



Parliamentarians for Global Action
Acción Mundial de Parlamentarios
Action Mondiale des Parlementaires

Report on Side Event on the Role of Legislators in the Implementation of the Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons

August 27, 2012 1:15 – 2:30 p.m.
Conference Room D, United Nations North Lawn Building

On Monday August 27, 2012, the opening day of the Second Review Conference of the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons, Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA) and the Permanent Mission of Mexico to the United Nations co-hosted a Side Event on the Role of Legislators in the Implementation of this Programme of Action.

The purpose of the event was to address progress made and shortcomings remaining in the implementation of the UN Programme of Action of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) and discuss ways in which legislators can address the challenges encountered in addressing its illicit trade. To this effect, PGA brought a Delegation of Members of Parliament to the 2nd Review Conference from Pakistan, Sweden and Senegal. (Due to a flight cancellation, the PGA MP from Senegal was unable to attend the side event but participated fully in the week of the Review Conference itself and attended a number of Side Events).

The Main Panel of Participants included Mr. Daniël Prins, head of the Conventional Arms Branch of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) and Secretary of the Review Conference; Mr. Jordan Ryan, Assistant Secretary General of the United Nations and Assistant Administrator and Director of the Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); Dr. Donya Aziz, member of the National Assembly of Pakistan and Convenor of PGA's Sustainable Development, Health and Population Programme; Mr. Robert Halef, Member of Parliament of Sweden; and Ms. Shazia Z. Rafi, Secretary General of PGA.

Ambassador Yanerit Morgan, Mexico's Deputy Permanent Representative to the UN, chaired the session.

The event was attended by delegates from Guatemala, Israel, Ireland, El Salvador, Australia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Mexico, Turkey, the European Union and the United States, as well as representatives from UN agencies and civil society (*for details, please refer to list of participants*).

Ambassador Morgan welcomed participants to the event and noted the importance of this review conference as an opportunity for Member States to agree on concrete steps to strengthen the implementation and scope of the PoA. She emphasized that small arms and light weapons constitute an obstacle for peace, reconciliation, security and sustainable development at the national, regional and international spheres. She then introduced the speakers.

Ms. Rafi gave an overview of PGA's programme work on peace and democracy and summarized the main points of Deputy Thiam's remarks from Senegal (as previously noted, he was unable to attend the first day of the 2nd RevCon on account of his flight being cancelled the previous night from Dakar). From his speech, she highlighted that now, more than ever it is necessary to encourage the application of the moratorium on small arms adopted by member countries of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Parliamentarians from ECOWAS must also encourage the creation of synergistic action to exchange information and develop a common regulatory policy against small arms. Ms. Rafi stated Deputy Thiam's emphasis on define means and techniques that could be used against the proliferation of weapons. This struggle, he added, should be considered at two levels: legal action to modify legislation and at the operational level, determining the practicality on how to collect weapons and how to destroy them. The goal should be a minimum set of common rules leading to harmonization of legislation. This, he concluded in his remarks, could be achieved by unifying legislation or aligning legislation.

Following the introductory remarks, **Mr. Prins** proposed improvements to better regulate the illicit trade in SALW should be carefully considered – in particular, in some instances, it may make more sense to seek to effect these improvements via national and international customs/border agreements, rather than through the UN PoA itself. He also noted the importance of regional arrangements and the role of legislators in translating the outcomes at UN headquarters into regional action. Mr. Prins mentioned there is a lack of coordination between different UN fora and diplomats attending to them. Often times, he clarified, inputs from one forum in Geneva not necessarily are shared with those in New York or at capitals, and the momentum may get lost. He concluded by highlighting the relevance of discussions and drawing a link between the Programme of Action on SALW and the Arms Trade Treaty.

Mr. Ryan, on the other hand, framed his participation along UNDP's work to end the terrible toll of armed violence on individuals and development. He said UNDP works on addressing the supply and demand of small arms and light weapons and in Members of Parliament (MPs) can be most effective to reduce demand. Reduction of demand for SALW goes hand in and with security and the rule of law in a country. MPs can add their voices to global campaigns against proliferation of SALW, they can speak for their constituencies and for those most affected. MPs, he emphasized, are the ones with the power to bring attention to the issues. Mr. Ryan also pointed to the transnational phenomenon of SALW and the relevance to not lose sight of the root causes of armed violence. He ended his intervention by highlighting the importance to create real and sustainable development through employment opportunities for the youth, promotion and strengthening of the rule of law, and development of security strategies at the community level.

The interventions from legislators began with **Dr. Aziz's, MP from Pakistan**, remarks on the gender dimension of small arms and light weapons and how PGA has been addressing it. She said that proliferation of SALW and their illicit trade within a country and across borders negatively impact every single sector of a society. SALW break the social fabric and have a direct impact on a country's development not only on the senseless loss of lives, but also in economic investments that could otherwise be devoted to infrastructure, healthcare, education and institutional governance. Vulnerability of women in poverty and insecure environments may lead them to be combatants, traffickers and/or dependents of illicit trade

on SALW. Diversification of activities in organized crime: use of women for smuggling SALW, drugs and being subjected to human trafficking. She agreed with Mr. Ryan on the importance of development and creation of jobs – unemployment is a root cause for armed violence. She emphasized that in order to build sustainable peace and security, women need to be fully included in decision-making and active participants in conflict prevention, peacebuilding and disarmament processes. She added that in Pakistan, women are constantly subjected to honor killings and that even if laws are in place; MPs have a vital role in explaining legislation to their constituencies. If laws are not understood by the people, then it is not law. Finally, she said that PGA has addressed this dimension in its annual forum in Istanbul, Turkey on “Building Human Security: Empowering Women” in 2010 by recognizing and advocating for full participation of women in all areas leading to economic progress, human development and global security. Women are vital for peace and democracy. Additionally, in PGA’s annual forum in Colombo, Sri Lanka, in 2011, which focused on “The Impact of Armed Violence on Development” mindful of its gender dimension in health, education and gender-based violence.

Finally, **Mr. Halef, MP from Sweden**, highlighted that since its launch 11 years ago, the Programme of Action has proved to be a genuinely valuable instrument in encouraging many UN Member States to improve their domestic firearms legislation and then subsequently to report to the UN on what they are doing. He noted that for legislators in Sweden, as an arms manufacturing and exporting country, and in many other countries around the world who both export and import conventional weapons, it is important to work for a binding trade agreement which would build on and consolidate the advances and progress made by the UN Programme of Action and one which is not confined to Small Arms and Light Weapons alone. He ended his participation by mentioning that along with the 90 other countries that endorsed the Statement made by Mexico on the final day of the Conference, Sweden would work very hard to make sure that the ATT becomes a reality - sooner rather than later.

The event ended with interactive discussion among speakers and participants. Ambassador Morgan thanked all for their interest and contribution to the debate and wished delegates to the review conference success during their work in the upcoming weeks.

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