Webinar
Stemming the Flow of Small Arms & Light Weapons in Africa and the Middle East

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

“If people need to arm themselves for their own security or if they need to raise arms to get their voice heard they will find weapons; there is no stopping weapons flows unless the conditions creating the need are addressed.”

Webinar Panellist

Illicit small arms and light weapons (SALW) constitute a serious threat to safety, security and stability in the North African region and have long been considered primary tools of and discrete enablers to violence on the continent. In conflict situations, small arms are used to commit a wide range of human rights violations including mass killings, forced displacements, gender-based violence, and attacks on peacekeepers and humanitarian workers.

As NATO is engaged and strives to address SALW through not only legal and technical methods, but also cultural, societal and functional paths, a dialogue was designed in collaboration with Three Stones International (TSI) for NATO to gain insights into illicit arms flows from a diverse selection of experts and practitioners in the field. The dialogue took place on October 1st, 2020 with nine experts from across North and Sub-Saharan Africa and Europe participating as panellists. A survey was administered ahead of the dialogue with key questions posed to NATO stakeholders and TSI’s Civil Society network.

Key insights were provided by panellists and included several cross-cutting challenges. Sources of illicit arms include diversion from missions and stockpiles, battleground captures and illicit arms trade. Looking to sources of SALW is important; however, several panellists also highlighted that the demand for small arms needs to be better understood in order to determine strategies and policy that effectively combat the flow of illicit arms. Demand for SALW is driven by poverty and conflict, often due to a government’s lack of response in tackling these issues. During the webinar, consensus was formed with panellists agreeing that armed conflict is the number one factor in enabling arms to flow through, to, or from a country. Other conditions mentioned in the survey often relate to internal conflict, such as corruption, a weak state, regional power struggles, illegal armed groups, vulnerable borders and illegal exploitation of resources.

Currently the most noteworthy conflict and instability cluster is in the Sahel, including Mali, Niger, Chad and Burkina Faso. Weapons flows across borders in Africa are possibly the most important source of illicit arms on the continent, and even more so in the Sahel region where there are no arms producers. Regarding the effectiveness of current efforts to mitigate SALW trafficking, the discussion focused on the need for increased coordination
and information sharing and a robust coordinated regional response in North Africa as a prerequisite to addressing root causes.

To conclude the dialogue, panellists contributed insights on how to strengthen NATOs holistic approach with a number of recommendations concerning the following themes:

**Border Control** – On appearance, border control may seem like a straightforward issue with practical solutions; however, in reality, it is fundamentally complex and needs careful consideration to integrate with local conditions and be operationalized in a way that minimize risks.

**Train and Equip with a ‘Do No Harm’ Approach** – Historically, training and equipping border and defence agencies have been the go-to solution for addressing flows of arms. There are however problems with this approach, the primary being that arming leads to diversion of weapons, which in turn deepens the problem at hand.

**Transparency and Data** – Moving illicit arms is a shadowy secretive business, therefore legitimate data is challenging to acquire. Without reliable data, response initiatives risk being unprepared to address the reality of the situation. Addressing the lack of data requires technical development, establishing institutions and methods for collecting data, and most critically, perpetual commitment to increased transparency and reporting of accurate data.

**Regional Frameworks and Cooperation** – To effectively address the issue coordinated regional approaches are necessary; it is not possible for one country to address the issue alone. In West Africa for example some success has been had through increased collaboration between governments in the region, championed by civil society.

**Holistic Approach** – A holistic approach includes involving all relevant actors, and a commitment to facing the difficult, complex issues behind the more apparent problems, such as lack of border controls. With more actors involved and thus more complex issues to address a holistic approach is far from an easy fix, and therefore it must be understood as a long-term engagement and commitment.
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**INTRODUCTION**

A significant number of cooperation and assistance activities have been carried out in recent years to assist states to improve their SALW controls. Regional efforts focus on physical security and stockpile management and export controls in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. Further coordinated efforts and improved collaboration of partners is required to control and disrupt trafficking of SALW in the region. Gaining regional perspectives through an open dialogue webinar, bringing together expert panellists and participants engaged in efforts to stem the trafficking of SALW in the North Africa region, provides NATO with relevant information to inform coordination of efforts and identify priorities when addressing the illicit trade of SALW in the region.

The dialogue took place on October 1st, 2020 and is available online. A survey was administered ahead of the dialogue with key questions posed to the overall NATO and Civil Society network. The survey consisted of 18 questions focused on gaining insight and understanding of routes for illicit arms flows in North Africa, stockpile management and surplus destruction, organisations involved, availability of data, and ideas for a more holistic approach in responding to illicit arms flow in North Africa.

Nine Experts from across North and Sub-Saharan Africa and Europe participated as panellists in the dialogue. The panel included practitioners with experience in peacekeeping and other conflict management interventions, researchers from leading national and international institutes, civil society leaders with experience of best practices from other regions of Africa and Members of Parliament from two North African countries representing the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM). Each panellist gave insights as to their experience of the SALW situation and following this NATO posed questions to panellists for further investigation. Panellists were then asked to present recommendations for NATO to consider when further developing policies and actions in response to illicit arms flows in North Africa. TSI invited an audience to take part in the dialogue which comprised of over 20 members from international and civil society organisations who joined from various locations across the globe. Audience members were invited to pose questions and comments within the sidebar chat of the zoom platform. These questions were moderated by TSI, answered by panellists within the chat, and brought into the discussion as deemed necessary. Altogether during the dialogue process, individuals from 23 countries participated with insights and knowledge.

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1. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8nhXVqoocPg&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8nhXVqoocPg&feature=youtu.be)
The following countries were represented in the webinar:

1. Algeria
2. Burundi
3. Democratic Republic of Congo
4. Egypt
5. Ghana
6. Greece
7. Guinea
8. Italy
9. Jamaica
10. Kenya
11. Liberia
12. Libya
13. Nigeria
14. Portugal
15. Rwanda
16. South Africa
17. Sudan
18. Sweden
19. Switzerland
20. Tanzania
21. Togo
22. United States of America
23. Zimbabwe

In advance of the live event, the following prompts were posed to panellists for consideration:

- In your area of expertise, what is the situation regarding SALW, including the main issues and challenges surrounding trafficking and mitigation in your region? What policies, programs or partnerships in your region are disrupting the flow of SALW trafficking and how?

- What would you recommend for multilateral organisations and the NATO Strategic Direction-South Hub (NSD-S Hub) Mission to prioritize in supporting African governments so that issues such as SALW proliferation can be approached with greater coordination and greater confidence?
BACKGROUND

Approximately 30 million firearms are currently in use in Africa, circulating between conflict settings, poachers, criminals, terrorists and communities. Another 11 million small arms are with armed forces and law enforcement agencies\(^2\). But the truth is that no one really knows how many SALW there are in Africa or North Africa, the statistics for arms ownership and government holdings is poor. The Small Arms Survey, a noteworthy collaborator on this issue, is a global centre of excellence with a mandate to generate impartial evidence-based knowledge on all aspects of small arms and armed violence\(^3\). The Small Arms Survey defines SALW in the following manner:

**Small arms:** revolvers and self-loading pistols, rifles and carbines, sub-machine guns, assault rifles, and light machine guns;

**Light weapons:** heavy machine guns, grenade launchers, portable anti-tank and anti-aircraft guns, recoilless rifles, portable anti-tank missile and rocket launchers, portable anti-aircraft missile launchers, and mortars of less than 100 mm calibre.\(^4\)

SALWS’s are the most commonly utilized weapons in civil war, terrorism and organized crime in Africa. To halt the flow of weapons is a key prerequisite for sustainable peace, stability and development in North Africa. A major obstacle to halt the flow is that several countries in the region or bordering the region are in a fragile state and thus fertile ground for arms to flow. A recent study on small arms suggests alarming levels of state fragility in North Africa (Libya), West Africa (Chad, Cameroon, Nigeria, Guinea, Mali, Niger, Guinea Bissau, and Liberia), East Africa (Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Uganda, Kenya), the Middle East (Yemen, Syria, and Iraq).\(^5\) Fragility with its context specific and complex causes; and proliferation and availability of small arms are reinforcing each other in a downward spiral.

Consolidated efforts across regions have been made to meet the issue of illicit arms and light weapon flows; however, complex and cross-cutting challenges remain. Recent initiatives include the African Union Practical Steps to Silencing the Guns in Africa by 2020, and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has a specific sub-goal relating to SALW:

> “By 2030, significantly reduce illicit financial and arms flows, strengthen the recovery and return of stolen assets and combat all forms of organized crime.”
> United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 16.4\(^6\)

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\(^3\) http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/about-us/mission.html  
\(^4\) Ibid  
\(^6\) UNSTATS.UN.ORG SDGS Metadata; https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/metadata/?Text=&Goal=&Target=16.4
As most illicit SALW are legally produced outside the region before finding their way to the illegal sector in North Africa, the 2014 Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), regulating the international trade in small arms, was a landmark in the efforts to reduce the effects of illicit arms. Various civil society organisations and research institutions were engaged to make this treaty become reality. The EU is currently a main actor in the region, and its 2020-2025 action plan on firearms trafficking includes the conclusion that “Cooperation with countries in North Africa and the Middle East needs to be particularly stepped up.”

On the ground, international and regional actors collaborate with governments in the region to address the situation through bilateral engagements, and often train and equip initiatives or regional and international peace keeping missions. In North Africa there is currently no regional organisation or forum with a mandate to deal with the issue in a holistic way. There is clearly a need for more joint discussions, information sharing and joint strategies between all actors involved in the region.

Issues that need to be addressed include: looking at sources of illicit arms, stockpile management and the trafficking routes and flow. There is a growing consensus that these issues cannot be addressed one at a time, as they are interconnected, and that the root causes behind the demand for SALW needs to be addressed. Root causes include poverty, corruption, armed conflict and governments not being responsive to citizen’s needs. When addressing root causes, actors who are previously unconnected, need to start collaborating.

NATO’s ROLE

NATO is engaged in global efforts to reduce illicit small arms flowing across borders, fuelling conflicts and terrorism. NATO strives to address SALW in a holistic approach, by not only addressing legal and technical components but also cultural, societal and functional issues. NATO has for example developed guidelines for gender mainstreaming in SALW projects.8

NATO is engaged in many partnerships where the agenda on small arms can be taken forward. These include the Partnership for Peace, the Mediterranean Dialogue and the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative. NATO sees the UN Programme of Action (PoA) as a key actor and, encouraged by the UN PoA processes has established and strengthened regional and cross-regional cooperation with 41 partners, and developed coordination and information-sharing mechanisms using its comparative advantage in assisting states in developing capacities in combating the illicit trade in SALW. The NATO SALW & MA Information Sharing Platform currently states that 626,000 SALW have been destroyed, 164,000,000 munitions have been disposed and that 4,120 mines have been cleared.9

NATO has provided technical and military expertise in physical security and stockpile management and developed best practices to contribute to the development of regional capacity for SALW and ammunition management. NATO’s technical standards serve as a basis for many international standards and best practices for small arms, light weapons, and stockpiles of conventional ammunition control. These efforts will continue to minimize the risk of diversion, through theft, loss and unauthorized re-export.10

NATO remains committed to working collaboratively to address and stem the flow of SALW in North Africa by working through member states and multilateral institutions. In this spirit, NATO South Hub convened a panel of experts to provide insights on the direction and support NATO may take to continue to combat the flow of SALW in North Africa to ensure stability in the future.

“The Hub exists to garner knowledge, especially from the regional perspective, from experts and from people living and working in North Africa and the Sahel. Then we digest the information and use it to make policy recommendations to NATO on how they can engage with the region or improve current engagements.”

NSD-S Hub Introduction to Webinar

8 https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_156151.htm
9 https://salw.hq.nato.int/
10 https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_156151.htm
DISCUSSION and KEY INSIGHTS

The webinar and survey conducted by NSD-S Hub and TSI revealed a number of compelling thematic areas for discussion regarding the flow of SALW in North Africa. In this section, the wealth of knowledge and experience that the panellists and participants shared during the dialogue and in the survey will be presented thematically, starting with different aspects of the problem at hand, then the current responses to the problem. The final section provides conclusions and recommendations on how to advance the agenda in combating SALW.

Sources of Illicit Arms

“Armed groups have arms, but DRC is not an arms producer. Arms come from USA and Europe.”
Survey respondent

To produce a firearm, or any type of light or small weapon, there is a requirement for technical skills, machinery and quality control. This means most illicit weapons have at some point been produced by a legitimate arms manufacturer. In addition to European and US manufacturers, there are arms manufacturers in the African region and increasingly more so in the Arab world. Guns are for the most part legally produced outside the region, then they find their way to North Africa either directly through to the illegal sector or diverted from the legal sector to the illegal sector. During the dialogue several contributors focused on this process of transition and other ways that illicit arms enter a country. The source of illicit arms is different in each setting, depending on the specific contextual circumstances. The panel discussion provided rich nuance in terms of compilation of sources of arms that the panellists were aware of, or most concerned about.

SALW are produced all over the world, including in Africa. Nineteen African countries produce small arms and ammunitions and specifically in North Africa, Algeria, Sudan and Egypt manage production. Given Africa’s production and export are relatively small, African countries are not significant amongst the world’s larger arms producers. The Small Arms Survey reports that South Africa is the only African country which makes it to the list of countries that transferred SALW, their parts, accessories, and ammunitions, worth USD 10 million or more in at least one calendar year between 2001 and 2016.

One source of illicit arms in North Africa is through legal purchases by governments within the region, mainly from countries outside the region. These weapons are then either illegally transferred to armed groups or stolen from stockpiles. SALW are also at times sold to governments in contravention to current arms embargos, making them illicit. Legal

12 http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/weapons-and-markets/transfers/exporters.html
civilian arms, hunting rifles and sporting equipment, are also sometimes stolen or sold illegally.

A major source of illicit weapons is so called ‘legacy weapons.’ These are weapons that change hands in different ways during or after an armed conflict. These include arms that soldiers sell to people in the vicinity of battlefields, arms that enter a country when nationals who have acted as foreign fighters in another country return, and battlefield captures (i.e., from army or group) that has succeeded in battle overtakes the arms of the army or group they defeated.

“Battlefield captures are the most common source of arms for armed groups in the Sahel conflict cluster.”
Webinar Panellist

Diversion can be framed as a leakage in the system. These leaks can be well known and accepted or even condoned by the very officials tasked to assure that the system is robust, or they are indeed just single incidents that prove no system can be built to be completely infallible. The largest leakages are likely from national stockpiles, as all countries have stockpiles to store weapons not in current use. Other examples might be extremely problematic and sensitive as they are diverted in a way that negatively impacts the mission and credibility of the responsible actor. For example, diversion from bilateral train and equip programs and (even more so) peacekeeping operations hurts the mission and the responsible organisations or countries. A sense of the scale of diversion from peacekeeping missions is readily deduced from the reports of peacekeeping missions in Sudan and South Sudan from 2004 to 2014 which had 22 incidents where at least 10 weapons or 500 rounds were diverted.13

There are also weapons that have never been inside the legal sector, these are produced outside regulation from any state and are called Craft Weapons. On the African continent this practice is most common in West Africa, where gunsmiths in Ghana are reportedly able to produce assault rifles. Craft weapons are mainly used in criminal activity and by anti-government forces.14

**Stockpile Management**

Diversion from national stockpiles is one of the major sources of illicit arms for illegal groups and terrorists. When stockpile management systems break down altogether it can have far reaching consequences. The Libyan stockpile was one of the best stocked in Africa before

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13 Diversion of Arms and Ammunition in Peace Operations, Small Arms Survey Research Notes • Number 54 • September 2015
2011. When that system broke down the arms were scattered all over North Africa and to other parts of the continent such as the Horn of Africa.\textsuperscript{15}

To address the issue several actors, including NATO, engage in supporting countries with regards to stockpile management. In post-conflict situations stockpile management has been part of Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration programs (DDR) and Security Sector Reform (SSR) initiatives. In DDR initiatives the disarmament can take place through cashback programs, decommissioning or destruction of SALW or storing of weapons. It was noted during the dialogue that a consideration surrounding international assistance in counterterrorism is that many train and equip programs have happened, providing a narrative and the appearance of governments in the region carrying out a strong response. While a compelling image of cooperation, in reality they are stocking weaponry, and negotiating better terms for acquiring weapons. Many hold the opinion that programs such as Physical Security and Stockpile Management (PSSM) have not actually been as impactful as projected and continue to be a source for SALW in the region when weapons fall in the hands of bad actors.

Survey responses provided insight that RECSA\textsuperscript{16}, ECOWAS and the UN have developed guidelines for arms marking and destruction of surplus weapons. The survey suggests that the UN should take a more active role in assisting with stockpile management and destruction of surplus weapons driven by implementation of the 2001 \textit{Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects} (UN PoA). Updates on the progress of this instrument should be made available to allow SALW mitigation organisations to monitor achievements and be aware of challenges met in the destruction of surplus weapons and stockpile management.

\begin{quote}
\textit{``The best way to deal with stockpile management and destruction of surplus weapons should be held by the member States of the United Nations. They should be made responsible for discussing the role that illicit brokers play in the global trade of illegal small arms and light weapons''} \footnotesize{Survey Respondent}
\end{quote}

Other respondents pointed to more national solutions through national legislations in line with international standards, permanent and operational commissions for arms control within defence ministries, computerization of national stockpile data and consideration of compelling governments who cannot reliably keep track and protect its weapons to destroy a (certain) number of existing arms in stock.

\textsuperscript{15}https://icct.nl/publication/the-use-of-salw-by-terrorist-organisations-as-a-source-of-finance/

\textsuperscript{16}Regional Centre on Small Arms.
Demand for Small Arms and Light Weapons

“Whatever measures are taken, it is still insufficient measures because they do not have access to all the weapons circulating in the population, I would say today in my province there are more light and small arms in circulation to civilians than hoes and machetes in villages.”

Respondent, SALW Survey

By making the connection between social issues and the availability of small arms the above quote captures the essence of the discussion. Looking at sources is important, but several of the panellists pointed out that the demand for small arms also needs to be understood in order to devise effective strategies and policy. An obvious list of actors keeping up the demand might include terrorist organisations, organized crime, illegal armed groups and militias, but in many situations of armed conflict and instability there is also a demand from the general population. When there is no legitimate actor or authority that assures stability and security, communities arm themselves in order to feel safe. Even though this increases security in the short term for individuals and families it also means arms are readily available when there are tensions in the community. In the long run, the impact of increased number of civilian arms is negative for individual and community security as it provides a violent and deadly option for responding to localized community conflict.

Similar security dilemmas in relation to insecurity of illegal actors were also described by survey respondents and panellists. Illegal actors involved in smuggling rely on basic security mechanisms to carry out operations. When national insecurity in a community or region increases, smugglers respond by further arming themselves.

“The smugglers are “victims” of the militarization they themselves contribute to by making weapons available for illegal actors such as armed groups and terrorists.”

Webinar Panellist

The financial and economic status of a population can be an indirect factor in the demand for SALW. Armed groups and organized crime often prey on vulnerable and easily-influenced citizens such as youth when recruiting for their operations.

“When unemployment is high and a lack of other opportunities for young people is present, consideration of joining an armed group becomes a livelihood decision.”

Webinar Panellist
As such, armed groups are responsible for perpetuating a never-ending cycle of increased demand for small arms, destabilizing regions and smuggling arms which keeps conflicts hot, while also taking advantage of economically vulnerable communities and youth. Based on this cycle it is essential to identify root causes that drive the demand for small arms in societies in North Africa and Sahel region as well as consider how the societies and communities in question function and determine the strength and stability with which government or local authority responds to the needs of its citizens.

“Issues around Small arms and Light weapons are a response to issues around justice, fairness, discrimination and domination” Webinar Panellist

**Conditions that Enable Flow of Illicit Arms**

![Figure 1: Enabling Conditions for Arms Flow](image)

Figure 1\(^{17}\) is a graphic representation of the survey response on this topic and is very much in line with what was expressed by several panellists during the dialogue. Consensus was achieved in confirming that armed conflict is the number one factor which enables arms to flow through, to or from, a country. Other conditions mentioned in the survey and reinforced by the panel relate to internal conflict, and also include corruption, weak states, regional power struggles, illegal armed groups, vulnerable borders and illegal exploitation of resources. A condition that was highlighted as causing these enabling conditions is the complacency of the government. In situations where a country is a hub or destination for

\(^{17}\) Source: SALW Survey data
arms flow, the government or parts of it, is usually involved either directly, through corruption, or failing to act responsibly.

During the dialogue such complacency was especially highlighted for two specific countries: Libya and Sudan, where many of these conditions are clearly visible. Libya was described by several panellists as the source of much instability in the region with particular regard to SALW. The current situation in Libya primarily relates to the events of 2011 and the downfall of long-time dictator Muammar Gaddafi. The situation since 2011 has been splintered and unstable, with no authority in full control which left stockpiles, borders and state institutions in disarray. In 2017 the Islamic State briefly took control of coastal cities and with no authority in full control, stockpiles, borders and state institutions became extremely vulnerable.

“Situation in Libya is getting worse, more foreign fighters and despite arms embargo from UN resolution 1970 more arms are available in Libya.”

Webinar Panellist

Additional commentary during the webinar added that although the collapse in Libya is critical to understanding the current situation with small and light weapons in the region, it is not the only factor driving instability. Prior to 2011 there was already an increase in private arms ownership in MENA, increased arms manufacturing in the Arab world and arms were flowing across North Africa - but in significantly less numbers than today.

Unlike Libya, Sudan on the other hand has not fallen quite as far into instability after the fall of its long-time dictator Omar Al-Bashir as recently as 2019. Due to the decades long conflict resulting in the creation of South Sudan in 2011 and the regional conflict in Darfur, Sudan has experienced war within its territory for a prolonged period. Sudan has been and still is a hub in the arms flow within the region for two reasons. First, the government has armed various rebel groups in the region, and second as a result of its geographical location holding a sea border and 7 neighbouring countries (before 2011 Sudan had 9 neighbouring countries).
Routes for Illicit Arms Flows in North Africa

“Libya destabilizes the whole region, terror fuelled by abundance of weapons” Webinar Panellist

This map visualizes arms flow routes as described in the survey results. Currently the conflict and instability cluster is located in the Sahel, including Mali, Niger, Chad and Burkina Faso. These countries are connected to arms flows from North Africa mainly via Libya and Sudan, and also from Mauritania.

Effectiveness of International Interventions

When looking for effective interventions to combat trafficking, the UN has a strong mandate through its Programme of Action to Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects from 2001. The UN PoA seeks to address the complex issue through marking of arms, record keeping, tracing and most importantly as a platform for cooperation. The UN is also involved through arms embargoes, peace processes and peacekeeping missions. Currently the relevant missions are MINUSCA in Central African Republic, MINUSMA in Mali and the AU and UN hybrid mission, UNAMID, in Darfur. With regards to the UN missions and issue of small arms, panellists expressed that in recent years the UN missions have been restricted by weak mandates relating to small arms. The Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) that came into force in 2014 was a landmark and will continue to be important going forward. The UN are involved in DDR processes across Africa however panellists indicated that these DDR missions have not been very effective in relation to

18 Map developed based on specific and general SALW trafficking routes provided via the survey
ending SALW proliferation. An example given is that DDR processes in Sierra Leone and Liberia failed, and as result weapons are still circulating in the region.

Regional organisations and governments outside Africa are also important actors, mainly as donors or supporting train and equip initiatives. The 2020-2025 EU action plan on firearms trafficking states that: “cooperation with countries in North Africa and the Middle East need to be particularly stepped up.”

“There is a lack of coordination, information sharing and joint strategy for the region”.

Webinar Panellist

The problem in many situations is there are numerous initiatives, and they are not necessarily aligned in approach or mission scope. As an example, according to the SALW survey, currently in Mali there is a peacekeeping operation, two European Union training missions (one military and another for internal security forces), the French operation Barkan, Force Conjointe G5 Sahel, and a bilateral training and equipment program. ECOWAS and the African Union employ a standby force to deal with the issue of SALW. Within a regional strategy, there is clearly a need for enhanced coordination and information sharing and possibly train and equip operations do have a role to fulfil.

“In the past 10-15 years a lot of investments have gone into extremely costly train and equip operations and the number of actors involved has mushroomed.” Webinar Panellist

Many operations in the region attempt to build mitigation programs without a solid foundation. This may not be due to lack of coordination but rather that States in question often having low capacity for accountability and oversight with regard to the security institutions that are proposed to be strengthened. These security institutions risk becoming many times more a part of the problem then of the solution. What is needed are more long-term engagements which build foundations, increasing state capacity, including parliamentarians and politicians, carrying out research, and engaging civil society. The end goal needs to lead to more accountable and transparent governments.

Many panellists pointed to the futility of trying to solve the problem of SALW without a holistic approach. Increasing military presence, arms control, improving coordination information sharing and monitoring can never solve the issue as long as root causes remain unaddressed.

“If people arm themselves for their own security or if they raise arms to get their voice heard they will find weapons, there is no stopping the flow of weapons unless the conditions creating the need are addressed.”

Webinar Panellist

A general consensus among panellists was that in a conflict area, it’s not an effective approach to increase the number of weapons on the ground, what is needed is disarmament and a culture of peace. In cases where train and equip programs are considered there should be also be conditions and requirements to be fulfilled by the state to ensure a lasting solution.

Despite regional and international initiatives, assurances and commitments to address the issues, panellists indicated that political will is lacking amongst governments in Africa as well as among international actors. The main indicator clarifying this sentiment is that arms continue to flow through the various ways described above, from legal arms manufacturing firms to the regional conflict cluster. An individual survey respondent posed the question of why international firms producing SALW are not facing sanctions from international courts. Until political will touches supply as well as demand panellists and survey respondents were sceptical about major gains in combatting SALW in North Africa.

**Need for a Regional Response**

“You cannot control arms in one country in a region, as the arms just slip across the border to another country.”

Respondent, SALW survey

Survey respondents as well as the panellists agreed that any response needs to have a regional perspective and reach. Currently there is no such regional response in place specifically in North Africa. One survey respondent alluded to the fact that the North African regional economic community, the Arab Maghreb Union has failed to set up instruments in relation to SALW for North Africa.

On the African continent, the AU has been the most active in addressing issues around SALW trafficking. In November 2016, the AU launched its ‘Silencing the guns in Africa by 2020’ initiative. The measures include an annual one-month amnesty period, during which people may surrender illegally owned weapons to the authorities without being subject to disclosure, humiliation, arrest or prosecution. Even though its abundantly clear the guns have not been silenced in Africa by 2020, the initiative has been important as it builds on previous initiatives including; the Bamako Declaration on an African Common Position on the Illicit Proliferation, Circulation and Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons from
2000 and the AU Strategy on the Control of Illicit Proliferation, Circulation and Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons from 2011. A key organisation in carrying out initiatives on SALW for the African Union is the Regional Centre on Small Arms in the Great Lakes Region, the Horn of Africa and Bordering States (RECSA). RECSA is the only inter-governmental organisation within Africa who is dedicated solely to stemming the flow and proliferation of illicit arms.

In West Africa ECOWAS is a main actor in relation to peace and security and the issue of SALW trafficking. The conflict cluster in West Africa (Liberia, Sierra Leone and Ivory Coast,) of the 90’s and early years of the new millennia drove arms to the West. Partially in response to this development 16 ECOWAS members agreed in 2006 to the ECOWAS Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, their munitions and other related material. The convention called for an establishment of a national commission on small arms to be formed in each country, with these commissions forming a network. Active civil society in the region was key in the process that leads to the convention. Although it has been a decade since the conflict was resolved, the routes are well established and remain active on a smaller scale. Today West Africa is connected to North Africa and the Sahel route through the Ivory Coast and Nigeria and further to Cameroon. Other panellists mentioned an Eastern route from the Horn of Africa towards conflicts in the east and central Africa, mainly DRC.

For North Africa to follow West Africa and develop a regional approach several obstacles have to be overcome. The main obstacle is lack of political will amongst the governments in the region to engage on the issue of SALW, as expressed by several panellists. One panellist suggested that there currently seems to be little interest in arms monitoring activities in relation to the ATT in North Africa. Corruption is likely a factor behind the lack of political will.

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20 Information summarized from SALW survey respondents’ comments
21 Summary of statements from Panelists and SALW Survey participants
CONCLUSIONS and PANELLISTS’ SUGGESTIONS

The following conclusions and suggestions are developed in response to the findings summarized from both the webinar dialogue and survey responses. Some of the suggestions by the panellists are specific to NATO, while others are also generally applicable to actors involved in stemming the flow of illicit arms in North Africa. These conclusions and suggestions provide the regional perspective of the multifaceted, complex and grave situation surrounding SALW flows, and provide the panellists’ views on areas in which NATO and other actors can unite against the proliferation of SALW trafficking.

Border Control

Increased border control is the most obvious recommendation to stop the flow of illicit arms. In Africa borders are often in essence artificial, as they were often drawn arbitrarily by colonial powers, without any consideration for people and nations. When people live their life as if there were no borders the job of securing the border becomes very difficult. Frequently it is those in the geographical area of the border area that are involved in smuggling. Therefore, citizens especially need to be involved in designing effective boarder control. A citizen engagement border control approach should be considered.

Panellists’ Suggestion: When planning and implementing initiatives aiming at securing borders, such as monitoring, patrol training and information sharing, it’s vital to take the local context into account and devise a plan that is in tune with local conditions.

Train and Equip with a ‘Do No Harm’ Approach

The countries in most need of secure borders are frequently those where the risk of diversion from train and equip activities is the greatest. Libya is currently causing instability in the region as arms flow freely across its borders. However, engaging in a train and equip initiative would quite likely increase the availability of weapons in the area. The generally accepted perspective is that it is preferable not to increase the availability of weapons in a conflict area. Reconciling this with the fact that borders need to be secured is necessary, or at least finding a middle ground.

Panellists’ Suggestion: In general, more stringent criteria should be applied when deciding whether or not to employ a Do Not Harm approach, particularly to avoid any chance of engaging in train and equip activities when the possible harm to a situation outweighs its possible benefits. To do so, NATO could consider a public policy which should specify the conditions for when a reasonable assurance of Do No Harm is in place. Such policy could limit train and equip to countries which have previously joined the arms trade Treaty and abide by Human Rights Conventions and International Humanitarian Law. When such a policy is in place, NATO should also advocate for its members states to observe it.

22 Recurring statement from SALW survey about border control
Regional Frameworks and Cooperation

In the panel discussion there was broad consensus that the problem of illicit arms flows cannot be tackled by acting in one or a few countries, a regional approach is required. It is also evident that one actor can’t resolve the issue. Governments, international organisations, intergovernmental organisations, researchers, civil society and other community leaders must act in alignment, and more coordinated ways.

Panellists’ Suggestion:

- Support programs that focus on: national legislation to regulate small arms, regional weapons collection programs integrated into DDR, regional convention on arms trade and trafficking and continued strategic engagement to increase government commitment to the ATT.
- Support programs to build capacity of the local civil society and parliamentarians on issues relating to SALW.
- NATO can stimulate a regional policy coordination response by supporting various entities to conduct a self-assessment of preparedness to deal with issues related to SALW.
- NATO can advocate for a monitoring mandate in the UN peacekeeping missions and a regional counter arms proliferation operation which can carry out monitoring operations with host states.
- NATO can support common security strategies and policies by developing or supporting the development of a common platform for sharing best practices, information and data across borders and between different actors.

Transparency and Data

The lack of transparency and data when it comes to illicit arms flow is a major obstacle to developing good policies to address the issue and problem. The tools are available. For example the UN and other agencies are collecting data, NATO has its SALW & MA Information Sharing Platform and many other actors are also engaged in research and data collection. There should be a political will for a shift to transparency, both in arms exporting nations and in nations with significant problems due to SALW.

Panellists’ Suggestion:

- Increasing the level of transparency among actors should be an overarching goal of NATOs engagement with the issue.
- Reinforce local capacities in the affected countries for research, data collection and modernization and computerization of stock management through trainings and joint exercises.
- Support innovation in the use of data driven early warning systems and further development of easy to use technology for non-experts to be able to analyse and document the flows of ammunitions and weapons.
Holistic Approach

While NATO currently employs a holistic approach in its efforts to curb illicit flows of weapons by including preventive and mitigating measures at the regional and national level, the panel discussion concluded that more is needed to address the flow and demand of SALW in the region. Common understanding from the panellists was the continuation of SALW trafficking is interconnected with many security, political, economic, and social issues and therefore it cannot be solved without considering and incorporating these issues as well.

Panellists’ Suggestion:

- Identify ways to increase North Africa governments’ responsiveness to citizen needs and support addressing root causes such as social inequity, livelihoods and security in order to reduce the demand for SALW in communities.
- Support implementation of proven traditional and localized conflict resolution approaches which may help transform conflict. Encourage efforts to foster an environment that allows space for voices of dissent within societal structures.
- NATO should continue to ensure gender integration and wherever possible endorse, support and commit to have women included in the peace process and inclusion in terms of data collection surrounding SALW issues.
MONCEF KARTAS
Moncef Kartas specializes in security, peace and development, notably on conflict transformation, security sector governance, armed violence reduction, SALW, informal economy and border communities. From 2016 to 2020, Moncef served three mandates on the UN Panel of Experts on Libya established pursuant to UN Security Council resolution 1973 (2011). Currently, Moncef is a non-resident affiliate researcher at the Centre on Conflict, Development, and Peacebuilding and works as an international consultant. His last assignments included field work in the Lake Chad Basin as an International Conflict Prevention and Recovery Advisor for UNDP in Maroua, Cameroon. Previously Moncef established and led Small Arms Survey’s multiyear, multi-donor North Africa programme. As a post-doctoral researcher at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, he led a range of research projects including on the role of security actors in post-colonial state formations in Tunisia; urban violence and resilience in Rwanda; and a peace and conflict impact assessment in Madagascar. He regularly advises ministries and international and national organisations and deliver training to government officials and civil society representatives on strategic development and learning in security sector reform and community-engagement. Moncef holds a PhD in International Relations from the Graduate Institute and an MA in political science, international law and philosophy from the Ludwig-Maximilian University, Munich.

MAJI PETERX (PhD)
Maji Peterx (PhD) is an Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP) Lead Facilitator and also facilitates Trauma Consciousness and Resilience and is very experienced in Compassionate Connection. He has facilitated well over 250 AVP, Trauma and other peace promotion related workshops not just in Nigeria but Internationally (US, Guatemala, Kenya, Rwanda, South Africa and UK). He introduced AVP to Kaduna, Kano, Nassarawa and Plateau state and was involved with the project in Delta, Rivers, Enugu, Anambra, Kwara, Osun, Oyo and Lagos States, all in Nigeria between 2002 and 2006. He introduced Trauma Consciousness to the AVP group in South Africa in 2015 and was in the team that trained Facilitators in Trauma Consciousness in Minnesota USA in 2014. He was the in the team of facilitators that introduced AVP to Liberia in 2013 and he has also facilitated peace building activities in Amman, Jordan. At the moment he is facilitating Prevention and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE) activities and training lay counsellors as first responders to traumatized persons who are victims and survivors of Boko Haram insurgency in the north eastern part of Nigeria.
Mohammed Elnour
Mohammed Elnour is a humanitarian worker from Sudan with more than 14 years of experience in humanitarian assistance, rapid need assessments, protection, human rights, conflict analysis humanitarian coordination, programs management, early recovery, population movements (forced displacement, return, and relocation), project management, he has worked for a Human Rights Organisation in Egypt, as well as National and International Organisations and the UN in Sudan. Mohammed has worked for more than 5 years as Field Coordination Officer for the office of the UN Resident Coordinator in Sudan working on both relief and early recovery operations implemented by the NGOs and UN agencies. He has served as protection assistant for the IOM with the main task of tracking of internally displaced persons movements. Also served as Protection officer for Sudan Social Development Organisation SUDO with the main responsibility of human rights monitoring, project management, and relief operations.

Shirine Jurdi
Shirine Jurdi started her career working on consultancy projects with the Ministry of the Return of the Displaced, UNODC and as a researcher of Lebanese Heritage at LAU. In 2003, Shirine joined WILPF-Lebanon and is now an executive member of the Lebanon Section as well as the MENA Regional Representative. Shirine is interested in and worked on research and training on issues pertaining to WPS agenda, women substantive and representative participation, conflict resolution, transitional justice and, lately, on R2P. Moreover, in March 2019, Shirine has started working with GPPAC as the MENAPPAC Regional Liaison Officer. As such, looks forward to working with partners within MENAPPAC along the strategy set by GPPAC in terms of WPS in the context of MENA. Another objective of Shirine’s is to strengthen and empower partners in MENAPPAC in both strengthening their network within their country and among partners in the MENAPPAC towards enhancement of the WPS agenda and to strengthen GPPAC strategy within human security in EWES and prevention discourse.

Professor Ammar Moussi
Professor Ammar Moussi was born in 1962 and graduated from Algerian University in 1986. On December 1991 fulfilled a PhD at Nottingham University, UK on Electrical Engineering and started working at Algerian university since 1992. In the period 2002-2007, he was elected as Member of the Algerian Parliament (APN). Again, in the year 2017 he is elected for the second term and he is now a member of the Finance and Budget commission of the National Assembly. In addition, he is member of the parliamentary assembly of the Mediterranean PAM and member of the executive bureau of the Arab Renewable Energy Commission AREC.
H. E. Doctor Engineer Marianne Amir Azer

H. E. Doctor Engineer Marianne Amir Azer is a member of the Egyptian Parliament, a member of Telecommunications and Foreign Affairs Committees in the Parliament, and a member of the International Parliament for Tolerance and Peace (IPTP) where she is the Chair of Women and Youth Committee. Additionally, she is the Vice President of the Information Systems Audit and Control Association (ISACA) board in Egypt. Before joining the parliament, she was the Advisor to the Minister of Communication and Information Technology for Strategic Initiatives. Dr. Azer obtained her BSc, MSc, and PhD in Electronics and Communications Engineering. She has more than 18 years of experience in Communications and Information Technology. Throughout her career, she held several positions, either academic or managerial, at several universities and organisations. To mention a few, the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology, the National Telecommunication Institute, Nile University, Cairo University, the American University in Cairo, the French University, the Arab Academy for Science and Technology and Maritime Transport. Dr. Azer is an author/co-author of over 70 publications in refereed international journals and/or conference proceedings. She has received awards, certificates, and fellowships from different international institutions. To name a few, the US Department of State, Academy of Science, Research, and Technology, Google, the University of Michigan Dearborn, and the British Council. She is also an alumni of the 12th Leaders in Governance Program (LGP), Singapore.

Mr. Félix Kokou Aklavon

Mr. Félix Kokou AKLAVON holds two master’s degrees, one in International Security and Defence at the University of Grenoble in France and another master’s degree in Conflict, Peace and Security at Kofi Anana International Peacekeeping Training Centre (KAIPTC). Founding member and former Vice-President of the West African Network on Peacebuilding (WANEP - TOGO), he was the president of several organisations or networks in Togo including the West African Network for Action Against Small Arms (WAANSA). As such, he is active in several campaigns against the illicit circulation of arms. He is therefore a member of CONTROL ARMS, IANSA (of which he was a member of the Global Advisory Board). On the African continent, he is known as a specialist in SALW having brought his expertise to ECOWAS and other African organisations. He took part in all stages of the negotiation process of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), of which he is one of the experts. Currently, Mr. AKLAVON Kokou Félix is the program director of CRESED (Center for Research and Studies on Security and Development). He is of Togolese nationality.
David Lochhead
David Lochhead currently works as a Senior Researcher with the Geneva based Small Arms Survey on IED component trafficking and diversion of commercial explosives and as a Technical Advisor to UNDP Mali on counter-poaching. He has 15 years of field experience with the UN in Peacekeeping Operations in the Horn of Africa/East and West Africa in conflict affected areas, working on conflict sensitive development, arms control, border security, SSR/DDR, conflict analysis and joint operations management. Mr. Lochhead was until recently a Senior SSR Officer with MINUSMA, responsible for the MINUSMA Border Security and Counter-Proliferation Programme, combining strategic-level policy development, arms and ammunition tracing and border strengthening efforts linked to the mission's mandate, the broader UN Sahel Strategy and counter-trafficking/counter-terrorism efforts. He has also been involved in numerous arms and ammunition tracing missions, including in collaboration with UN Panels of Experts, in support of UNMIS(S) and MINUSMA Human Rights Division investigations and UN Boards of Inquiry.

Giovanna Maletta
Giovanna Maletta is a Researcher in the Dual-Use and Arms Trade Control Programme at SIPRI. Her research interests include issues related to arms transfers and SALW controls; export controls; EU non-proliferation and disarmament policies and EU engagement with arms export policies. Giovanna’s work also involves mapping cooperation and assistance activities in the field of arms transfer and SALW controls and relevant to the implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) and the UN Programme of Action on SALW (UNPOA). Additionally, Giovanna acts as a Project Coordinator for activities related to SIPRI’s participation in the EU Non-proliferation and Disarmament Consortium. Prior to joining SIPRI, Giovanna worked as a Blue Book Trainee in the Disarmament, Non-proliferation and Arms Export Control Division of the European External Action Service (EEAS) and as an Intern in the International Cooperation Branch of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).