



# Security Council

Seventy-fifth year

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New York

*Provisional*

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*President:* Mr. Pecsteen de Buytswerve . . . . . (Belgium)

*Members:*

China . . . . .	Mr. Wu Haitao
Dominican Republic . . . . .	Mr. Singer Weisinger
Estonia . . . . .	Mr. Jürgenson
France . . . . .	Mrs. Gueguen
Germany . . . . .	Mr. Heusgen
Indonesia . . . . .	Mr. Syihab
Niger . . . . .	Mr. Abarry
Russian Federation . . . . .	Mr. Polyanskiy
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines . . . . .	Ms. King
South Africa . . . . .	Mr. Van Shalkwyk
Tunisia . . . . .	Mr. Baati
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Mr. Clay
United States of America . . . . .	Mr. Barkin
Viet Nam . . . . .	Mr. Dang

## Agenda

Small arms

Report of the Secretary-General on small arms and light weapons (S/2019/1011)

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*The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.*

### **Expression of thanks to the retiring President**

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I should like to take this opportunity to pay tribute, on behalf of the Council, to His Excellency Mr. Dang Dinh Quy, Permanent Representative of Viet Nam, for his service as President of the Security Council for the month of January. I am sure I speak for all members of the Council in expressing deep appreciation to Ambassador Dang and his team for the great diplomatic skill with which they conducted the Council's business last month.

### **Adoption of the agenda**

*The agenda was adopted.*

### **Small arms**

#### **Report of the Secretary-General on small arms and light weapons (S/2019/1011)**

**The President** (*spoke in French*): In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs; and Mr. Damien Spleeters, Deputy Director of Operations, Conflict Armament Research.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2019/1011, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on small arms and light weapons.

I now give the floor to Mrs. Nakamitsu.

**Mrs. Nakamitsu**: At the outset, allow me to express my gratitude to Belgium for convening this very important meeting and for giving me the opportunity to brief the Security Council. I applaud the Council's commitment to addressing the issue of small arms and light weapons on a regular basis.

This is only the second time that I am briefing the Council in person on this agenda item (see S/PV.8140), but the biennial consideration of small arms began 12 years ago with the 2007 presidential statement S/PRST/2007/24. In that statement, the Security Council articulated the deeply negative consequences of excessive and poorly controlled small arms and light weapons (see S/PV.5709).

The Council noted with grave concern that the destabilizing accumulation and illicit manufacture, trade and circulation of small arms and light weapons increase the intensity and duration of armed conflicts, undermine the sustainability of peace agreements and frustrate prevention efforts. In sum, the Council recognized that the illicit flow and excessive accumulation of such weapons compromise the effectiveness of the Security Council in discharging its primary responsibility to maintain international peace and security.

In view of the gravity of the challenges, the Security Council requested the Secretary-General to begin reporting on small arms on a biennial basis beginning in 2008. Since that request, there have been six reports of the Secretary-General on this topic.

It is important to acknowledge that there are common themes that run through all the reports of the Secretary-General on this critical issue, including the most recent one issued in December 2019 (S/2019/1011). Such commonalities are indicative of the depth and scope of the problem of small arms and light weapons.

In this regard, I wish to address two themes of high relevance to the work of the Security Council: the role of illicit small arms, light weapons and their ammunition in conflict and pervasive crime; and the deeply cross-cutting and wide-ranging impact of illicit small arms and light weapons flows. These two fundamental themes have been consistently raised throughout the biennial reports of the Secretary-General, as well as in the context of the two thematic resolutions adopted on small arms and light weapons, namely, resolutions 2117 (2013) and 2220 (2015). Let me highlight a few points, drawing upon the content of the latest report of the Secretary-General from last year (S/2019/1011).

First, the destabilizing accumulation, illicit transfer and misuse of small arms and light weapons continue to initiate, sustain and exacerbate armed conflict and pervasive crime. In situations of conflict and post-conflict, the majority of acts of violence are carried out with small arms and light weapons. On a global scale, small arms were used in nearly 50 per cent of all violent deaths between 2010 and 2015. This translates into more than 200,000 deaths each year. With an estimated 1 billion small arms in circulation worldwide, the use of these weapons in lethal violence, whether in conflict or non-conflict settings, is prevalent across regions and subregions from the Americas to Africa to southern

Europe. No State is immune from the challenges posed by illicit arms flows:

Small arms and light weapons are the weapons of choice in intra-State conflicts and for terrorism, organized crime and gang warfare. Current and past crises that have been addressed by the Council, from the Democratic Republic of the Congo to Haiti and Mali, have all been aggravated by the widespread availability and uncontrolled flow of small arms and light weapons and their ammunition. In 2018 alone, the Security Council raised the challenges posed by small arms, light weapons and ammunition in the framework of United Nations peacekeeping operations and special political missions in Afghanistan, Abyei, the Central African Republic, Haiti, Libya and Somalia. Currently, the mandates of nine peacekeeping operations and special political missions address conventional weapons-related issues, including, inter alia, small arms and light weapons control and weapons and ammunition management.

In this context, I wish to highlight the mandate of the newly-established United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti, that provides for advisory capacity on gang violence, community violence reduction and weapons and ammunition management. This is a welcome development indicative of the importance of proper weapons and ammunition management in reducing violence.

Diversion remains a major source of weapons and their ammunition for gangs, criminal organizations and terrorist groups. Illicit small arms, light weapons and their ammunition originate from varied sources, from poorly-managed State-owned stockpiles, battlefield capture or loss following State collapse. There are also ample diversion opportunities along the supply-chain, from manufacture through end-use.

We are witnessing the serious impact of such illicit arms flows, including in relation to violent extremism, throughout the Sahel and parts of the Central African subregion. A continued influx of weapons, including by sea, into Libya remains a serious concern. South Sudan is similarly suffering from steady flows of weapons and ammunition, a reality that is affecting the safety of United Nations personnel and hindering the ability of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya to carry out its mandate. In Haiti, where there are over 270,000 illicit firearms in the possession of civilians, violent crime has reached unacceptable heights.

I turn now to the second central theme. The negative impact of illicit small arms and light weapons flows is cross-cutting and multidimensional. Illicit small arms and light weapons have a multitude of implications for security, human rights, sustainable development, gender equality and conflict prevention. It is in this spirit that the Secretary-General has consistently encouraged the Security Council to consider small arms and light weapons, including their ammunition, in the context of both country-specific and thematic agenda items.

As echoed by the Security Council in its 2007 presidential statement, the excessive accumulation of, illicit trade in and misuse of small arms and light weapons have wide-ranging consequences touching upon all core pillars of the United Nations work: peace and security, humanitarian actions, human rights, the rule of law and development. Small arms continue to facilitate a vast spectrum of acts that constitute human rights violations, including the killing and maiming of children, rape and other forms of sexual and gender-based violence. Armed violence perpetrated with small arms and light weapons erodes legal and peaceful dispute resolution mechanisms. And contemporary armed conflict is also a primary driver of displacement and food insecurity. In Yemen, as of the end of 2019, an estimated 4 million people were internally displaced amidst devastating conflict, facilitated by steady arms flows.

The Secretary-General has recognized the relationship between high levels of armed violence and challenges to achieving sustainable development. With the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the international community recognized that sustainable development cannot be realized without peace and security. In tandem, by virtue of the adoption of target 16.4, which includes a significant reduction of illicit arms flows, States acknowledged the role of effective small-arms control in reducing armed violence and thereby enabling communities to better pursue sustainable development.

In his Agenda for Disarmament, the Secretary-General prioritizes disarmament that saves lives, including a call for deeper and more coherent efforts on small arms and light weapons at the national level. To that end, the Office for Disarmament Affairs is partnering with the United Nations Development Programme to support country-level, small-arms control and armed violence reduction initiatives through a holistic approach, including a gender lens. To

facilitate this work, the Secretary-General established the Saving Lives Entity, the so-called SALIENT trust facility, in his Peacebuilding Fund. The SALIENT fund is intended to serve as an effective tool for the realization of sustainable peace as a basis for longer-term development. Pilot projects will be initiated this calendar year, in collaboration with respective United Nations country teams.

I would be remiss not to also underscore the highly gendered nature of small arms and light weapons. The Security Council has paid increasing attention to the gendered aspects of small arms and light weapons control, including the full and effective participation of women in all policy and practice, as well as the differentiated impacts of illicit arms on women, men, girls and boys.

The deeply societal characteristics of the small arms and light weapons issue necessitate a comprehensive mainstreaming of gender perspectives in legislative, policy and programmatic frameworks. To date, gender has not been sufficiently integrated into policies regulating small arms and light weapons, nor has there been sufficient research and data collection. Without the benefit of evidence-based information on the gendered implications of small arms and light weapons, small-arms control interventions will remain gender-blind, thereby hampering policy development, reinforcing gender inequalities and impeding the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable Development.

To support enhanced effectiveness of small arms control measures, the Office for Disarmament Affairs is implementing a multi-year project, with the financial support of the European Union, to promote small-arms approaches that include systematic gender analysis, the integration of gender perspectives and the promotion of women's empowerment. The development of a training manual and the conduct of various national and regional capacity-building activities are among the concrete outputs to be delivered over the coming three years.

Before concluding, I wish to make a few additional remarks on the report of the Secretary-General (S/2019/1011). The Secretary-General provides an overview of significant trends and developments over the past two years. He laments the continued rise in global military expenditure and the role that small arms and light weapons continue to play in hindering peace, security and sustainable development.

At the same time, the Secretary-General recognizes the considerable efforts undertaken at the global, regional, subregional and national levels in support of small arms and light weapons control. Such efforts include work in the framework of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and its International Tracing Instrument, in particular the outcome of the 2018 third Review Conference of the Programme of Action, the Firearms Protocol to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Arms Trade Treaty.

Equally important, efforts at the regional and subregional levels have continued to reinforce and enhance coordination in the area of small arms and light weapons control. Regional efforts are especially critical with regard to combating cross-border trafficking. In particular, efforts in Africa, a region severely affected by the small arms scourge, have continued in the framework of the Silencing the Guns by 2020 initiative. The Security Council, through the adoption of resolution 2457 (2019), has outlined means to ensure robust support for that important initiative.

The United Nations is undertaking concrete action to support the African Union in achieving its goal of a conflict-free continent, including by supporting the upcoming September 2020 Africa Amnesty Month for the surrender, collection and destruction of illegally acquired weapons. The Office for Disarmament Affairs and the Department of Peace Operations are also continuing to support more effective weapons and ammunition management, including in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration contexts.

Over the past two years, the United Nations has supported national authorities in weapons and ammunition management in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Mali. The proper management of arms and ammunition is fundamental to the safety and security of communities, especially those impacted by conflict.

I would like to conclude my briefing by reiterating the need for mainstreaming small arms and light weapons considerations across the work of the Security Council. A key denominator in all issues of the Security Council, both geographic and thematic, is that the wide and easy availability of small arms, light weapons and associated ammunition are key determinants of crisis dynamics. Given the wide-ranging impact of those

weapons, section II of the Secretary-General's report contains an assessment of several of the Council's thematic areas of work that are particularly pertinent to small arms and light weapons considerations.

The report assesses the relevance of small arms and light weapons considerations to several key thematic items on the Council's agenda, namely the protection of civilians in armed conflict, peace operations, arms embargoes, women and peace and security, children and armed conflict, counter-terrorism and transnational organized crime. The assessment offers concrete and conceptual linkages, including practical recommendations on how to integrate small arms and light weapons considerations in those areas of work.

In conclusion, allow me to reiterate that the compartmentalized treatment of the small arms and light weapons issue is not sufficient to address the seriousness and magnitude of the challenges arising from those weapons. If threats to international peace and security are to be adequately addressed, small arms and light weapons must be considered regularly and across issue areas.

It is a matter of urgency for the United Nations, the Security Council and the broader international community to focus on the root causes of illicit arms flows with a view to preventing, mitigating and resolving conflict.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I thank Ms. Nakamitsu for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Spleeters.

**Mr. Spleeters**: I thank the Belgian representation to the United Nations for giving me the opportunity to address the Security Council today. I congratulate Belgium for the work already accomplished during its mandate.

In his very important and timely report to the Security Council (S/2019/1011), the Secretary-General highlights the importance of using evidence-based approaches to control the illicit proliferation and circulation of, and trafficking in, small arms and light weapons. The Secretary-General's report underlines a truth that is widely recognized in the research community, namely, that a comprehensive understanding of the problem is a critical first step towards taking effective action and achieving measurable outcomes.

Since the early 1990s, the international community has sought to control the conventional arms trade so as to minimize weapons diversion — the loss, theft, or intentional retransfer of legally acquired arms to unauthorized users, such as insurgent, terrorist and criminal groups, whose activities sustain armed conflicts and violence across the globe. The lack of detailed reporting has consistently hampered those efforts, with most reports failing to record unique weapon-identifying information, thereby providing little indication of weapon provenance and, consequently, offering few avenues for further and effective investigation.

Ungrounded reporting has resulted in arms-control policymaking that fails to understand the dynamics it seeks to mitigate. That is a situation that is analogous to attempting to control the spread of an infectious disease without understanding its origins and transmission vectors.

On the battlefield is precisely where my organization, Conflict Armament Research (CAR), gathers the evidence that matters. CAR's approach recognizes that the most effective way to determine the origins of diverted weapons, ammunition and related materiel is to observe and document them at first hand on the battlefield or as close as possible to the point of capture, seizure or recovery.

CAR places the physical weapon at the nucleus of its investigations. Deploying alongside national defence and security forces, CAR field investigation teams recover unique, traceable information from weapons, ammunition and related materiel, such as serial, lot and batch numbers, which identify an item individually in production, sales or transfer records.

With the cooperation of weapon exporters and their Governments, CAR then traces each item's transfer history through sales and supply records from the place of manufacture to the point of diversion. By aggregating data on thousands of traced items recovered on the battlefield, CAR provides a dynamic global picture of weapon-supply chains and indicates where weaknesses in those chains permit diversion to unauthorized users.

Those weaknesses usually include one or several of the following six elements. First, Governments fail to secure their weapons against theft and looting. Secondly, national defence and security forces are defeated, resulting in wholesale weapon losses. Thirdly, export control documents are falsified. Fourthly,

States do not exercise proper due diligence when they grant export licenses. Fifthly, imported weapons are subject to unauthorized retransfers. Finally and sixthly, State-led initiatives deliberately supply weapons to rebel, insurgent and terrorist forces.

Weapon diversion has real consequences. In 2016, our field investigation teams working in Iraq documented and traced a weapon that had been diverted to the Islamic State group less than two months after its manufacture in Europe. Although its investigations begin with the examination of a physical weapon, CAR pursues multiple strands of inquiry, following the paper trail through arms transfer records to reveal bank accounts, front companies, illicit brokers, conflict financing and trafficking support networks.

In that work, CAR supports several crucial United Nations mechanisms, such as the Arms Trade Treaty, the Firearms Protocol, the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and the 2020 Group of Governmental Experts on problems arising from the accumulation of conventional ammunition stockpiles in surplus.

CAR provides information in support of several United Nations sanctions monitoring groups and panels of experts — such as those concerned with the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and Al Qaida, Libya, Somalia, South Sudan and Yemen. CAR also provides direct support to United Nations operations in the areas of diversion monitoring and the technical aspects of weapon and ammunition management.

With resolutions 2370 (2017) and 2482 (2019), the Security Council insists that efforts must be undertaken by all Member States to address the sources of supply of weapons to terrorists, including through better information-sharing, coordination and investigations into the illicit origin of weapons. However, national law enforcement is often one of the first victims of armed conflicts, which results in the obstruction of traditional law enforcement investigations and weapon-tracing mechanisms. Through its field documentation and tracing operations, CAR offers a service to its national partners that would otherwise not be available to them.

The Secretary-General indicates in his report that Member States' success rate in tracing weapons seized between 2016 and 2017 was typically less than 13 per cent. Between 2014 and 2019, CAR's Tracing Unit issued

more than 700 trace requests for weapons. If successful, tracing can be defined as confirming a waypoint in a weapon's chain of custody. CAR's success rate is currently about 40 per cent. That demonstrates the important complementary role that non-governmental organizations can play in the process.

The Secretary-General's report also underlines that exports of conventional arms, including small arms, light weapons and associated ammunition, must be contingent upon a robust risk assessment that incorporates the strictest considerations of international law. Again, such a robust risk assessment must be backed by concrete evidence provided by investigations into weapon diversion. With that objective in mind, CAR developed the iTrace project in 2013, with the continuous funding and support of the European Union (EU). That project is the foundation of CAR's work and methodology and the repository of all its data.

Through the iTrace project, our field investigators have documented more than 6,000 individual weapons and 590,000 units of ammunition. Recognizing the cross-border nature of illicit arms trafficking, CAR has worked in more than 30 conflict-affected States from West Africa to the Middle East, thereby building an extensive and holistic database that can support effective sanctions and embargo monitoring or inform required adjustments to sanctions regimes.

Using CAR's iTrace project findings, the European Union has made evidence-based policy decisions, including risk assessment prior to the export of weapons. CAR's work in East Africa and the tracing of weapons and ammunition documented there, for example, has resulted in one European country publicly stating that it refused to issue a licence to another country in the region identified by CAR as having previously diverted material.

To support embargo and sanctions enforcement, CAR has provided law enforcement agencies in several countries with detailed information about weapons traders in their jurisdictions who have violated several EU arms embargoes. CAR also works in partnership with countries on the front line of embargo enforcement, for example by directly supporting the Federal Government of Somalia to identify supply routes of weapons being trafficked into Somalia, in violation of the United Nations embargo, and reaching Al-Shabaab.

The Secretary-General, in his concluding observations, states that it is a matter of urgency for the

United Nations, the Security Council and the broader international community to focus on the root causes of the diversion of small arms and light weapons. It is my hope therefore that my briefing has demonstrated the importance of an evidence-based approach and the unique field expertise built by CAR in that respect. That approach is an effective way to tackle the illicit proliferation of weapons contributing to the massive loss of civilian life and international instability.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Spleeters for his briefing.

I shall now give the floor to the members of the Security Council who wish to make statements.

**Mr. Singer Weisinger** (Dominican Republic) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I would like to thank the Kingdom of Belgium for assuming the presidency for the month of February and, again, we thank Viet Nam for its excellent presidency in January.

We extend our thanks to the presidency for convening this timely briefing on small arms and light weapons. We also thank Under-Secretary-General Nakamitsu and Mr. Damien Spleeters for their briefings.

I would like to begin by underscoring the great importance that we attach to the issue of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and ammunition. The widespread availability, excessive accumulation and misuse of such weapons constitutes a serious threat to international peace and security, foment armed violence and undermine respect for human rights. Likewise, it contributes to transnational organized crime and terrorism, and poses an obstacle to the achievement of sustainable development.

In that regard, we are steadfast in our commitment to the international instruments that call for combating that scourge, including the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, the International Tracing Instrument and the Arms Trade Treaty. We hope that they will become universal and be fully implemented, and that there will be harmonization among them.

Despite the strides that have been made, States continue to face difficulties in achieving effective arms control. That is why closer cooperation and international and regional assistance must be stepped up in the areas of financing, capacity-building, transfer of technology and equipment, as well as in the exchange

of experiences and best practices, taking into account the needs of the host State. Similarly, it is imperative to reinforce policies on the management and security of weapon and ammunition stockpiles and the destruction of surpluses, as well as on the tracing and marking processes, border control and the development of a robust legal framework.

The wide availability of arms directly impacts the forms and intensity of gender-based violence, including sexual violence, within and beyond conflicts, and puts women and girls at a much greater risk of violence and insecurity. Increased efforts to mainstream gender perspectives into international arms control frameworks are therefore imperative. We must continue to promote gender equality and the meaningful participation of women in decision-making and planning activities to combat the illicit arms trade.

Equally important is respect for arms embargoes. Their violation by States themselves, with the continued supply of arms to the various parties to a given conflict, including armed groups, leads to the perpetuation of such embargoes and, in many cases, to the illicit diversion of arms to terrorist groups. Libya is a perfect example of that. Moreover and given the new means of manufacture, design and technology of weapons, we support engaging in discussions in that regard, including on standards for marking and tracing, as well as transfers via the dark web and the conversion and reactivation of weapons, by adopting a comprehensive approach and analysing the impact of such developments on the fight against illicit trafficking.

On another note, we commend the approach to arms control integrated into the mandates of various peace missions and the support that the United Nations provides to the national authorities of Mali, the Central African Republic, Somalia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the areas of arms and ammunition management.

We emphasize that, owing to the key role played by small arms and light weapons in armed conflicts and the fact that they are the main cause of death in conflicts and in acts of violence in general, we believe that this issue must be discussed more often in the Security Council. Furthermore, we believe that we can make greater efforts to achieve concrete results, such as updating resolution 2220 (2015). Since its adoption, new methodologies for the manufacture, design and transfer of arms have emerged, as have other needs

resulting from the specific circumstances facing States. Resolution 2220 (2015) therefore should be updated to face and meet the new realities and challenges of today's international environment.

**Mr. Syihab** (Indonesia): At the outset, my delegation would like to congratulate Belgium on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for the month of February. We would also like to thank Viet Nam for having successfully presided over the Council during the month of January. I would also like to thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this very important meeting. Let me also thank the briefers for their very comprehensive briefings.

The illegal trade in small arms and light weapons has worsened the situation in regions affected by armed conflict, violence, organized crime and terrorism, as highlighted in resolution 2220 (2015). Small arms trafficking also hinders international efforts to resolve conflicts and promote peace, and efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals in the aftermath of conflicts. Indonesia attaches great importance to ensuring that those efforts can be effectively implemented through a holistic approach. Indonesia would therefore like to emphasize the following points.

First, States bear the primary responsibility. States are themselves responsible for regulating their legitimate arms trade, as well as curbing and eliminating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. Therefore, the implementation of a politically binding multilateral framework is of crucial importance. Various existing multilateral guidelines, including the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons (ITI) have provided the framework for States to address multifaceted challenge in countering the illicit trade in small arms within their territories. Furthermore, resolution 2117 (2013) underlines the importance of international assistance in building State capacity to implement the Programme of Action and the ITI. Moving forward, we need to ensure the adequacy, effectiveness and sustainability of such international assistance.

Secondly, combatting the illegal trade in small arms requires cooperation among States, including regional organizations. Indonesia would like to

emphasize the important role of regional organizations. This is in line with resolution 2457 (2019), which calls for further strengthening the partnership between the United Nations and regional organizations. The African Union Silencing the Guns by 2020 initiative, similar initiatives in the Caribbean and the regional road map for the Western Balkans are noteworthy examples.

In our region, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) continues to support the implementation of the Programme of Action to address arms smuggling and related issues, through, inter alia, the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime, the ASEAN Regional Forum and the ASEAN Working Group on Arms Smuggling, established in 2018, as a platform for collaboration on capacity-building, training and information-sharing. Indonesia therefore supports the strengthening and widening of cooperation between the United Nations and regional and interregional organizations to combat this crime globally.

Thirdly, let me re-emphasize the need for a comprehensive and inclusive approach to combating this crime. Such a multifaceted challenge requires a multi-stakeholder response. Governments should substantially increase the participation and the ownership of different stakeholders in implementing policies to combat the illegal trade in small arms and light weapons. Indonesia would also like to emphasize that this effort should be undertaken as part of broader peacebuilding and nation-building.

In conclusion, respect for sovereignty, the rule of law, national ownership and international cooperation are key to countering this challenge. States need to work together to build a global culture of rights and responsibilities, as well as respect for the rule of law, in addressing the threat posed by illicit small arms and light weapons.

**Mr. Polyanskiy** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu, for introducing the report of the Secretary General on small arms and light weapons (SALW) (S/2019/1011). We are also grateful to Mr. Damien Spleeters for his valuable briefing on the work of the non-governmental organization Conflict Armament Research.

Russia has consistently advocated enhancing the role played by the United Nations in coordinating the international community's efforts to resolve the



problem of the illegal trade in SALW. The illegal traffic in such weapons remains the main source of financing for terrorist and extremist groups and a major factor in the spread and exacerbation of local conflicts and armed violence.

Despite progress in some areas, significant improvement has yet to be made in countering the illicit trade in SALW throughout the world. The pace of 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 remains inadequate. There has also been a loss of traction in the implementation of the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons.

We believe that the implementation of the Programme of Action would be more effectively facilitated by introducing a universal ban on the transfer of all types of SALW to entities that are not authorized by the Governments of recipient States; ensuring that States impose strict regulations and exercise direct control over brokering activities related to arms exports within the territory under their jurisdiction and limiting, to the extent possible, the number of brokers themselves; imposing a ban on the re-export of imported SALW without the consent of the initial exporting State; and banning the manufacture of SALW with expired licenses or without licenses from the countries owning the production technology.

Finally, greater national control over all stages of the life cycle of weapons, from their manufacture to their use, would also help to significantly lower the risk of the uncontrolled proliferation of SALW. Such measures could be based on the relevant best practices of States, including those of Russia, which has well-developed legislation in that area. We stand ready to advise States interested in studying Russian best practices in SALW control.

As part of its annual reporting, our country always presents its report on the implementation of the Programme of Action. It is a stand-alone, structured document that provides a holistic view of the effective implementation of the Programme of Action at the national level.

However, we must point out that the report of the Secretary-General also contains a number of controversial points. In particular, we draw attention to the idea it raises of expanding the remit of the United

Nations Register of Conventional Arms to include an eighth category of SALWs. It should be taken into consideration that the existing seven categories already include all major conventional weapons whose delivery, in certain circumstances, can be destabilizing. Furthermore, when taking decisions on an eighth category, we should bear in mind the negative precedent of the use of the Register for unintended purposes, namely, to define the scope of arms embargoes, as was the case with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Iran. In practice, that would significantly curtail the ability of States under sanctions not only to exercise the right of self-defence enshrined in Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, but also to simply conduct law enforcement activities.

In addition, we find the references to the international Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) questionable. The Treaty, which is far from universal, still does not fully allow for the implementation of its own provisions. For example, the ATT does not explicitly prohibit the unlicensed production of weapons or their transfer to non-State actors or include provisions governing the re-export of weapons. There are serious questions about the application of the Treaty in practice. Some parties to it continue to directly or indirectly supply arms to areas of internal armed conflict.

In conclusion, I note that the Russian Federation shares the concerns of the international community with regard to the uncontrolled proliferation of SALWs and advocates the further consolidation of international efforts to counter them under the auspices of the United Nations. We agree that those issues require a comprehensive approach. We intend to continue to work closely on these issues with all stakeholders during this year's biennial review conference on the Programme of Action.

**Mr. Wu Haitao** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China thanks Viet Nam for its work as President of the Council in January and congratulates Belgium on assuming the presidency for this month. It also thanks Under-Secretary-General Nakamitsu and Mr. Spleeters for their briefings.

The international security situation is complex and grave at present, with regional conflicts and hotspot issues popping up one after another. As stated in the Secretary-General's report (S/2019/1011), the illicit trade of small arms and light weapons (SALW) aggravates regional and armed conflicts, abets violent

extremist forces and organized crime and obstructs peace, security and sustainable development. The Security Council and the Secretary-General himself have made positive efforts and achieved effective results on SALWs. The Council adopted resolutions 2117 (2013) and 2220 (2015) and has taken appropriate account of SALWs when considering regional hotspots. The Secretary-General has made SALWs a priority concern in his disarmament agenda and set up a new trust fund to support the relevant efforts of all countries.

In order to further prevent and counter the illicit trade of SALWs, China would like to make the following proposals.

First, there should be a focus on political settlement. Settling disputes through political and diplomatic means and maintaining international and regional peace and stability are key to eliminating the illicit trade of SALWs. We should intensify peacekeeping and post-conflict rebuilding efforts to assist the countries concerned in achieving economic prosperity and sustainable development.

Secondly, State responsibility should be strengthened. Governments bear the primary responsibility for combating the illicit trade of SALWs and should establish and improve laws and regulations and strengthen their enforcement. In addition, they should strictly implement Council resolutions on arms embargoes, refrain from transferring weapons to non-State actors and prevent the trafficking of legitimate weapons through illicit channels.

Thirdly, United Nations leadership should be enhanced. States should earnestly carry out their international obligations deriving from, for instance, the outcome of the third Review Conference of the Parties to the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons. They should also support the Secretary-General and United Nations agencies in playing their positive role and push forward the multilateral process of countering the illicit trade of SALWs so as to share in the security and governance dividends.

Fourthly, international cooperation should be increased. All countries should actively engage in multilateral, bilateral and regional cooperation on a voluntary and equal basis. In the light of the needs

of developing countries, the international community should increase, inter alia, its assistance for institution- and capacity-building, funding contributions, technology transfers and personnel training and should effectively enhance developing countries' capacity in stockpile management, marking and tracing, collection and destruction of illicit firearms.

The Chinese Government consistently opposes the illicit trade of small arms and light weapons and is prudent and responsible in exporting them. It actively participates in international and regional cooperation and endeavours to combat their illicit trade. State Councillor and Minister for Foreign Affairs Wang Yi announced at the General Assembly last year (see A/74/PV.9) that China had started its domestic legal procedures to accede to the Arms Trade Treaty, thereby illustrating the determination and sincerity of China to adhere to multilateralism and actively participate in the global governance of the arms trade and in building a community of shared future for humankind. China would like to work together with the international community to jointly combat the illicit trade of small arms and light weapons, appropriately address the humanitarian issues arising from their illicit transfer, excessive accumulation and abusive use and make our due contribution to the maintenance of international and regional peace and stability.

**Mr. Jürgenson (Estonia):** I thank Under-Secretary-General Nakamitsu and Mr. Spleeters for their informative and insightful contributions. Their briefings reaffirm that the Council should maintain its focus on this matter and that there is a need for concerted action.

As the Secretary-General's latest report (S/2019/1011) regrettably confirms, the illicit trade, diversion and unauthorized use of small arms and light weapons continue to impede peace, security and sustainable development. Small arms are relatively cheap. They are easy to construct, maintain, operate and conceal. For those reasons, small arms are often the weapons of first resort in civil wars, terrorist attacks, organized crime and gang warfare. The widespread availability of such weapons continues to cause loss of life, violate human rights, fuel conflict and hamper humanitarian assistance and peacekeeping efforts.

Just last month, UNICEF published a report on the situation in central Sahel. The report shows that the recent surge in armed violence and attacks in the region

against communities, schools, health centres and other public institutions have had devastating impacts on civilians, especially children. Thousands of children have been forced to flee their homes and cannot go to school or receive basic social services. It is not possible to sustain or build peace and increase development in the Sahel, as well as in other parts of the world, if we do not address the misuse of and illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and their ammunition.

It is clear that the threats posed by the illicit transfer, excessive accumulation and misuse of small arms and light weapons touch upon many country-specific and thematic topics on the Council's agenda. For that reason, Estonia supports the further mainstreaming of the issue in all relevant discussions in the Council's work. There are already some good practices in place. We note an example in the report of the Secretary-General, with reference to resolution 2454 (2019), in which he links the assessment of weapons and ammunition management to the review of arms embargo measures. We also support the inclusion, in the mandates of United Nations peace support missions, of assistance for monitoring arms embargoes and supporting Government actions on small arms management.

Estonia welcomes the focus on gender in the Secretary-General's report. It is important to increase awareness that armed violence affects women and men differently. As the Secretary-General's report notes, sexual and gender-based violence is often abetted by armed intimidation. We welcome the report's recommendation to consider including the small arms issue in the women and peace and security agenda. It is equally important to improve the role of women as participants and decision makers in addressing the proliferation and misuse of small arms in disarmament and arms control programmes and policies.

Adherence to, and ratification of, key international instruments in this area is of crucial importance. We call on all States to implement the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and the International Tracing Instrument. Estonia also continues to champion the universalization and implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty. We believe that, when the Treaty is effectively and widely implemented, it has great potential to contribute to more responsible and more transparent international arms transfers.

Finally, regional efforts and initiatives are essential and should be encouraged. In 2018, the European Union adopted its new strategy against illicit firearms, small arms and light weapons and their ammunition. A number of new capacity-building projects have launched since then in support of small arms control in the Western Balkans, the Middle East, Latin America and the Caribbean, among other regions, in cooperation with United Nations agencies and regional organizations.

Estonia is committed to preventing and curbing the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. We welcome today's discussion and urge all countries to join in strengthening the implementation of existing commitments and obligations in the field.

**Mr. Van Shalkwyk (South Africa):** Let me start by thanking Under Secretary-General Nakamitsu for her briefing. We would like to emphasize that the issue of small arms and light weapons remains an important one for the African continent, as it exacerbates conflict situations and enables threats to international peace and security. We also thank Mr. Spleeters for his comprehensive briefing.

South Africa supports the approach of the Security Council in including consideration of the issue of small arms and light weapons within the various United Nations peacekeeping mandates, as well as with regard to the imposition of arms embargoes.

South Africa also welcomes and emphasizes the importance of supporting countries in implementing the provisions of resolution 2220 (2015). To that end, we commend the efforts of the Secretary-General in prioritizing disarmament that saves lives and his commitment to establish a trust facility in the form of the Saving Lives Entity, which is being established in conjunction with the Peacebuilding Support Office, the United Nations Development Programme and the Office for Disarmament Affairs.

South Africa believes that support for peacebuilding efforts, especially those related to security sector reform and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, are vital to curtailing the flow of illicit arms. Effectively combating the illicit flow of arms is also critical to efforts to create a better enabling environment for the protection of civilians by United Nations peacekeepers.

South Africa supports the need to address the linkages between curtailing the illicit flow of small arms and light weapons and the women and peace

and security agenda, particularly with regard to the development of national action plans, security sector reform and the broader peacebuilding and policy spheres. In that regard, we support the Secretary-General's call for the Security Council to consider how women can be actively engaged in efforts to prevent the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

The African Union Peace and Security Council has also been seized of the issue of the illicit proliferation, circulation and trafficking in small arms and light weapons on the African continent at both regional and subregional levels, as Mrs. Nakamitsu ably informed us. The Peace and Security Council has reaffirmed that the elimination of the threat posed by the illicit transfer, circulation and misuse of small arms and light weapons is a critical component of realizing the goals of the Silencing the Guns in Africa by 2020 initiative and Agenda 2063 of the African Union (AU).

The Peace and Security Council requires AU member States to enact appropriate regulations and administrative procedures to ensure effective control over the production, export, import, transit or retransfer of small arms and light weapons, as well as related brokering activities, in order to prevent the illegal manufacture of, and illicit trafficking in, small arms and light weapons or their diversion to unauthorized actors. Those steps are required to curb the illicit flow of arms on the African continent.

South Africa's National Conventional Arms Control Act is the cornerstone of the country's conventional arms control legislation and contains specific guiding principles and criteria to be considered when arms transfer applications are assessed. Those provisions include the principle of adherence to international law, norms and practices and the international obligations and commitments of the Republic of South Africa, including Security Council arms embargoes.

South Africa will therefore continue to take the necessary steps to combat the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

**Mr. Clay** (United Kingdom): Millions of people around the world are impacted directly or indirectly by the diversion of arms and illicit arms transfers. While small arms and light weapons have a legitimate role in ensuring defence and security, their diversion and misuse cost hundreds of thousands of lives every year, undermine security and sustainable development, and fuel conflict, crime and terrorism.

The United Nations has an important role to play in supporting efforts to address illicit flows of small arms. There is no one-size-fits-all solution and, to achieve real progress in that area, it is crucial that we bring on board all stakeholders, including the full and active participation of women in the disarmament community.

As the High Representative stated this morning, the United Nations is carrying out considerable work to tackle the illicit spread of small arms and light weapons. I would like to take this opportunity to commend the work of Office for Disarmament Affairs and join the High Representative in underlining the importance of the role of peacekeeping missions and special political missions in this area, in line with their mandates.

In its work, the United Nations must take into account existing guidance. For example, the Modular Small-arms-control Implementation Compendium and the International Ammunition Technical Guidelines provide international best practice in physical security and stockpile management, and should be consulted consistently in United Nations field work.

International cooperation in this area is vital. The Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects is a key forum for international action and policy coordination. We look forward to productive discussions at the seventh Biennial Meeting of States on the Programme of Action, to be held later this year.

The United Kingdom is also proud to participate this year in the Group of Governmental Experts on problems arising from the accumulation of conventional ammunition stockpiles in surplus. We hope that the Group will achieve tangible results in addressing a long-neglected problem in conventional arms control.

There is also important work to be done elsewhere. We reiterate our full support for the Arms Trade Treaty, a key multilateral tool for addressing the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons through its object and purpose — to create a well-regulated legal trade in conventional arms. The universalization of the Treaty, coupled with the full implementation of its robust provisions, remains a priority for the United Kingdom. We continue to encourage all States that have not yet done so to make ratification and accession a national priority.

We welcome the language of the Secretary-General's latest report (S/2019/1011) on arms embargoes,

which are a crucial tool for tackling the illicit spread of small arms and light weapons to many of the conflicts on the Council's agenda. I would like to take this opportunity to underline the importance of respect for, and the implementation of, the arms embargoes that the Council has agreed. We welcome the emphasis in the Secretary-General's report on the need for flexibility and agree that arms embargoes should respond to changing contexts. However, the United Kingdom is concerned that arms embargoes are often lifted for political reasons without sufficient consideration being given to the efficient management of small arms and light weapons and associated ammunition and the harm caused by their mismanagement.

The challenge of illicit small arms and light weapons is a global one that requires international cooperation on action, but we must also recognize that different regions face different challenges. The United Kingdom has been a consistent supporter of regional approaches in this area. The Western Balkans road map, which is currently being implemented, is an excellent plan of action for that region and has highlighted transferable lessons to be taken forward.

The United Kingdom would also like to take this opportunity to commend the African Union's goal of silencing the guns by 2020. It is vital that we seek to translate that initiative into initiatives that will make a direct difference to the lives of ordinary people across Africa. Public buy-in and ownership of security sector reforms and policy will be crucial to that objective. In addition, success in silencing the guns will require strong and effective partnerships to maximize results, effective preventive diplomacy and mediation, strengthening the role of women and young people in conflict resolution and prevention and genuine and lasting security sector reform, on which the United Kingdom, in partnership with the African Union, has a renewed focus.

The United Kingdom remains committed to supporting African efforts in that regard through cooperation on initiatives for disarmament, surplus destruction, the regulation of arms transfers, weapons marking, stockpile management and cooperation on law enforcement across the continents. That is a key strand of work for the British Army's Peace Support Team based in Nairobi. Through it, we provide technical advice and training on this issue to the African Union Commission, the African Union Mission in Somalia and its troop-contributing countries.

The United Kingdom continues to prioritize support to work on small arms and has provided technical and financial support bilaterally and through regional and multilateral organizations. Through that support, we help countries to strengthen arms control frameworks through national legislation, to implement better stockpile management procedures and to tackle the grave challenges recognized in the Secretary-General's report, the drivers of terrorism, crime, poverty and exclusion, which fuel the demand for illicit weapons.

**Mrs. Gueguen** (France) (*spoke in French*): I too thank the briefers for their interventions, and I welcome the report of the Secretary-General (S/2019/1011), which contains very comprehensive recommendations. The proliferation of and illicit trade in small arms and light weapons pose a serious threat to international peace and security. These weapons cause by far the most casualties, averaging more than half a million victims a year worldwide.

The concerns and challenges caused by such weapons are widely shared by all regions of the world. They cut across all issues, as the Secretary-General points out by listing the opportunities for the Council to address them. Their trafficking continues to foment conflicts and exacerbate armed violence, while fuelling organized crime and terrorism. Those weapons and their ammunition are easily accessible and able to be hidden and moved through cross-border trafficking. France had the painful experience of that during the attacks in 2015.

In that context, our common mobilization is necessary now more than ever. The need for the universalization and implementation at the national level of jointly agreed measures to combat the proliferation of and illicit trade in small arms and light weapons is self-evident. I am thinking particularly of international instruments such as the Arms Trade Treaty, the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, as well as, above all, the United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms and the International Tracing Instrument.

Furthermore, the commitments made by States at the third United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action, which France had the honour of chairing in June

2018, should make it possible to specifically strengthen the prevention of and fight against the illicit trafficking in such weapons. We also have high expectations for the discussions on preventing and combating the diversion of small arms and light weapons, which should be the main focus of the next biennial meeting, to be held next June.

It is also more necessary than ever for Member States to respect arms embargoes imposed by the Council and work together to strengthen their effectiveness, in particular in Libya, South Sudan and the Central African Republic.

Our operational activities must also be strengthened and based on two pillars: on the one hand, prevention by improving national control capacities, marking and securing weapons stockpiles and, on the other, combating trafficking, particularly by strengthening cooperation among States.

With regard to prevention, France conducts many training and capacity-building activities for States, including Benin, Mali and the Niger. My country also contributes to combating the supply of weapons to armed terrorist groups in the Sahelo-Saharan region. That is also the purpose of the benchmarks that the Security Council established at our initiative for the arms embargo on the Central African Republic so as to strengthen the capacities of the Central African authorities in the areas of security sector reform and arms and ammunition management and prevent the risk of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

However, our efforts would be incomplete if they were not implemented, coordinated and aligned at the regional level. The Secretary-General's report cites many examples in support of that. I would like to come back to the specific case of the Western Balkans, where France, together with Germany, has been particularly involved. The efforts made against the diversion of such weapons have been significant and provide a frame of reference on which we can draw.

We are also fully committed to supporting initiatives in other regions, particularly West Africa and the Sahel region. I would also like to commend the other regional initiatives cited in the report, including the African Union's Silencing the Guns by 2020 initiative. We must continue to build on those experiences and promote the mutual learning of lessons in order to better align our action at the international and regional levels.

In conclusion, the many links with other issues at the forefront of the Council's activities call for strengthening the effectiveness of our work and avoiding the silo approach. We must continue to strive to take into account the existing synergies in all our areas of work. France especially welcomes the Secretary-General's call to develop a comprehensive approach, particularly within the United Nations system with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and in cooperation with INTERPOL and the World Customs Organization, around the interlinkage of combating illicit trafficking, organized crime and terrorism.

Also in that context, I wish to note the usefulness of the tools already developed by the Council, including the aides-memoires and the dedicated Saving Lives Entity fund. They are vital resources that we must continue to use for the benefit of our action. For its part, France, will remain fully committed to the fight against illicit trafficking and the uncontrolled proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

**Mr. Heusgen (Germany)** (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. I also congratulate your predecessor, the Ambassador of Viet Nam. I commend your choice of the important topic that we are discussing today. It is a topic that is also very close to our hearts. Lastly, I commend Mrs. Nakamitsu and the Secretary-General for his report (S/2019/1011), which Germany strongly supports, including its conclusions.

As Mrs. Nakamitsu said, first and foremost, it is an issue that is specific to almost each conflict. I therefore think that it is important that, in our deliberations when we discuss mandates, we include the specific aspect of small arms and light weapons in the mandates. Secondly, it is also a thematic issue. Mrs. Nakamitsu and others explained very well that small arms and light weapons have consequences for sustainable development, terrorism and organized crime but also, in particular, women and children. I would like to echo all those who stressed that issue and requested the increased participation of women in discussions on this topic and, more generally, that women be included in all negotiations and talks concerning conflicts.

With regard to the dimension, the French representative has just said that every year there are some 500,000 victims. By our estimation, there is a victim every 15 minutes, which perhaps adds to the

number. It is unacceptable. With regard to what should be done now at the operational level, I agree with the remarks made by the Ambassador of the Dominican Republic, who just said that it is now time to update resolution 2220 (2015), which we adopted in 2015.

Secondly, several speakers have already said it, and I agree, that we must support regional activities. I would also like to congratulate Africa on its very important Silencing the Guns by 2020 initiative, as well as on its regional activities. The representative of France just mentioned the Franco-German initiative on small arms and light weapons in the Western Balkans, which is essential for that region and can be replicated in others.

Thirdly, we must request that States meet their obligations on the issue. The representative of China, Mr. Spleeters, in his briefing, and others have said that States are under obligation to secure their weapons. An export control system that grants export licenses is needed. Tracing mechanisms are also required. In particular, embargoes and sanctions that have been agreed upon in the Chamber must be implemented and respected. I would again like to raise the issue of Libya. It is unacceptable that, in spite of the sanctions agreed upon by the Council, some States openly violate the embargo — and we see the effects of such actions in Libya every day.

Lastly, I would like to briefly turn to the discussion we had in the Council a few days ago on the sanctions imposed on the Central African Republic (see S/PV.8712). Germany was very reticent about the lifting of the sanctions, not because we do not support the Government but because we are not yet convinced that the measures taken to secure weapons are sufficient. Some around the table have mentioned examples of weapon theft and looting, which has led to devastating repercussions in countries of the Sahel, other countries in Africa, in Afghanistan and elsewhere. It is for that reason that we are so reticent about lifting that embargo. The right conditions must be in place.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I would like to commend the representative of Germany for his perfect French.

**Mr. Baati** (Tunisia) (*spoke in French*): I would like to begin by sincerely congratulating you, Mr. President, on your country's assumption of the presidency of the Security Council. I look forward to working with you and your team to ensure peace and security throughout

the world. Through you, Mr. President, we sincerely congratulate our colleague from Viet Nam on a very successful presidency. I would also like to commend you for your selection of today's agenda item, as the subject is crucial for our region, Africa.

I would like to thank Mrs. Nakamitsu for her very informative and useful briefing. I also thank Mr. Spleeters for being here and for his briefing.

(*spoke in Arabic*)

The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons remains one of the elements that contribute to the exacerbation of internal armed conflict in many countries and regions, particularly on the African continent and the Arab world. It results in the targeting and killing of a large number of innocent civilians, especially women and children, and in the deepening of conflict-related humanitarian tragedies. The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons also undermines regional security and stability, while supporting terrorism and transnational organized crime as a key source of funding.

In that regard, we reiterate our deep concerns about the continued illicit flow of weapons to Libya and the Sahel, which hampers the prospects for a political solution and emboldens terrorist organizations to take advantage of the ongoing unrest in order to implement their schemes and further expand in the region. Therefore, Tunisia reiterates that weapons control and addressing the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons are sine qua non for reducing tensions, facilitating peace and security and restoring stability in hotspot areas, as well as creating an environment conducive to boosting socioeconomic development in the countries concerned. In addition, they would also help ensure the success of the African Union initiative, Silencing the Guns in Africa by 2020, which is greatly supported by the United Nations. It is a priority for the Heads of State and Government of the African Union, in particular at the start of this year and decade. We thank all delegations that expressed their support for that initiative today.

As Tunisia calls for concerted efforts to achieve the goals set, we support the recommendations of the Secretary-General to continue working to address multi-dimensional challenges resulting from the large-scale circulation of small arms and light weapons and ammunition.

Tunisia is a peaceful country that — I underscore — does not produce or export weapons of any kind. Based on our firm commitment to international peace and security, we are committed to actively participating in all efforts aimed at finding effective solutions to the problem of small arms and light weapons, in addition to redressing the devastating consequences of the wide-scale availability of such weapons, in particular instability, violence, insecurity and the undermining of development in many countries. In that regard, Tunisia supported the adoption of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, along with the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons.

Tunisia is also party to the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. As evidence of that orientation in the foreign policy of Tunisia and its principled positions, we endorsed the adoption of the Arms Trade Treaty at the General Assembly. We took that step because we believe that the Treaty could significantly contribute to finding solutions to the illicit trade in conventional weapons, including small arms and light weapons, without prejudice to the sovereignty, security and legitimate needs of States in terms of their national defence and without impacting the regular and legal trade in arms among States.

In conclusion, I reiterate the position of my country's delegation that combating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons hinges primarily on the national responsibilities of States and necessarily requires cooperation among States and with international organizations. It is also necessary to increase assistance provided to developing countries in order to promote their capacity to manage stockpiles, the marking and tracing of arms, as well as collecting and destroying illicit weapons. We again commend the President's initiative to convene this meeting.

**Mr. Abarry** (Niger) (*spoke in French*): Please accept my congratulations, Mr. President, on your country's assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of February. I would also like to convey our appreciation to the representative of Viet Nam for an extremely successful presidency last month. I also thank the High Representative for

Disarmament Affairs for presenting the biennial report of the Secretary-General (S/2019/1011), as well as Mr. Spleeters for the excellent briefing he delivered to the Council.

Despite the numerous initiatives constantly being developed by the international community, the impact of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons continues to be a matter of grave concern throughout the world, as they fuel various conflicts, as the Secretary-General and the High Representative so aptly pointed out. The issue is extremely important for the Sahel in general, and for the Niger in particular, given the prevailing security situation.

The Niger duly commends the Secretary-General's *Securing Our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament*, published in May 2018, which seeks to contribute to saving lives through a far-reaching programme that supports national, subregional and regional efforts to control illicit weapons. I would also like to commend all such efforts and initiatives aimed at strengthening control over the illicit flows of small arms and light weapons at the national, subregional and regional levels.

In Africa, those initiatives include the Silencing the Guns by 2020 initiative; the African Union's Agenda 2063; the Economic Community of West African States Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and Other Related Materials; and the Central African Convention for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and All Parts and Components That Can Be Used for Their Manufacture, Repair and Assembly, to name just a few.

Since the establishment of the Niger's National Commission for the Collection and Control of Illicit Arms, on 28 November 1994, the Commission has significantly contributed to the control of illicit weapons, despite the fact that the porous nature of the country's borders does not make it easy. Those efforts are continuing thanks to the support of bilateral and multilateral partners, including the United Nations.

However, despite the considerable progress made over the past two years, as mentioned in the report, much work remains to be done, commensurate with the harmful consequences of the proliferation of small arms, especially in the current context of an increasing number of conflicts and the expansion of international terrorism. In March 2000, Kofi Annan, in one of his many statements on the subject, said that,



“In terms of the carnage they cause, small arms, indeed, could well be described as ‘weapons of mass destruction’” (A/54/2000, para.238).

That observation is unfortunately still valid today.

Furthermore, the report stresses the fact that small arms remain the primary cause of human suffering, particularly among women and children, who are generally the innocent victims of the perpetrators of violence. That reality obliges us to be fully aware of the situation in order to take the necessary actions to avoid the humanitarian crises flowing from the violence caused by the illicit circulation of small arms and the conflicts that they provoke, perpetuate and fuel.

The Niger welcomes the special attention that the Secretary-General is paying to the Central African region, and in particular the Sahel, where the impact of the trafficking in small arms has been magnified by the Libyan crisis. Since the diversion in 2011 of the Libyan arsenal to terrorist groups, the situation in the Sahel has only worsened. Continuing to supply arms to Libya, despite the embargo, is to continue inundate the Sahel with weapons, contributing to the destabilization of the region and encouraging serious violations of human security and human rights. My delegation once again takes the opportunity of this meeting to appeal for strict compliance with the arms embargo on Libya, which is one of the indispensable conditions for the return to peace and stability in both Libya and the Sahel.

The impact of conflicts also compromises the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and imposes exorbitant costs on the States, communities and individuals who suffer from them on a daily basis. Hence the need to take that dimension into consideration in assessing the implementation of the SDGs by the countries affected. The scale of the damage caused by the proliferation and circulation of small arms and light weapons should be a concern to all countries around the world. That is why the Niger calls for greater mobilization of the international community on the issue, with a view to reducing the harmful impacts of the proliferation of small arms on human security in general and development in particular.

From that standpoint, while recalling the need for cross-border cooperation to strengthen measures to control small arms and light weapons, the Niger encourages and supports all subregional, regional and international initiatives on the issue. We particularly welcome the efforts made by the United Nations to

ensure the protection of civilians, especially in conflict zones, including through the management of weapon and ammunition stockpiles and the development of strategies to ensure enhanced protection for civilians and peacekeepers, some of whom, unfortunately, have paid the ultimate price in discharging their duties.

In conclusion, the Niger calls on all Member States, especially manufacturing countries, to shoulder more responsibility and give greater consideration to the involvement of women and children in national strategies and to establish an effective system for the control and management of those types of weapons and their ammunition.

**Mr. Dang** (Viet Nam): I congratulate Belgium on presiding over the Security Council in February. I also thank all members of the Council for their support, cooperation and guidance during our presidency last month. I would furthermore like to thank the two briefers for their insightful remarks today.

Twenty years have passed since the Council first took up the issue of small arms and light weapons (SALW) (see S/PV.4048). Yet, according to the Secretary-General’s report (S/2019/1011), in many places, illicit small arms and light weapons remain the main cause of human suffering, regional conflicts, humanitarian crises, terrorism and transnational crime and pose serious risks to peacekeepers and civilian personnel alike. Despite international efforts over the years, the illicit trade and misuse of small arms and light weapons continue to threaten many regions and countries, such as the Sahel and Libya, among others.

Viet Nam supports international efforts, with the central role of the United Nations, to prevent and combat the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. But such efforts should be made on the basis of international law and the Charter of the United Nations, including full respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States and non-interference in their internal affairs. At the same time, they should not negatively affect Member States’ legitimate right of self-defence.

We welcome the efforts of States and international organizations to implement the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. We also commend the Council’s considerable efforts to continue to constructively and effectively address the issue of the illicit small arms trade in specific situations. We highly appreciate the work of the

United Nations and its specialized agencies, including through the publishing of the relevant aide-mémoires, including the aide-mémoires for the consideration of issues pertaining to the protection of civilians in armed conflict and that on options for reflecting weapons and ammunition management in decisions of the Security Council. As for the way forward, we would like to stress the following.

First, Member States bear the primary responsibility in combating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. States should strictly implement the Programme of Action and the relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolution 2220 (2015). Capacity-building and technical assistance should further be considered and provided, particularly for those countries most in need of dealing with SALW-related issues.

Secondly, the Council should focus on improving the design and implementation of relevant mission mandates in specific situations. That activity could include assistance to the host country and ensuring the effectiveness of arms embargoes, but it should not excessively restrict the legitimate security needs of the Governments concerned. The desirable outcome should always be achieving immediate peace, long-term stability and strong Governments that are capable of combating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. In that process, priority should be given to the protection of civilians, the security of peace operations and personnel, combating terrorism and organized crime and enhancing role of women as agents for peace.

Thirdly, United Nations organs and agencies and international and regional organizations should work together in a cohesive manner to strengthen cooperation and complementarity in achieving their common goal. The importance of sharing good practices cannot be over-emphasized.

In conclusion, we would like to stress Viet Nam's strong commitment to addressing the issue of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. We are ready to cooperate with Member States, the United Nations system and regional organizations to move forward this very important agenda.

**Ms. King** (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines): I thank both of our briefers.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines has a front-row seat to the damage that the illicit trade in small arms

and light weapons can cause. Although the Caribbean does not produce arms itself, the illicit traffic in small arms profoundly affects our region. Resolution 2220 (2015) underscored that small arms and light weapons are the most frequently used weapons in the majority of recent armed conflicts. The illicit flow of small arms fuels conflict, terrorism and crimes around the world, and thereby threatens international peace and security. Let us cite a recent example.

In August 2019, the Government of Chad closed the border that it shares with the Sudan in response to the illegal entry of small arms and light weapons. Those weapons are easier and cheaper to access in the Sudan. Their presence in Chad contributed to the escalating intercommunal violence in the region. Unfortunately, such situations are not isolated events. Around the world, we see that the increased presence of small arms and light weapons is directly related to increased violence. The Secretary-General puts it best in paragraph 9 of his report (S/2019/1011), when he states that the illicit trade in small arms continues to exacerbate ongoing conflicts and contribute to the outbreak of others.

Trafficking in small arms and light weapons cannot be divorced from other forms of trafficking that provoke tensions between rival groups that compete for power and profit. The illegal exploitation of, and trade in, natural resources and wildlife form part of the same political economy as the illicit arms trade. Such complex webs of criminality operate across borders, as they often thrive on the fringes of State authority. The strength of those networks, however, begets their greatest weakness. They can flourish only in the absence of a well-organized governance framework. Regional and subregional organizations and their member States must work collectively to manage their shared borders and regulate the movement of people.

On the African continent, the illicit flow of small arms and light weapons has taken its toll on far too many generations of people. Our delegation welcomes the ongoing initiatives towards silencing the guns in Africa. We recall, however, that key mechanisms like the Nairobi Protocol and the Kinshasa Convention will be successful only if they are accompanied by structural economic developments.

We cannot pursue sustainable development where we do not have peace. Increasingly, armed conflicts in destabilized regions are moving out of battlefields and into villages, towns and cities, where civilians

are deeply affected. That creates humanitarian crises that endanger those who are most vulnerable. Indeed, the gendered implications and violence occasioned by small-arms use cannot be ignored and should not be minimized. We cannot sit idly by as those disturbing trends continue.

As a State party to the Arms Trade Treaty, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines appreciates that Member States have the right to order their internal affairs as they see fit, including in the area of arms control. However, that right is not absolute when domestic policies have negative implications beyond borders. Given the nature of small-arms trafficking, regional cooperation is critical.

As a member of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), we reiterate CARICOM's 2011 declaration on small arms and light weapons. The Caribbean Community has vowed to support the implementation and enforcement of policies and legislation against the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. We encourage the efforts that are being made at the regional level around the world.

Small arms and illicit weapons have been a concern of the international community for years. However, now is the time for concerted action. Across the world, small arms find their way into countries that do not even produce them and wreak havoc on vulnerable communities within them. It is time to enforce greater accountability.

**Mr. Barkin** (United States of America): I congratulate Belgium on its assumption of the presidency. I would also extend congratulations to Viet Nam for a very successful presidency last month. I also thank High Representative Nakamitsu and Mr. Spleeters for their briefings.

In 2001, the General Assembly adopted by consensus the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. In this landmark achievement of the international community, we committed to concrete actions to reduce the illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons. The United States remains fully committed to implementing the Programme of Action, as well as the 2005 International Tracing Instrument. We have worked and continue to work side by side with other countries and international and regional organizations to combat the illicit small arms trade. For example,

our conventional weapons destruction programme has provided more than \$3.6 billion in assistance to more than 100 countries since 1993. The programme includes assistance to countries to destroy their excess weapons and munitions and enhance their stockpile security through the provision of technical expertise and physical security upgrades.

The Secretary-General's report (S/2019/1011) rightly indicates the cross-cutting nature of issues associated with illicit small arms, which span numerous lines of effort, including conflict prevention, crime and human rights. We agree with the conclusion that the international community must focus on the root causes of illicit arms flows, including poor stockpile management of State-owned stockpiles and cross-border trafficking. Additionally, we must remember that, in many of those cross-cutting areas, work is already being done, including by the Secretary-General and the Security Council. We must ensure that there is coordination between those efforts rather than redundancy. That includes items on the Security Council's agenda, such as women, peace and security and the protection of civilians.

The Secretary-General's report gives some cause for optimism regarding that important issue. Notably, in 2018 States explicitly acknowledged for the first time the relationship between the implementation of the Programme of Action and combating gender-based violence. In addition, we commend the report's focus on regional and subregional efforts to enhance coordination in small arms and light weapons control, making particular note of the focus on silencing the guns in Africa by 2020 and on the road map 2024 initiative in the western Balkans region. We would like to see future reports address regional issues more comprehensively, such as the ongoing efforts in the western hemisphere.

The report also rightly indicates that the international community is struggling to fulfil existing commitments on small arms. For example, it notes that the success rate for tracing seized weapons was less than 13 per cent between 2016 and 2017. Full implementation of United Nations sanctions regimes, in particular arms embargoes, would help to improve record-keeping of government stockpiles, which have long been a source of weapons for armed groups operating in fragile States, particularly in the Central African Republic, South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Simply keeping records of

weapons is not enough, however. We called for greater efforts to implement existing commitments at the last briefing on this matter in 2017 (see S/PV.8140) and we reiterate that call today.

Unfortunately, we do have several concerns about the Secretary-General's report, including with regard to civilian ownership of firearms. We urge the Secretary-General to carefully differentiate between lawful ownership of small arms and the illegal use of small arms in non-conflict settings and the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, which fuels conflict and instability. Despite those concerns, the United States welcomes today's discussion and will continue to lead efforts to reduce the threat that illicit small arms and light weapons pose. We will continue to take concrete steps at the national, regional and global levels to combat the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and urge all countries to join us in strengthening implementation of our existing commitments and obligations to combat the illicit transfer, accumulation and misuse of such weapons.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as representative of Belgium.

The uncontrolled circulation of small arms and light weapons (SALWs) clearly poses a serious threat to international peace and security. As we have heard, it is estimated that more than 1 billion such weapons are in circulation worldwide, 85 per cent of which are in civilian hands. The consequences of that situation are as dramatic as they are predictable. Every year, SALWs kill hundreds of thousands of people. They are responsible for 90 per cent of the victims of armed conflicts, mainly civilians and too often women and children. To avoid such tragedies, we must stop the flow of illicit arms. Arms embargoes are an effective instrument to that end, provided that they are fully implemented. The Libyan case is a dramatic counterexample in that regard. A collective surge of effort on the part of the Council is necessary today in order to reaffirm its authority and the unequivocal nature of the embargoes it imposes.

Furthermore, a satisfactory response to the illicit trafficking of SALWs requires us to take into account their entire life cycle, as well as the ammunition they need to function. Belgium has been firmly committed for several years to a more systematic tracing of illicit weapons in conflict and post-conflict zones, which requires sufficient technical and human resources. Indeed, tracing is the cornerstone of an

effective approach that is informed by the reality on the ground. The briefing by Mr. Damien Spleeters clearly demonstrated that. The tracing of SALWs contributes to preventing diversions and improving stockpile security policies. Moreover, it facilitates informed decision-making on export licences, enables the assessment of embargo enforcement and helps to dismantle trafficking networks.

The monitoring of SALWs, as well as direct investigations on the ground, enable United Nations peacekeeping operations to more effectively prevent the resurgence of violence. That said, cooperation between peacekeeping operations and groups of experts responsible for monitoring embargoes should be strengthened, which would enhance their ability to trace the origin of illicit SALWs and limit their availability. That is why Belgium calls for the monitoring and tracing of illicit weapons to be included in the mandates of the relevant peacekeeping operations.

In addition, the role of regional organizations and their member States in the fight against illicit arms trafficking is fundamental, and several tools are at their disposal. In that regard, Belgium welcomes the African Union's Silencing the Guns by 2020 initiative and the establishment of action plans for Africa and its subregions. Those decisions demonstrate the importance of better coordination among the various regional and international arms control mechanisms. As mentioned in the Secretary-General's report (S/2019/1011), particular focus on the Sahel region and central Africa is sorely needed.

In conclusion, I underscore the technological evolution of small arms and light weapons and the challenges that it poses to existing commitments. Thus, there is an urgent need to supplement the 2005 International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons with an annex that takes into account the increase in the number of polymer and modular weapons. If we want to be effective, we must ensure that our tools remain relevant.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers.

*The meeting rose at noon.*