About the Arms Transfer Dialogue

The Small Arms Survey and the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) are hosting a series of Arms Transfers Dialogue (ATD) meetings for Geneva-based diplomats and other stakeholders to provide a forum for exploring options and approaches that support multilateral processes on conventional arms control, including small arms and light weapons. More specifically, the ATD aims at realizing four inter-related objectives:

- To sensitize disarmament and arms control practitioners to current and emerging issues related to conventional arms control, including small arms, and to facilitate common approaches towards them;
- To build shared understandings among Geneva-based stakeholders on the provisions of conventional arms control instruments and to identify synergies among them, with a particular focus on the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) and the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms (PoA);
- To identify, and facilitate discussions around, challenges and opportunities relating to the implementation of conventional arms control instruments; and
- To enhance dialogue and information exchange between disarmament, development, human rights, humanitarian, and public health communities in order to strengthen conventional arms control at the national, regional, and global levels.

About the second meeting

This event was the second in a series of Small Arms Survey-UNIDIR ATD meetings in 2017. The first ATD meeting addressed the diversion of conventional arms, including small arms and light weapons. The second meeting addressed the synergies between the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the ATT, and other relevant multilateral instruments. A group discussion was preceded by three topical presentations: ‘Universalization and the SDGs’; ‘Gender, armed violence, and the SDGs’, and ‘Measuring illicit arms flows—ATT/SDG Synergies on Transparency’. 
Meeting Summary: Presentations

Anna Alvazzi del Frate (Small Arms Survey): Universalization and the SDGs

- The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development represents an innovative, universal instrument for the achievement of sustainable development. The SDGs seek to build on, and broaden, the Millennium Development Goals. One of their main innovations is the inclusion of Goal 16, which focuses on peaceful and inclusive societies, access to justice, and accountable institutions. The goals are ‘integrated and indivisible’ in the sense that achieving one requires achieving the others.
- The targets for Goal 16 focus on specific aspects of peace and security that are key pre-requisites for sustainable development. In particular, they recognize that armed violence and insecurity bear heavily on States, societies, and individuals, inflicting profound and long-lasting negative consequences on them.
- With SDG Target 16.4, States have universally committed to significantly reduce illicit arms flows by 2030 as a prerequisite for sustainable development. This positions the 2030 Agenda de facto among the international arms control instruments and offers stakeholders an opportunity to build political momentum on, and reinforce the mandates of, other arms control processes.
- To significantly reduce illicit arms flows, it is essential that international arms control instruments, themselves aimed at preventing and reducing illicit arms flows, are fully implemented.
- This includes, inter alia, preventing arms transfer diversion, as mentioned in Article 11 of the ATT, and ensuring that international transfers are responsible (Article 1). By advancing the realization of these objectives, universalization of the ATT would significantly strengthen efforts to achieve Target 16.4.

Sarah Boukhary (Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, WILPF): Gender, armed violence and the SDGs.

- Gender-based violence (GBV) refers to the type of violence directed at a person based on his/her specific gender and identity. GBV is the most prevalent form of violence in the world.
- There are four types of GBV:
  - Sexual violence,
  - Physical violence,
  - Emotional and psychological violence, and
  - Socioeconomic violence.
- GBV can occur in private or in public, in both conflict and non-conflict settings.
- In many cases, GBV is facilitated by the widespread availability of weapons. A case study of Yemen, a country with some of the most difficult living conditions for women and girls, illustrates this. After the outbreak of conflict in Yemen, research has found that GBV increased by 70%. Even if arms are not directly used to harm women, their presence correlates with increased gender inequality and GBV. In many cases, research has found that the presence of weapons in some areas prevent women and
girls from participating in daily life and hinder economic development. This, according to researchers, also qualifies as a form of GBV.

- According to WILPF, in cases of domestic violence, the presence of a gun increases the likelihood of that violence turning into a homicide by 500%.
- The ATT has several components that can help to prevent GBV such as Article 7(4), where GBV is specifically referenced. In addition, under the ATT, it is illegal to transfer arms to a State if there is a risk that these arms may facilitate GBV. The effective implementation of this Article may not only help to prevent GBV, but also allow for a more effective protection of human rights and prevention of armed violence. This explicit mention of GBV in the ATT underlines the need to prevent this form of violence, and makes its exclusion from risk assessments more difficult.
- In order to further support the inclusion of GBV-related considerations in conventional arms transfers, WILPF has produced a report on how gender-sensitive risk assessments could be conducted by State Parties.¹ This report includes GBV-related considerations which State Parties should take into account, as well as numerous sources of data which State Parties could draw upon. According to WILPF, the more considerations are included in an assessment, the more consolidated and comprehensive the assessment becomes, and the more effective the implementation will be.
- It is important to note that sources of data useful for conducting gender-sensitive risk assessments go beyond usual arms control bodies and sources.
- In short, synergies between the SDGs, the ATT and GBV exist and may be capitalized upon to maximize impact. As previously noted, SDG Target 16.4 seeks to reduce illicit flows of arms, and SDG 5 specifically addresses the issue of gender equality. If the ATT reduces illicit arms flows, it will contribute to the attainment of Target 16.4. Given what has been laid out in this presentation combined with the integrated nature of the SDGs, it follows that reduced illicit arms flows will decrease armed domestic violence, in turn contributing to an overall reduction in violence against women and girls.

Irene Pavesi (Small Arms Survey): Measuring illicit arms flows – ATT/SDG Synergies on Transparency

- Increased transparency in the arms trade is a worthwhile goal. One of the arguments to support transparency is making information publicly available as both a catalyst for greater transparency, and a tool for accountability because it helps to determine whether States are implementing relevant international agreements to which they are a State Party.
- Timely reporting on arms transfers can serve as an early warning tool, as it provides data relevant to an excessive or destabilizing accumulation of arms that could potentially result in armed conflict.

• Transparency also enables scrutiny and accountability, strengthens international norms, and can help build inter-state confidence by shedding light on the interpretation of national criteria for arms export authorizations and denials.

• The lack of information on illicit arms flows poses important challenges for monitoring the implementation of SDG Indicator 16.4.2, which measures the ‘Proportion of seized, found or surrendered arms, whose illicit context has been traced or established by a competent authority in line with international instrument’. This formulation of Indicator 16.4.2 stresses linkages with international instruments, specifically the International Tracing Instrument, (ITI) and the PoA.

• However, given how little is known about the size of illicit arms flows, this indicator focuses mostly on progress in developing and implementing measures to lower the risk of diversion. In fact, in order to increase knowledge on illicit arms flows, according to Dr Pavesi, States need to determine the illicit nature of weapons through marking, tracing and adequate recordkeeping. Therefore, one of the implicit requirements of the indicator is that States should increase the proportion of weapons that are subject to this determination.

• According to Dr Pavesi, a combination of several ‘progress made’ indicators can be useful for monitoring results at the national level. For example:
  o The number of countries that ratify the ATT,
  o The number of countries that report authorized or actual exports and imports,
  o The number and extent of national reports to the PoA and ITI,
  o The number of countries that provide information on measures taken to prevent diversion, and
  o The average national score in the Small Arms Trade Transparency Barometer.

• The Small Arms Trade Transparency Barometer assesses States’ reporting practices, covering 49 small arms exporters. It looks at factors such as timeliness, access and consistency, clarity, deliveries, as well as licences granted and refused. It rates the exporters on a 25 points scale. In 2016, the average was at 11.4. Small Arms Survey believes that further progress can be made in this respect. The Barometer features as a complementary indicator for Indicator 16.4.2 within the SDG 16 Data Initiative (www.sdg16.org).

• Additionally, there is scope to develop an ad hoc transparency-related indicator in the framework of the Voluntary Global Supplementary Indicators initiative, led by Community of Democracies together with UNDP and the Open Government Partnership. This framework is proposed as a voluntary non-prescriptive tool for use in the national level monitoring process.

**Meeting Summary: Discussion**

Q: What are some cases of GBV committed against men?
A: Men are indeed targets of GBV. However, this is often more difficult to document, especially in more conservative regions. This is due to, among other things, ideas and images of masculinity. In many cases, men are more directly affected by violence in terms of sheer numbers of casualties whereas women suffer more from the indirect effects of
GBV often takes the form of domestic violence, which disproportionately affects women and girls.

Q: How can we evaluate the ATT’s contribution to the implementation of the SDGs, and vice versa?
A: Evaluating the SDGs is a challenge. SDG 17 (‘Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development’) partially addresses this challenge and hints at how it could be done via data monitoring and accountability, capacity building for monitoring, and evaluation in fragile contexts. Everyone needs to be educated on, and familiarized with, the measurement of relevant concepts (i.e. prevention of diversion and reduction of illicit arms flows) where the ATT and SDGs overlap. Although an exact evaluation will be difficult, it is possible to achieve it and to measure efficiently, for example by using reporting which builds on findings from transparency and accountability assessments.

On a more general note, but still connected to the question of data availability for evaluation, reporting is central. Transparency has a key role to play for the Agenda 2030 as it relates to building accountable institutions. There is also the interaction with human rights mechanisms that should be mentioned and how data is available through related UN mechanisms and relevant reports.

Q: Concerning the measurement of illicit arms flows, it is not always clear whether actors are talking about measuring all types of weapons or specifically small arms and light weapons. Does the Survey intend to address this in the future?
A: The Small Arms Survey started its work with the Barometer before the ATT was negotiated, thus the Transparency Barometer is currently limited to small arms, and covers major exporters and importers. The first formulation of the SDG indicator for measuring illicit arms flows (Indicator 16.4.2) made reference to ‘small arms’. Now, the indicator has aligned to the language of SDG Target 16.4, and makes reference to ‘arms’ instead of ‘small arms’.

Q: When analysing export licenses requests in practice, focus is often placed on human rights and international humanitarian law. With respect to cases of GBV, are there situations which are not also human rights violations?
A: Article 7, paragraph 1 of the ATT focuses on general violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law. Paragraph 4 of the same Article is gender-specific and can therefore be considered as a special set of considerations within international human rights law which need to be taken into account.

Q: The ATT aims to prevent illicit arm flows whereas the SDGs have a more reactive focus. How can this be reconciled?
A: The reduction of illicit flows seeks to prevent violence as well. Agenda 2030 needs to be interpreted and analyzed. Even if language in the SDGs was not primarily focused on prevention, the issue has gained in importance and visibility as of late.