



Security Council

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Letter dated 4 December 2023 from the Permanent Representative of Ecuador to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to inform you that, during its presidency of the Security Council in December 2023, Ecuador will convene an open debate on the theme “Addressing the threat posed by diversion, illicit trafficking and misuse of small arms and light weapons and their ammunition to peace and security”, to be held on 15 December, at 10 a.m.

A concept note, prepared to inform and guide the discussion, is attached (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) José **De la Gasca**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Ecuador



Annex to the letter dated 4 December 2023 from the Permanent Representative of Ecuador to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: English]

Concept note for the Security Council open debate on the theme “Addressing the threat posed by diversion, illicit trafficking and misuse of small arms and light weapons and their ammunition to peace and security”, 15 December 2023, 10 a.m.

Overview

The Permanent Mission of Ecuador to the United Nations will host a Security Council open debate on the theme “Addressing the threat posed by diversion, illicit trafficking and misuse of small arms and light weapons and their ammunition to peace and security”.

The diversion, illicit trafficking and misuse of small arms and light weapons and ammunition have persisted, and they continue to undermine peace and security at the national, regional and global levels, derailing States from their paths towards sustainable development. These weapons are the leading cause of deaths in conflict and non-conflict settings alike, fuelling armed conflict and violence, facilitating human rights abuses and violations and gender-based violence, and enabling organized crime and terrorist acts.

Accordingly, the Security Council has considered the cross-cutting implications of small arms and light weapons in the context of relevant countries and regions experiencing armed conflict and high levels of armed violence, including through relevant mandates to peace operations. The threat posed by illicit flows of small arms and light weapons and their ammunition has also been treated in the framework of Council-mandated arms embargoes, for example most recently in the context of Haiti through resolutions [2700 \(2023\)](#) and [2653 \(2022\)](#). The action taken by the Council through adoption of resolution [2616 \(2021\)](#) with regard to combating the illicit transfer, destabilizing accumulation and diversion of arms and related materiel in violation of arms embargoes has been crucial in addressing this serious threat to international peace and security.

The Security Council has also consistently addressed small arms and light weapons as they relate to the protection of civilians, human rights, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, as well as in relation to transnational organized crime and terrorism, and linkages to women and peace and security, as well as children and armed conflict. Regarding women and children, the Council, in its resolution [2616 \(2021\)](#), urged Member States to mainstream perspectives that took into account the disproportionate impact of illicit arms flows on women and children in arms control policymaking and implementation processes. The Council called for women’s full and meaningful participation in arms control and in all levels of decision-making in its resolution [2122 \(2013\)](#), and encouraged their empowerment to participate in the design and implementation of such efforts in its resolution [2242 \(2015\)](#).

The General Assembly has long recognized the valuable contribution of women to practical arms control decision-making, policy and practice and the need to strengthen women’s participation in such processes. Member States have been encouraged to better understand the impact of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons on women and girls through the development of national action plans on women and peace and security, strengthening the collection of disaggregated data and

utilizing analysis mechanisms to inform evidence-based and gender-sensitive policymaking and programming.

The most recent report of the Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence (S/2023/413) underscores the role played by the proliferation and illicit circulation of small arms in facilitating and perpetrating conflict-related sexual violence. Recent research has shown that there is an intimate relationship between weapons and sexual violence in conflict. In countries where disaggregated data on weapons is available, between 70 and 90 per cent of incidents of conflict-related sexual violence are reported to involve weapons, particularly small arms. Not only are weapons and ammunition used to facilitate sexual violence and to injure and kill survivors and victims, their proliferation also propagates the conditions that lead to the normalization of sexual violence in a conflict. The most recent report of the Secretary-General on small arms and light weapons (S/2023/823) contains a number of recommendations on promoting the linkages between the women and peace and security agenda and small arms and light weapons control that can be advanced by the Council.

The Secretary-General's policy brief, entitled "A New Agenda for Peace" and issued in July 2023, provides an opportunity for renewed comprehensive action on small arms and light weapons control, including by the Security Council. Arms control and disarmament are central to comprehensive peace and security responses and are a key component of conflict and violence prevention. In calling for reducing the human cost of weapons, the Secretary-General advocates developing and implementing regional, subregional and national instruments on small arms and light weapons, as well as whole-of-government approaches that integrate arms control into development, prevention and violence reduction initiatives at the local and national levels. At the same time, gender-responsive arms control and disarmament will be essential to transform gendered power dynamics in peace and security as called for in the New Agenda for Peace, including by securing women's meaningful participation in arms control and disarmament decision-making and eradicating all forms of gender-based violence. The Council could consider the recommendations outlined in the New Agenda for Peace in its work on addressing the threat posed by the diversion, illicit trafficking and misuse of small arms and light weapons and their ammunition.

Background

The Security Council first addressed the issue of small arms as a stand-alone agenda item in 1999. In presidential statement S/PRST/1999/28, it noted with grave concern that the destabilizing accumulation of small arms had contributed to the intensity and duration of armed conflicts, and acknowledged that the challenge posed by small arms was multifaceted and involved security, humanitarian and development dimensions. Subsequent presidential statements on small arms were issued by the Council in 2001, 2002, 2004, 2005 and 2007. Since 2008, the Secretary-General has reported regularly to the Council on the issue in the form of a substantive report, traditionally on a biennial basis.

In 2013, the Council adopted its first thematic resolution¹ on small arms and light weapons, including the illicit transfer, destabilizing accumulation and misuse of small arms and light weapons. Its second resolution thereon,² adopted in 2015, contained further provisions aimed at bolstering international cooperation, the effective implementation of mandated arms embargoes and the integration of these considerations in the mandates of United Nations peacekeeping operations.

¹ Resolution 2117 (2013).

² Resolution 2220 (2015).

In its resolution [2457 \(2019\)](#), dedicated to the African Union flagship initiative entitled “Silencing the Guns in Africa”, the Security Council called for the effective implementation of relevant arms control instruments and regimes, in particular those related to small arms and light weapons, thus illustrating the criticality of tackling illicit arms to achieving a conflict-free Africa. In adopting resolution [2616 \(2021\)](#), the Council addressed the issue of the illicit transfer, destabilizing accumulation and diversion of arms and related materiel in violation of Council-mandated arms embargoes, and committed to considering during the renewal of mandates how peace operations could support national authorities in combating illicit arms flows in violation of the arms embargoes.

Objectives

The meeting provides an opportunity to discuss the biennial report of the Secretary-General on small arms and light weapons ([S/2023/823](#)) submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution [2220 \(2015\)](#).

Building on the existing framework and resolutions, the meeting also provides an opportunity to focus on implementation. It will allow the Security Council to assess the trends and impact of the misuse, illicit transfer and destabilizing accumulation of small arms and light weapons on conflict, post-conflict and fragile situations and the multitude of their cross-cutting implications for international peace and security, with a view to identifying avenues for further strengthening the implementation of the normative arms control framework, as well as elaborating and advancing comprehensive responses to the challenges posed by the weapons.

Guiding questions

- What are the current trends and implications of the diversion, illicit trafficking and misuse of small arms and light weapons and ammunition, and how can the Security Council respond to them in a comprehensive and integrated manner?
- What action can be undertaken by the Security Council to promote national and regional implementation and enforcement of arms embargoes?
- Building on the discussions during the open debate on the theme “Threats to international peace and security: transnational organized crime, growing challenges and new threats” held on 7 December, how can the Security Council further address the nexus between small arms and light weapons, organized crime and armed violence, as well as promote effective prevention approaches and responses to the acquisition of weapons and ammunition by organized criminal groups?
- How can the Security Council contribute to reducing the human costs of weapons and transforming gendered power dynamics in peace and security?
- What role do small arms and light weapons control efforts play in advancing the women and peace and security agenda, and how can the linkages between women and peace and security and arms control and disarmament be further strengthened?
- What is the role of the proliferation and illicit circulation of small arms and light weapons in facilitating and perpetrating conflict-related sexual violence and gender-based violence? How can arms control be better incorporated into prevention and response efforts?
- How can the Security Council leverage, strengthen and promote the implementation of legally binding and political instruments at all levels to address challenges related to the diversion, proliferation and misuse of small

arms and light weapons and ammunition, including in the context of peace operations and in the implementation and enforcement of arms embargoes?

Format

The open debate will be chaired by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility of Ecuador. Member States wishing to participate should inscribe their names on the list of speakers through the eSpeakers module of e-deleGATE. A letter addressed to the President of the Security Council, duly signed by the Permanent Representative or the Chargé d'affaires a.i., requesting to participate in accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure must be uploaded to the eSpeakers module of e-deleGATE. Inscription for the list of speakers will open at 9.30 a.m. on 12 December. Statements by Member States should not exceed four minutes.

Briefers

1. The Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs
 2. The Executive Director of the Women's Institute for Alternative Development, Folade Mutota
 3. An additional briefer
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