

STATEMENT

Statement by the Gender Equality Network for Small Arms Control (GENSAC) at the Fourth United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made in 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 and the International Tracing Instrument (RevCon)

As representatives of the Gender Equality Network for Small Arms Control (GENSAC), a diverse network of women peacebuilders, security officials, grassroots civil society and women's rights groups, and disarmament experts, we stand before this esteemed assembly to bring your attention to the gendered impact of small arms proliferation and misuse, and how gender analysis and gender mainstreaming will improve implementation of the PoA.

We are deeply concerned about the devastating role that small arms play in perpetuating violence against women and girls. The illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons is a critical global issue that intensifies violence against women and girls in both conflict and non-conflict settings. While this issue is pervasive globally, recent escalations of violence in various regions have particularly worsened the plight of women and girls.

Although men are the primary victims of firearms violence, women make up the majority of victims of intimate partner violence. Furthermore, the impacts go beyond physical harm, leading to severe economic and social consequences. These consequences deepen gender inequalities and perpetuate cycles of violence, significantly hindering efforts toward sustainable peace and development. While women are too often excluded from the creation and implementation of SALW processes, policies and programs, we are pleased to see recent instruments, such as The Global Framework for Through-life Conventional Ammunition Management, recognizing the importance of guaranteeing the full, equal, meaningful, and effective participation of women in decision-making and implementation processes.

For the reasons above, we reinstate our belief that incorporating gender perspectives into SALW control will yield better results for all people.

Recommendations

In light of these realities, GENSAC urgently calls for bold and decisive action to address the intersecting issues of small arms proliferation and misuse, and gender inequality. As such, we urge member states to prioritize the following action points:

1. Ensure equal opportunities for women's participation in disarmament, political decision-making, policy formulation, and lawmaking by increasing women's meaningful involvement in security processes.
2. Take swift action to accelerate implementation of SDGs 5.2 (gender equality), 16.1 (peaceful and inclusive societies), and 16.4 (reduce illicit arms flows), and prioritize gender-responsive approaches in achieving these goals, particularly in regard to measures to address small arms proliferation.
3. Implement socio-economic empowerment programs for women and marginalized groups to address the underlying drivers of violence and reduce vulnerability to violence and exploitation through targeted interventions.
4. Provide local and national civil society organizations (CSOs), including women's organizations, with sufficient civic space, information, and financial resources to effectively engage in public oversight and advocacy on small arms control issues. Foster an enabling environment for CSO participation and collaboration.
5. Improve data collection mechanisms to gather gender-disaggregated data on the impact of small arms proliferation and misuse on women and girls as to inform evidence-based policymaking and programmatic interventions.



6. Ensure that all early warning systems are designed with strong gender-sensitive frameworks, taking into account women's lived experiences, and leverage technology to enhance their efficacy. Provide regular training for law enforcement, military, and community leaders on the use of early warning systems.

7. Establish mechanisms for survivors to seek justice and redress, and uphold women's rights in small arms control legislation. Provide access to healthcare, psychosocial support, legal aid, and economic assistance to survivors.

8. Engage men and boys as allies in efforts to prevent and address violence against women. Promote transformative approaches that challenge harmful norms related to masculinity and firearms.

The illicit proliferation of small arms not only perpetuates violence, but systematically erodes the fabric of our communities, obstructing peace, and diluting global efforts to cultivate a safer, just and inclusive world.

In this critical moment, we urge member-states to act with urgency and resolve. Only through such decisive actions can we hope to build societies that offer true security and equality for all their members. This call to action transcends mere political advocacy; it is a moral mandate to uphold the dignity and rights of every individual, especially the most vulnerable among us.

Thank you, Madame President.

