



Security Council

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Letter dated 22 October 2021 from the Permanent Representative of Mexico to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to inform you that, during its presidency of the Security Council in November 2021, Mexico will convene an open debate on the theme “The impact of the diversion and trafficking of arms on peace and security”, to be held on Monday, 22 November, at 10 a.m.

In order to guide the discussions on this topic, Mexico has prepared a concept note (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Juan Ramón **de la Fuente**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Mexico



Annex to the letter dated 22 October 2021 from the Permanent Representative of Mexico to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: English]

Concept note for the Security Council open debate on the theme “The impact of the diversion and trafficking of arms on peace and security”, to be held on 22 November 2021, at 10 a.m.

Objective

1. The Security Council has recognized, through a series of thematic and country-specific resolutions, the consequences that illicit transfers, the diversion of licit trade, destabilizing accumulation and the use by unauthorized recipients of small arms and light weapons have for international peace and security. Nevertheless, unrestricted flows of weapons continue to fuel conflicts in conflict and post-conflict situations. Therefore the Council needs to continue advancing solutions under a common global approach to this equally global scourge.
2. This matter must be advanced under a lens of prevention and geared towards the promotion of more peaceful societies through the reduction of the illicit flows of conventional weapons, in line with indicator 16.4 of the Sustainable Development Goals. In light of its approved mandates, the Security Council must also address the intersection of illicit financial flows derived from the illegal trade in small arms and light weapons that, in turn, serves as a source of finance for non-State actors.
3. There is a shared global responsibility to seek solutions, based on Security Council mandates and previous decisions, to address the destabilizing accumulation, illicit transfer and misuse of small arms and light weapons in fuelling and exacerbating armed conflicts.

Background

4. The direct impact of small arms in conflict has been on the thematic agenda of the Security Council since 1999 and has been previously addressed in a partial manner within the framework of its country-specific issues and some thematic areas.
5. The multidimensional and cross-cutting nature of small arms and their relevance have been acknowledged in a series of contexts, from arms embargoes, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes, children in armed conflicts, counter-terrorism, the protection of civilians in armed conflicts and the fuelling of transnational organized crime.
6. The impact of the wide availability, misuse and destabilizing accumulation of small arms is vast and well-documented. A great number of deaths as a direct consequence of conflict can be attributed to the use of small arms; today, almost half of all violent deaths in the world are due to firearms. Furthermore, the number of firearms-related killings in post-conflict societies often exceeds the number of deaths in conflict zones. These are staggering figures and paint a grim reality.
7. Small arms are force multipliers and contribute to the initiation and duration of conflicts and can facilitate all forms of conflict, including civil wars, interstate conflicts and the commission of violent crimes. These are determining factors of the degree of mortality and protraction of these forms of conflict.
8. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime has even noted that most trafficked arms are found in States other than those where they were produced, some

even having almost no connection to the countries where they were produced, and that they have mostly been diverted from legal trade channels.¹

9. Landmark international, regional and United Nations-led initiatives have been undertaken in recognition of the need for common action, the latest of which include the African Union “Silencing the Guns by 2030” and the Secretary-General’s “Securing Our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament” initiatives.

10. In the outcome document of the 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, “States noted that preventing, combating and eradicating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects, including preventing and combating the diversion and the illicit international transfer of small arms and light weapons to unauthorized recipients was a global challenge, requiring concerted efforts at the national, regional and global levels” (A/CONF.192/BMS/2021/1).

11. In his report on small arms and light weapons (S/2021/839), the Secretary-General highlights the following:

While conflict continued unabated amidst the [COVID-19] pandemic, some actors also used the worldwide shift in focus to step up their covert, irregular or unchecked supply of weapons and ammunition in theatres of conflict, leading to massive increases in new supplies that are at risk of diversion in conflict and post-conflict situations. Illegal markets, including the market for illicit small arms and light weapons, continued to operate and adapt to the circumstances.

Approach

12. The Security Council is in a privileged position to take action to curb the illicit trade, diversion and trafficking in small arms and light weapons and ammunition that fuel and sustain conflicts in all regions of the world.

13. The Security Council can fulfil its preventive role by dedicating efforts to consider early on any risk of diversion and potential illicit networks that would result in the acquisition of small arms and light weapons by unauthorized recipients. This will, in turn, reduce potential new conflicts, or their resurgence, instead of managing conflicts once they have broken out.

14. Members of the Security Council can continue to mainstream issues related to weapons and ammunition into the Council’s considerations of peace operations mandates and sanctions regimes, among other areas.

15. Further acknowledging the specific impacts of small arms and light weapons on women and children, the Security Council can improve the integration of the recommendations emanating from the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security and the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict related to this issue.

16. Finally, the latest report of the Secretary-General (S/2021/839) contains a number of pertinent conclusions and recommendations that can be further advanced by the Security Council.

¹ *Global Study on Firearms Trafficking 2020* (United Nations publication, 2020).

Format

17. The open debate will be chaired by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mexico. The Director of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research and a representative from civil society have been invited to brief the Council.

Guiding questions

18. The following questions will serve to guide the debate:

(a) How can the Security Council effectively tackle the diversion of weapons to conflict zones without undermining licit trade?

(b) What actions can be undertaken by the Security Council beyond weapons and ammunition management that truly address the risk of diversion to unauthorized recipients during the complete life cycle of weapons and ammunition?

(c) In preventing illicit flows of weapons, how can Security Council arms embargoes better complement relevant international and regional treaties relating to small arms and light weapons, and vice versa?

(d) How can the Security Council make better use of its formal and informal subsidiary bodies to design adequate responses to the evolving challenges posed by the unrestricted flows of small arms and light weapons?

(e) How can regular reporting by the Secretary-General to the Security Council better integrate dimensions of diversion and trafficking in small arms and light weapons?
