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
New York, 27 August-7 September 2012

Working paper submitted by Australia, Côte d’Ivoire, Germany, Kenya and South Sudan

International cooperation and assistance

1. The Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, adopted in 2001, encourages States, inter alia:

   (a) To establish and strengthen cooperation and partnerships at all levels (sect. III, para. 2);
   
   (b) To provide technical and financial support (sect. III, para. 5);
   
   (c) To provide expertise and technology (sect. III, paras. 6-7);
   
   (d) To network and share information on implementation experiences (sect. III, para. 8).

2. The second 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, held in 2012, provides an opportunity for States to review progress made in international cooperation and assistance under the Programme of Action and the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons, and to identify areas that could be strengthened. The present working paper reviews the provision of international assistance under the Programme of Action and proposes possible issues for further consideration.

1 See General Assembly resolution 66/47.
Review of international assistance

3. A number of lessons have been learned in the first decade of implementation of the Programme of Action and the International Instrument. These include, inter alia the importance of national ownership, national coordinating bodies and needs assessments to ensuring effective assistance, the need for mechanisms to match needs and resources to support this, the importance of measuring impact, the multi-faceted nature of small arms and lights weapons issues and the need for tailored, evidence-based assistance.

Pursuing effective models

4. Assistance for the implementation of the Programme of Action and the International Instrument is delivered in many ways, often in tandem with broader peacebuilding or development activities. Experience over the first 11 years of the implementation of the Programme of Action suggests that the following types of activities have been the most effective approaches to countering the illicit trade in small arms and lights weapons:

(a) Effective stockpile management of Government stocks and robust marking and recordkeeping;
(b) Destruction of surplus State-owned and seized illicit weapons;
(c) Security and judicial sector reform;
(d) Youth employment schemes, community education and national non-governmental organization campaigns.

Importance of national ownership to the effectiveness of assistance

5. In respect of the importance of national ownership:

(a) Practical implementation of the Programme of Action requires a strong investment at the political level to mobilize relevant elements of Government to identify needs, set priorities and implement activities:

Political leadership both demonstrates national ownership, helping the population understand the societal benefits of addressing the challenges...
associated with small arms and lights weapons, and empowers technocrats to act;

(b) Programmes have been most effective where they are based on national priorities identified following close consultation with both Government and community stakeholders. Programming is further enhanced when coupled with a detailed analytical assessment of the factors influencing effective implementation, which enables solutions to be tailored to local contexts;

(c) Delivery of assistance through national systems accompanied, where necessary, with efforts to strengthen such systems, is also a key contributor to national ownership;

(d) Activities should be led by national commissions, relevant local authorities or regional organizations to ensure that specific needs are appropriately identified and addressed, that institutional strengthening and capacity-building are appropriate and that information exchange is facilitated;

(e) Objectives and performance indicators for monitoring programmes should be agreed between implementing partners and national, regional or local institutions. The contribution to achieving the broader aims of the Programme of Action (e.g., reducing illicit trafficking) should be considered, not simply quantitative outputs such as the number of weapons destroyed;

(f) These approaches are consistent with aid effectiveness commitments that prioritize national ownership, including the Paris, Accra and Busan declarations.

Utilizing mechanisms to help match needs and resources that facilitate the flow of assistance and promote coordination

6. It is important to utilize mechanisms that coordinate assistance and appropriately align support and national needs to create coherence across programming and avoid duplication. Such mechanisms include:

(a) Effective identification of country needs and priorities, including information on continuing and concluding programmes in national reports;

(b) Applying tools such as the International Small Arms Control Standards, developed within the United Nations;

(c) Capitalizing on the role of the central implementation unit of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects Implementation Support System as a means to coordinate national and regional requests for assistance and match needs to resources;

(d) Effective use of the matching needs and resources database of the Support System and the compilation of national assistance proposals, compiled and coordinated by the United Nations Secretariat;

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5 For example, the Australian Federal Police and Vanuatu Police Force joint firearms census project currently under way in Vanuatu has prioritized national capacity-building while collecting important data on firearms ownership in the country. Australia and Germany have contributed to the strengthening of the national commission in Côte d’Ivoire to build capacity to develop national strategies and small arms and lights weapons control mechanisms.
(e) Taking advantage of established meetings under the Programme of Action as forums for coordinating support and identifying assistance needs, underpinned by support, through the United Nations Development Programme voluntary sponsorship programme,\(^6\) to facilitate participation by countries affected by small arms and lights weapons issues.

7. In particular, the Group of Interested States in Practical Disarmament Measures should also be recognized as a platform for donors and recipient States for the sharing of experiences and new ideas in small arms and lights weapons projects and information exchanges on studies and new developments.

8. Despite such a set of robust mechanisms there is still room to enhance the coordination of activities in respect of small arms and lights weapons, in particular, in a way that adds to the sustainability of assistance, provides certainty in delivery and fills gaps that remain unmet:

To that end, States have communicated a need to make use of a multi-donor facility for affected States to draw on in order to implement Programme of Action-related projects. Australia is currently engaging the Office for Disarmament Affairs on how this can be taken forward.

9. South-South and triangular cooperation should be embraced, and donors can provide support for South-South cooperation. Regional organizations can play an important role in catalysing inter-State and interregional assistance, and information and skills exchanges.\(^7\)

Implementation activities should take into account the multi-faceted nature of issues related to small arms and lights weapons and tie them into broader development frameworks.

10. Implementation activities should take into account the following:

(a) It is important for implementation of the Programme of Action to have an integrated, multisectoral approach that incorporates community development, law enforcement and security sector reform;

(b) Activities that are incorporated as part of a broader development framework will better address the demand for weapons at the local, national, regional and global levels;\(^8\)

(c) Donors and recipients should work together to design effective approaches to the implementation of the Programme of Action that consider the various levels on which armed conflict and violence occur as well as the links to transnational organized crime, drug trafficking and terrorism. Such joint initiatives should offer flexible and integrated programmes for dealing with the context-specific drivers, risk factors, prevention options and impacts of illicit small arms and lights weapons;

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\(^6\) Australia has been one of the largest contributors to the sponsorship programme over the past three years.

\(^7\) Regional cooperation is the subject of a working paper by Pacific States and States of the Caribbean Common Market.

(d) Implementation activities should also strengthen the relationship between countering trade in illicit small arms and lights weapons and broader development; women, peace and security; and peacebuilding and State-building objectives.

Possible issues for consideration

11. Some areas that have been identified for improved implementation include strengthening the evidence base for assistance, enhancing the ability of States to measure progress and impact, and increasing the overall quantity of assistance rendered to developing States. States should (inter alia) consider strengthening implementation in those areas at the Review Conference and look ahead to the next review period (2012-2018).

Evidence-based assistance

12. Evidence-based assistance includes the following:

(a) Information on the local context, including data that builds a picture of the underlying nature of the problem, will be crucial to increasing the effectiveness of efforts in respect of small arms and lights weapons, enabling more tailored approaches that fit local circumstances, particularly in situations of low capacity and conflict:

  Comprehensive needs assessments that take account of national institutional capacity, accurate assessments of demand and supply, assessments of local, national and regional markets for illicit small arms and lights weapons,\(^9\) and community perceptions of security all provide critical contextual understanding;

(b) The preparation of a new global survey on assistance (the previous one was conducted in 2006) would be a further useful step. This will set a new baseline for international assistance and help to identify progress since the previous Review Conference;

(c) Increased assistance in the design phase of programmes that enables thorough analysis and assessment will be crucial.

Increasing the flow of assistance by enhancing tools and mechanisms to match needs with resources and improve assistance coordination

13. There was a strong message in the Preparatory Committee, and at the Fourth Biennial Meeting of States, that assistance to implement the Programme of Action has not been as forthcoming as intended and that renewed efforts are needed, as follows:

(a) States should re-energize their efforts to provide assistance in a way that is coordinated and embodies national ownership, including through the use of national systems;

(b) In respect of building upon existing coordination mechanisms (including the Coordinating Action in Small Arms), Australia is proposing an enhanced multi-donor facility, overseen by the Office for Disarmament Affairs and the United Nations Development Programme, to act as an important mechanism for coordinated

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\(^9\) Ibid., p. 51.
financial support to Programme of Action and Arms Trade Treaty (once adopted) implementation activities;

(c) Australia has committed a start-up contribution of 1 million Australian dollars to the facility, which will facilitate better coordination and cohesion in the delivery of assistance;

(i) The facility would simplify matching donor resources with programme proposals by centralizing contributions from donors into one fund, facilitating the timely and flexible provision of assistance to affected States;

(ii) Importantly, it will also give greater certainty to programming that requires multi-year funding and address underlying issues of programme sustainability. It will help to fill gaps and promote new and innovative forms of assistance in respect of small arms and light weapons;

(iii) Other donors are encouraged to contribute to the fund;

(d) States should also be encouraged, with appropriate assistance, to prepare national reports that include requests for assistance and information on projects completed;

(e) There is a need to expand awareness, understanding and use of implementation mechanisms and tools, such as the Implementation Support System, the compilation of assistance needs, the rosters of experts maintained by the Office for Disarmament Affairs and its regional centres, and the new International Small Arms Control Standards, as well as to utilize the outcome documents of the Third and Fourth Biennial Meetings of States;

(f) United Nations agencies should coordinate more closely with such mechanisms as the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development and 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 with INTERPOL and the World Customs Organization to work towards mutual objectives, avoid duplication and share implementation tools;

(g) United Nations regional disarmament centres, regional organizations and meetings can play an important role in communicating the needs of regions and individual States for assistance to implement the Programme of Action. Providing a communiqué of assistance needed should be encouraged. Importantly, regional organizations should consider Programme of Action meeting outcomes in their regional implementation plans.

Improving the measurability, effectiveness and sustainability of assistance

14. Many States have emphasized the need for a better picture of what constitutes effective assistance in respect of the Programme of Action:

(a) States should be encouraged to develop common mechanisms and tools to improve the measurability and effectiveness of assistance to implement the Programme of Action at the national, regional and global levels, building upon

10 Australia’s commitment to provide start-up funding to this facility was announced by the Australian Foreign Minister on 2 July 2012 at the Arms Trade Treaty Diplomatic Conference.
existing Programme of Action implementation monitoring efforts. The newly developed International Small Arms Control Standards may also serve as an orientation;

(b) Further means to enhance monitoring and sustainability include:

(i) Ensuring that project proposals submitted to the Implementation Support System secretariat include provisions for sustainability criteria and monitoring and evaluation frameworks;

(ii) Project outcomes, including evaluations, should also be submitted to the Implementation Support System secretariat and should be included in national reports;

(iii) Capturing and applying lessons learned globally and locally, and disseminating them through the secretariat and cross-regional partners;

(iv) Ensuring national ownership of the monitoring process and strengthening national capacity to monitor and evaluate;

(v) Providing support through regional institutions to national commissions to enhance monitoring and evaluation of projects;

(vi) Setting monitoring and evaluation processes and sustainability plans as key criteria for the multi-donor facility;

(c) National action plans should give long-term direction to efforts, set indicators to measure against and identify the resources necessary to sustain gains:

Such plans should be closely integrated with broader law and justice or national development plans, with gains being monitored over time;

(d) Demonstrating programme sustainability should also be a prerequisite for Implementation Support System needs requests.