

Forum: Disarmament Committee  
Issue: Addressing the illegal trade and supply of weapons  
to countries involved in armed conflict  
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## **I. Introduction**

"The illicit trade and transfer of small arms and light weapons fuels conflicts, exacerbates violence and insecurity, and contributes to widespread human suffering"(United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs).

This quote from the United Nations emphasizes the negative impact of the illegal trade and transfer of small arms and light weapons. Member states have repeatedly become involved in conflicts that they have no active involvement in, backing rebel groups or invading countries for economic or political interests. The illegal trade and supply of weapons to countries involved in armed conflict is a global problem that poses significant threats to human security, international peace, and stability. This issue has been a longstanding concern for the international community, as it can contribute to exacerbating violence, prolonging conflicts, and impeding post-conflict peacebuilding efforts. Addressing this issue requires concerted efforts from multiple stakeholders, including governments, international organizations, civil society, and the private sector, to strengthen arms control and disarmament measures, promote responsible arms trade practices, and prevent the diversion of weapons to non-state actors and other unauthorized parties.

## **II. Definition of Key Terms**

## **A. Illicit Trade**

illicit trade refers to the illegal movement and transfer of weapons, ammunition, and other military equipment across borders or within countries. Arms trafficking often involves the use of black markets and other illicit channels, and can be driven by a range of factors, including profit, ideology, political instability, and armed conflict. Illicit arms trafficking can have significant negative impacts, as it can fuel violent conflict, undermine peace and security, and contribute to the spread of terrorism and organized crime. Countries and international organizations often work to combat illicit arms trafficking through measures such as arms control agreements, weapons embargoes, and law enforcement efforts.

## **B. Disarmament**

An arms embargo is a type of sanction that prohibits the sale, transfer, or shipment of weapons and related military equipment to a particular country or region. The goal of an arms embargo is to limit the ability of countries or groups to acquire the means to engage in armed conflict, commit human rights abuses, or engage in other destabilizing activities. Arms embargoes may be imposed by individual countries or by international organizations, such as the United Nations, and may be enforced through a range of measures, including inspections, seizures, and penalties for non-compliance. Arms embargoes are a common tool used in international conflict resolution and peacekeeping efforts, and can be an effective means of promoting stability and reducing violence in conflict-prone regions.

## **C. Sanctions**

Sanctions are often used in the context of arms control and disarmament as a means of discouraging the proliferation of weapons, ammunition, and military technology. In the arms control context, sanctions may be used to punish countries or groups that violate arms control agreements, such as by engaging in arms trafficking. Sanctions can include economic measures, such as trade restrictions or asset freezes, as well as diplomatic measures, such as travel bans or visa restrictions. In some cases, military measures, such as a naval blockade, may be used to enforce arms sanctions.

#### **D. Conflict Zones**

Conflict zones are geographic areas where armed conflict, violence, or political instability is prevalent. They can be characterized by high levels of violence, including armed clashes, bombings, and acts of terrorism, as well as by significant displacement of people, destruction of infrastructure and property, and violation of human rights. They can arise from a variety of causes, including ethnic or religious tensions, political power struggles, territorial disputes, and resource competition, among others. Conflict zones can also be fueled by external factors, such as arms trafficking, illicit trade, and foreign intervention.

#### **E. Arms Control**

Arms control refers to the practice of limiting the proliferation, development, and use of military weapons and technology through international agreements, treaties, and other cooperative measures. The goal is to reduce the risk of armed conflict and to promote stability and security.

Arms control measures can take various forms, including limiting the production and stockpiling of certain weapons, reducing the number of military forces and equipment, and establishing verification and inspection mechanisms to monitor compliance with agreements. These agreements can be bilateral or multilateral, and can involve both nuclear and conventional weapons.

#### **F. Proliferation**

proliferation refers to the spread or increase in the number of weapons or weapons technology in circulation, particularly those that have the potential to cause harm or destruction. This includes conventional weapons such as small arms and light weapons. The proliferation of weapons is often seen as a threat to global peace and security, as it can contribute to the escalation of conflicts and increase the risk of weapons falling into the hands of non-state actors or terrorists.

### **III. General Overview**

#### **A. The impact of illegal trade on different regions**

## **1. The Middle East**

The illicit trade of weapons in the middle east has had a significant impact on the region. The issue is particularly acute in countries like Syria, Yemen, and Libya, where ongoing conflicts have created a vast demand for weapons. In Yemen, the conflict has resulted in an estimated 3.6 million people being displaced from their homes, and more than 20 million people in need of humanitarian assistance. The conflict has also resulted in the deaths of more than 230,000 people. The consequences of the illicit trade of weapons in the Middle East are far-reaching. In addition to fueling conflicts, it has contributed to the rise of non-state actors and terrorist groups, who have used these weapons to launch attacks both within and outside the region. The proliferation of weapons has also undermined governance and stability in many countries, making it more difficult to achieve peace and security.

### **B. North Africa**

The illicit trade of weapons has had a significant impact on North Africa, contributing to political instability, violence, and conflict in the region. In countries like Libya, weapons proliferation has been a key driver of the ongoing civil war, with various factions vying for control of territory and resources. Similarly, in Mali and other Sahel countries, weapons trafficking has fueled the growth of extremist groups like Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb and the Islamic State, which have carried out attacks on civilians, military personnel, and UN peacekeeping forces. Moreover, the flow of weapons into North Africa has intensified existing tensions between neighboring countries, as well as between governments and non-state actors. In addition to contributing to conflict and insecurity, arms trafficking also has negative economic and social impacts, hindering development and undermining efforts to promote peace and stability.

## **IV. Major Parties Involved**

### **A. UN Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA):**

UNODA was established in 1998 to promote disarmament and arms control on a global scale. Unoda provides technical assistance and support to member states in the areas of arms control, including measures to prevent the diversion of weapons to

conflict zones. They also implemented the UN Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. They also played a vital role in negotiating and adopting the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), which attempts to regulate the trade of conventional weapons and prevent their diversion to illegal markets. UNODA allows for a coordinated, international response to the issue of disarmament.

### **B. International Criminal Police Organization (Interpol):**

Interpol was founded in 1956 to promote international police cooperation and facilitate the exchange of information between law enforcement and agencies from different countries; they currently encompass 194 member countries. According to Interpol's 2020 Annual report, they carried out over 1,200 operations combating the illegal arms trade, and seized over 86,00 firearms and nearly 18,000 pieces of ammunition. In 2017 they launched the operation "Trigger VI" which targeted illicit trafficking of firearms in West Africa, resulting in the Arrest of over 160 suspects, and the seizure of more than 2000 firearms and 20,000 pieces of ammunition.

### **C. United States of America**

The USA has been actively working towards ending the illicit trade of weapons to countries involved in organized crime. They are major proponents of sanctions, specifically arms embargoes, against countries found to deal illicitly, such as Iran, North Korea, and Venezuela. The USA has implemented strict export controls on military and dual-use technology to prevent their misuse and diversion to illicit actors. The USA also requires companies to obtain licenses for certain exports and conducts end-use checks to ensure compliance with export controls.

### **D. Iran:**

Iran has been accused of supplying weapons to multiple armed groups and countries involved in conflict. In particular the Houthi rebels in Yemen, providing them with missiles and drones. The Houthis have used these weapons on Saudi Arabia, escalating the situation in Yemen. They have also been accused of providing military assistance to the regime of the Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. The Syrian conflict started in 2011 and resulted in the displacement and suffering of millions of people. The international community has placed sanctions on Iran for their actions, including an Arms Embargo sponsored by the UN. Aside from their involvement in the Middle East, a UN report identified Iran as a source of illicit Arms in the Horn of Africa.

## **V. Timeline of Events**

<b><u>Date</u></b>	<b><u>Event</u></b>
2001	The United Nations General Assembly adopts the Program of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate



	the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light weapons in All its Aspects
2004	The UN Security Council adopts resolution 1540, which call on all states to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction
2005	The United Nations establishes the Group of Governmental Experts on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light weapons in All its Aspects
2006	The UN Security Council imposes an arms embargo on Iran
2008	The UN Security Council adopts resolution 2117, which strengthens and imposes additional sanctions on the Iran arms embargo
2016	The UN adopts the Arms Trade Treaty

## **VII. Conclusion**

Addressing the illegal trade and supply of weapons to countries involved in armed conflict is a complex and challenging issue. Dealing weapons illicitly to rebel groups and countries involved in armed conflict wreaks havoc on the country, and exacerbates. There have been multiple attempts to solve this issue on a global scale, including sanction and embargoes. These have so far proven to be unsuccessful. addressing the root causes of conflict, such as poverty and inequality, is crucial to

reducing the demand for weapons in conflict zones. The international community must work together to address this issue, with a particular focus on strengthening governance and promoting transparency in arms transfers.

## VIII. Questions to Consider

- What are the factors that drive the demand for weapons in conflict zones, and how can they be addressed?
- What role do states, international organizations, and non-state actors play in facilitating the illegal trade and supply of weapons?
- What role do arms manufacturers and suppliers play in the illegal trade and supply of weapons to conflict zones, and how can their activities be monitored and regulated?
- To what extent do sanctions help or exacerbate the situation?
- What is the impact of arms transfers to non-state actors in conflict zones, such as militias and rebel groups?
- How does your country stand on sanctioning member states?

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