

United Nations Security Council

Advanced Committee

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### Topic 1: Addressing the Proliferation of Small Arms in Former Conflict Zones

#### **Introduction**

The proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALWs) represents a significant international security challenge, especially in regions recovering from conflict. Defined as portable firearms and munitions that can be carried and operated by an individual or small group, SALWs include pistols, rifles, machine guns, grenades, and rocket launchers. Their portability, durability, and ease of concealment contribute to their widespread use in sustaining violence and instability in post-conflict areas (Small Arms Survey, n.d.).

According to the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA), approximately 500 million small arms are in circulation globally, with a considerable proportion concentrated in post-conflict regions where weak governance, porous borders, and extensive weapon stockpiles facilitate illicit trafficking (United Nations, 2020). The humanitarian consequences of uncontrolled SALW proliferation include sustained armed violence, economic stagnation, social disruption, and prolonged psychological trauma for communities already devastated by conflict. Addressing this issue requires comprehensive international intervention and strategic multilateral cooperation.

#### **History**

The proliferation of small arms has played a critical role in prolonging conflicts and exacerbating humanitarian crises. One prominent example is the Balkans in the 1990s, where the dissolution of Yugoslavia led to the uncontrolled spread of an estimated 6-7 million weapons, fueling ethnic conflicts in Bosnia, Croatia, and Kosovo (Berman & Matveeva, 2013). Similarly, in West Africa, the civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone saw an estimated 80% of combatants armed with small arms, with weapons trafficking networks extending across multiple national borders (Db, 2005). In Afghanistan, decades of war have resulted in an abundance of unregulated arms, many of which continue to be used by militant groups, posing significant security threats both domestically and internationally (United Nations Security Council, various years).

These case studies highlight the role of SALWs in transforming localized disputes into prolonged conflicts with severe socio-economic repercussions. The accessibility of small arms enables non-state actors to challenge legitimate governance, undermines post-war reconstruction efforts, and increases the likelihood of conflict relapse.

### **Past United Nations Actions**

The United Nations has taken several measures to combat the illicit proliferation of SALWs. Resolution 56/24V, adopted in 2001, established the Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons (PoA), which serves as an international framework for preventing and combating illicit arms trafficking (United Nations, 2020). Additionally, the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), adopted in 2013 and entered into force in 2014, aimed to regulate international arms trade and prevent the diversion of weapons into conflict zones (United Nations, 2013). However, its effectiveness has been hindered by weak enforcement mechanisms and inconsistent state participation (Bromley & Holtom, 2022).

Other initiatives include the UN Register of Conventional Arms and regional disarmament efforts, such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, which seeks to control arms flows within West Africa (Stohl & Tuttle, 2020). Despite these measures, challenges persist due to the decentralized nature of arms trafficking and geopolitical complexities that hinder international cooperation.

### **Current Situation**

At present, the proliferation of SALWs remains a pressing security concern, particularly in regions emerging from conflict. In countries such as Syria, Libya, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, unregulated arms flows continue to fuel violence and hinder stabilization efforts (Small Arms Survey, n.d.). The growing involvement of transnational criminal organizations and terrorist groups further complicates disarmament efforts, as these entities exploit weak border controls and corruption to acquire and distribute small arms (Bromley & Holtom, 2022).

Technological advancements, such as 3D printing and untraceable “ghost guns” pose new challenges to arms control measures (Stohl & Tuttle, 2020). Additionally, the diversion of legally produced arms to illicit markets remains a significant issue, often facilitated by corrupt officials or weak regulatory oversight. Without stronger international cooperation, improved border security, and enhanced disarmament efforts, small arms proliferation will continue to threaten global peace and stability.

### **Questions to consider:**

1. What measures can be taken to strengthen the enforcement of existing international treaties and agreements on small arms control?

2. How can post-conflict states improve their governance structures to prevent arms trafficking and the resurgence of violence?
3. What role should regional organizations play in curbing the illicit proliferation of small arms?
4. How can technology be leveraged to enhance weapons tracking and disarmament efforts?
5. What strategies can be employed to encourage greater international cooperation in addressing small arms proliferation?

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## Topic 2: Preventing the Spread of Terrorism

### **Introduction**

Terrorism represents a complex and multifaceted threat to international peace and security, characterized by the use of violence and intimidation against civilian populations to achieve political, religious, or ideological objectives (United Nations, n.d.). The United Nations (UN) has yet to adopt a universally accepted definition of terrorism, leading to varied interpretations among member states, which complicates the development of cohesive international strategies to combat terrorism effectively (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC], n.d.).

In an increasingly interconnected world, terrorist organizations have developed sophisticated networks that transcend national boundaries, posing unprecedented challenges to global stability. The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) aims to develop comprehensive, coordinated strategies that prevent terrorist groups from recruiting, financing, and expanding their operational capabilities, thereby safeguarding international peace and protecting vulnerable populations from the devastating impacts of systematic violence (UNSC, 2001). By promoting international cooperation, intelligence sharing, and targeted interventions, the UNSC seeks to disrupt terrorist networks, address the root causes of radicalization, and create sustainable mechanisms for preventing the spread of terrorism across regional and national borders (United Nations, 2021).

### **History**

The history of modern terrorism reveals a complex, interconnected network of violent ideologies that have dramatically transformed global security dynamics since the late 20<sup>th</sup>

century. The September 11, 2001, attacks on the United States marked a pivotal moment, demonstrating how terrorist organizations like Al-Qaeda could execute sophisticated, cross-border operations with devastating consequences, fundamentally altering international perceptions of transnational terrorism (National Commission on Terrorist Attacks, 2004).

Subsequent major terrorist events, such as the 2004 Madrid train bombings, the 2005 London bombings, and the 2008 Mumbai attacks, further illustrated terrorism's ability to transcend national boundaries (International Centre for Counter-Terrorism [ICCT], 2019). These incidents exposed critical vulnerabilities in international security frameworks, revealing how terrorist groups exploit geopolitical instabilities, weak governance, and socioeconomic disparities to establish footholds in multiple regions (Krueger & Malečková, 2003). Particularly across the Middle East, North Africa, and areas of Southeast Asia, political fragmentation and prolonged conflicts have created fertile grounds for extremist ideologies to proliferate and recruit vulnerable populations (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2017).

### **Past United Nations Actions**

The United Nations has persistently sought to develop a comprehensive framework to address terrorism through multiple strategic resolutions and initiatives since the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. A significant milestone is Resolution 1373, adopted unanimously on September 28, 2001, which established the Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC) and mandated that member states implement measures to prevent and suppress the financing of terrorist acts, criminalize the provision of funds for such acts, and enhance international cooperation in counterterrorism efforts (United Nations, 2001).

Despite these substantial efforts, the effectiveness of UN actions has been mixed. The absence of a universally agreed-upon definition of terrorism has led to inconsistent legislative responses among member states, hindering international cooperation (UNODC, n.d.). Additionally, the CTC's monitoring mechanisms have struggled to ensure consistent compliance, leading to a complex landscape where theoretical frameworks often outpace practical enforcement capabilities (UNSC, 2017). Furthermore, the predominantly reactive nature of these measures has limited their efficacy in addressing the root causes of terrorism, such as political disenfranchisement, economic inequality, and social marginalization (UNDP, 2017).

### **Current Situation**

The contemporary landscape of terrorism presents increasingly complex and adaptive challenges for the international community. Terrorist organizations continue to exploit technological advancements, digital communication platforms, and geopolitical instabilities to expand their recruitment and operational capabilities across national borders (Europol, 2022). International cooperation has become paramount in addressing these transnational threats, with intelligence-sharing mechanisms and coordinated law enforcement efforts emerging as critical strategies to disrupt terrorist networks (United Nations, 2021).

Despite significant progress in counterterrorism frameworks, ongoing challenges persist in preventing terrorist groups from establishing footholds in vulnerable regions, particularly in areas experiencing political instability, economic hardship, and weak governance structures (World Bank, 2019). Intelligence agencies and international security organizations increasingly recognize the need for comprehensive, multidimensional approaches that not only focus on military and security interventions but also address the root socioeconomic conditions that enable terrorist ideologies to take hold and propagate (Krueger & Malečková, 2003). Collaborative



efforts between nations, involving real-time intelligence exchange, synchronized legal mechanisms, and coordinated strategic interventions, represent the most promising pathway to effectively mitigate the spread of terrorist activities and protect global security (ICCT, 2019).

**Questions to consider:**

1. What measures can be taken to establish a universally accepted definition of terrorism to enhance international cooperation?
2. How can the United Nations improve the effectiveness of its counterterrorism initiatives and ensure consistent implementation among member states?
3. What strategies can be employed to address the root causes of terrorism, such as political disenfranchisement and economic inequality?
4. How can technological advancements be leveraged to prevent the spread of terrorist propaganda and recruitment online?
5. What role should regional organizations play in supporting global counterterrorism efforts and enhancing local capacities?

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