

The threat posed by illicit flows of small arms and light weapons

Mr President, thank you for calling this briefing session today and for the opportunity to discuss this important issue. Thank you to the briefers not only for their valuable contributions but also for all the work they do in their respective fields. It was good to hear such practical and common sense advice from them. We're grateful too for the Secretary General's latest report on small arms and light weapons.

It is very important that we consider peacekeeping in this context. As we have heard again and again today, peacekeeping does not happen in a vacuum so we need to consider this issue carefully in the round.

Although small arms and light weapons have important and legitimate uses, they are also subject to diversion and misuse, which every year costs hundreds of thousands of lives. Illicit small arms undermine security and in doing so, undermine sustainable development, fuelling conflict, crime and terrorism.

Many UN processes contribute to countering the illicit trade in small arms, and in this context we warmly thank the Kenyan Mission and particularly Ambassador Kimani for your able leadership of the recent Seventh Biennial Meeting of States on the UN Programme of Action, as others have said today.

As our speakers have brought out, effective control of small arms and light weapons should be seen as an important part of our wider approach to conflict. The UK is pleased to support the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research in a project to integrate conventional arms control into conflict prevention work. Together we've developed a risk analysis toolkit for conflict practitioners that will strengthen their understanding of the risks and impact of arms, and how conventional arms control can contribute to UN conflict prevention, management and resolution.

We welcome the focus within the latest Secretary General's report on Children affected by armed conflict and the gendered dimensions of the illicit trade in small arms. We support its recommendations, particularly on coherence in programming related to children on the role states should play in countering sexual violence in conflict by tackling illicit arms flows in line with the Arms Trade treaty and other national obligations.

The Arms Trade Treaty is a key multilateral tool to ensure a well-regulated, legal trade in conventional arms, and address illicit transfers. We continue to encourage all states to ratify and accede to the treaty.

Illicitly traded small arms affect different countries and regions in different ways. This has come out clearly today. We commend regional approaches in this area, including the African Union's Silencing the Guns by 2020 initiative and The Western Balkans roadmap. The UK itself is leading a

review of OSCE Best Practice Guidance on SALW stockpile management.

We also continue to support work to address the risks of stockpiles of ammunition, including through the recently concluded Group of Governmental Experts on Problems Arising from the Accumulation of Conventional Ammunition Stockpiles in Surplus.

The UK will continue to prioritise support to work on small arms, to strengthen domestic frameworks. We are helping countries to strengthen arms control frameworks through national legislation, to implement better stockpile management procedures, and to tackle the grave challenges recognized in the SG's report.

Mr President, you've put this issue on the agenda today because it's clearly at the very heart of the council's work. We've heard again and again that unchecked proliferation causes conflict plain and simple, that conflict causes insecurity and the unchecked proliferation is therefore exacerbated even further by it. And this proliferation causes human misery where it occurs, and that cost is felt, as we've said, mainly by women and children, but also as we heard today by the peacekeepers that we deploy.

So it is clear that this Council needs to focus on the objectives set out again today by our speakers. And it's also clear that we need to think very carefully when those in this Council call ours to modify or reconsider arms embargoes, which we have implemented. We implement them for a reason and we need to consider very carefully the implications of changing them.

So let's redouble our efforts. Let's consider whether we can sign up to the Arms Trade Treaty if we haven't. Let's properly apply all Council resolutions in this area and think through the issue very carefully as we mandate our peacekeeping missions.

Thank you, Mr President.