors should complement international cooperation and assistance with political engagement.** Such political engagement should aim to encourage states to better implement and report on the PoA, to encourage national ownership and to promote sustainable approaches.

5. **PoA discussions could create more space for addressing practical aspects of implementation, which also offers opportunities for keeping momentum between formal meetings.** A lot of time in the BMS is understandably dedicated to the negotiation of the outcome document. The separate agenda item on international cooperation and assistance is welcome. It may also be beneficial to consider other options, drawing on concepts such as the follow-up mechanism suggested by The Netherlands in a working paper at the Third Review Conference, establishing a voluntary group of states to examine a range of issues. Another option would be to explore the intersessional period for more voluntary, thematic discussions among interested states, including on international cooperation and assistance and matching needs with resources.

6. We welcome the adoption of voluntary national and regional targets at BMS7 in order to strengthen national ownership and measurability. Such targets can also help focus international cooperation and assistance. Many states have national action plans on small arms and light weapons (SALW) and we are increasingly seeing regional roadmaps being developed. **UNPoA voluntary targets should draw on existing plans, roadmaps and assessments instead of**
duplicating work. International cooperation and assistance should respond to the needs identified in such action plans.

7. **Discussions on international cooperation and assistance should include sharing of lessons learned regarding gender mainstreaming.** We welcome increased inclusion of gender consideration in all aspects of the implementation of the UNPOA. This can only be achieved if international cooperation and assistance deliberately supports gender sensitive and transformative projects. Sharing lessons learned regarding cooperation and assistance targeted at gender mainstreaming in the PoA should be part of the ongoing discussion. MAG’s experience on the ground also highlights the importance of youth, particularly young men, as both victims and perpetrators of armed violence.

**About MAG**

MAG is an international humanitarian organisation working in conflict prevention, response and recovery. With a history anchored in humanitarian mine action which started over thirty years ago, MAG has expanded the scope of its work significantly over the last two decades. MAG currently implements armed violence reduction activities across Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, Middle East and South and South-East Asia, building on weapons and ammunition management as an entry point and confidence building measure.