



Small arms and light weapons**Report of the Secretary-General***Summary*

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The same weapons — whether in the hands of government forces or of others — that may have been meant to assist in bringing order may instead bring havoc on a massive scale.

In particular, the diversion of weaponry is a colossal problem in many parts of the world. It allows rebels, gangs, criminal organizations, pirates, terrorist groups and other perpetrators to exponentially bolster their power.

Poor weapons management is an area of alarming concern. Many States lack thorough planning, consistent attention and adequate resources to ensure safe storage, handling, transportation and disposal.

A key common denominator in all issues on the agenda of the Security Council is that availability, ownership and use of weapons and ammunition significantly determine the dynamics of the crisis. If the weapons situation is not consistently dealt with, exacerbation or relapse into renewed fighting remains a paramount risk.

The present report contains 14 recommendations for consideration by the Security Council.



I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 2117 (2013), the Security Council requested me to continue to submit to the Council on a biennial basis a report on the issue of small arms and light weapons, including on the implementation of that resolution.
2. While the focus of the present report is on small arms and light weapons, including their ammunition, the increased diversion and misuse of heavy weapons cannot be disregarded, as has recently been observed with the diversion of weapons from Iraq and Libya to the Syrian Arab Republic, Ukraine and Yemen.
3. Weapons are force multipliers. They enable their user to dramatically enhance the ability to project power and to exercise coercive control within and across national borders. Each crisis or conflict dealt with by the Security Council has its own characteristics. Yet, a key common denominator in all issues on the Council's agenda is that availability, ownership and use of weapons and ammunition significantly determine the dynamics of the crisis. If the weapons situation is not consistently dealt with, exacerbation or relapse into renewed fighting remains a paramount risk.
4. Section II of the present report frames the issue of arms and ammunition, focusing not only on conflict and post-conflict situations, but also on situations of transnational organized crime and terrorism, and armed violence.
5. Section III examines ways of addressing the risk of the misuse, diversion and illicit circulation of arms and ammunition. The section first highlights government responsibility in proper weapons use, safe storage, sound legislation and adequate procedures for the tracing and destruction of weapons.
6. Subsequently, it looks at addressing the illicit circulation of arms and ammunition, including through arms embargo monitoring, peacekeeping activities, security sector reform, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes and the strengthening of the rule of law.

II. Framing the issue of small arms and light weapons

7. States have an inherent right to self-defence and may use armed force in conformity with the Charter of the United Nations. Apart from arming their national armed and security forces, most countries allow private security companies and citizens, under conditions defined in national laws, to own certain firearms and weapons and use them for lawful purposes.
8. The same weapons — whether in the hands of government forces or of others — that may have been meant to assist in bringing order may instead bring havoc on a massive scale. This can occur when government forces start misusing the arsenals at their disposal, arms from legal stocks are diverted into illicit use or already existing illicit arms arrive in crisis areas.
9. In particular, the diversion of weaponry is a colossal problem in many parts of the world. It allows rebels, gangs, criminal organizations, pirates, terrorist groups and other perpetrators to exponentially bolster their power. Diversion may occur as a result of a transfer without proper controls, unauthorized retransfer, thefts from

poorly secured stockpiles, hand-outs to armed groups or barter involving natural resources. Corruption is a problem often associated with diversion.

10. Poor weapons management is an area of alarming concern. Many States lack thorough planning and consistent attention to safe storage, handling, transportation and disposal. Poor national inventory practices mean that surpluses cannot be identified, leading to extensive build-ups of frequently unnecessary stockpiles.¹

11. Small arms typically have a lifespan of multiple decades, yet their real value depends on an uninterrupted supply of ammunition. It is sometimes argued that the trade in ammunition should be excluded from international regulation because of the high volume of its production and trade, which would render it difficult for Governments to warrant the detailed levels of record-keeping that would be needed for ammunition tracing and for the proper regulation of its trade. However, as consumer traceability has evolved in other fields, such as pharmaceuticals and food and agricultural products — goods with an even higher turnover — the question of including ammunition in arms regulation seems to be more a matter of political prioritization than one of technical or logistical impossibility. It is encouraging that the Arms Trade Treaty covers ammunition in addition to weapons and their parts and components.

12. High levels of illicit arms and ammunition in circulation contribute to insecurity, cause harm to civilians and severely constrain assistance activities. The United Nations and other organizations providing protection, humanitarian aid and development resources are confronted with this reality on a daily basis.

13. Because of the immense havoc weapons and ammunition can wreak, any Government that decides to export them must realize the profound international responsibility it has for every transfer it authorizes. Conversely, a Government importing or procuring from national production must ensure that it will use these weapons only to provide for the safety and security of its citizens and that it has the capacity to safeguard all weapons and ammunition within its possession throughout their life cycles.

14. Weapons and ammunition are hardware, namely, physical commodities on which, in principle, measurable action can be undertaken. Warehouses can be upgraded, surpluses can be destroyed, illicit arms can be collected and serial numbers can be recorded and traced. Undeniably, in many situations, it may be difficult to undertake these actions; I underline, however, that the concrete character of weapons management should warrant unrelenting attention.

A. Conflict and post-conflict situations

15. Within the past decade, over 250 conflicts have affected all parts of the world.² About 55,000 people perish annually as a direct consequence of armed conflict.³ The number of those displaced by conflict has reached levels not seen

¹ James Bevan, ed., *Conventional Ammunition in Surplus: A Reference Guide* (Geneva, Small Arms Survey and others, 2008).

² Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, *SIPRI Yearbook 2014: Armaments, Disarmament and International Security* (Oxford University Press, 2014).

³ Secretariat of the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development, *Global Burden of Armed Violence 2011: Lethal Encounters* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2011).

since the Second World War: currently, more than 33 million people are displaced because of conflict and violence.⁴ Chillingly, children have been recruited and used by armed forces and groups, killed and maimed, forced into displacement and made victims of sexual violence in 23 conflict situations around the world (see [A/68/878-S/2014/339](#)).

16. The widespread availability of small arms and light weapons and their ammunition is a key enabler of conflict. Arms and ammunition may originate from varied sources. Shipments of small arms to conflict zones from abroad are most often small-scale consignments, namely, a steady trickle of weapons across porous borders. The cumulative destabilizing force of such small-scale trade — for example, as equipment of foreign terrorist fighters, pirates or armed groups — is not to be underestimated. Domestically, small arms and ammunition often enter illicit circulation through distribution, theft, corruption, pilferage and resale. Government depots remain prominent sources. These can amount to massive injections of weapons with a wide regional effect, as has been the case recently in Iraq and Libya. To a considerable extent, addressing this risk is a matter of managing surpluses. Authoritative assessments estimate that some 40 percent of military firearms in the arsenals of State armed forces can be considered surplus and should therefore be priority items for destruction.⁵

17. Most modern-day peacekeeping and peacebuilding operations include disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes which normally address the demand-driven aspects of arms transfers. To be effective, these programmes should lead to the rapid disassembling of warring parties and the reintegration of former combatants into society. However, these goals can be seriously frustrated if weapons and ammunition continue to be easily available to warring parties. Such parties, aware of their ability to quickly re-tool their fighting forces, may have an incentive to limit the movement of peacekeepers, to engage in systematic violations of peace or ceasefire accords or to threaten withdrawal from such accords, thus perpetuating climates of impunity, enhancing the risk of conflict recurrence and undermining the international community's investment in building peace. The linkage between arms transfers and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration has also been recognized by the Security Council which, for instance, has made the lifting of sanctions on arms transfers to Côte d'Ivoire conditional upon progress made in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (see Council resolution 2045 (2012)).

18. The conduct of free, inclusive and credible elections is a critical peacebuilding goal, which often requires extensive international assistance. This goal cannot be properly achieved, however, in environments where electoral censuses cannot be conducted safely for lack of security, members of political parties cannot move freely to support organizations and campaigns, electoral agents are intimidated by armed groups, and voters are reluctant to go to campaign meetings or to the polls for fear of reprisals at gunpoint. In such situations, trust in the peacebuilding process can be undermined, as election dates are postponed and the easy availability of arms and ammunition increases the risk of renewed or post-election violence.

⁴ Available from http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/PV.7374.

⁵ Small Arms Survey, *Small Arms Survey 2008: Risk and Resilience* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008).

Protection of civilians

19. Armed attacks against civilians, including United Nations humanitarian and associated personnel, continue to occur, often with impunity. In the Syrian Arab Republic, the number of casualties runs into the hundreds of thousands. In Somalia, recent United Nations reports have shown a further increase of violence against civilians. In 2014, 10,548 civilian casualties of conflict were documented in Afghanistan, marking a 25 per cent increase in civilian deaths compared with 2013.⁶

20. The pervasive misuse of weapons in conflicts worldwide is a major factor driving forced displacement. Conflict dynamics in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Libya, Mali and the Syrian Arab Republic, where weapons and ammunition are in ready supply, have resulted in the large-scale displacement of civilians and have served to keep many refugees and internally displaced persons in situations of protracted exile, in violation of their fundamental human rights.

21. I particularly condemn the continuing armed terrorist attacks perpetrated by groups such as Boko Haram and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant against civilian populations in Africa and the Arab world. The abduction and use of children, including as suicide bombers, is a grave violation of the rights of children. I urge a multidimensional approach that addresses arsenals and ammunition flows, legitimate grievances, past and current human rights violations and root causes of the conflict.

22. Significantly, attacks on civilians in conflict settings have increasingly been carried out with rockets, mortars and heavy weapons, and women and children are often disproportionately affected by such attacks. Strikes on schools, hospitals and other populated areas, including in Afghanistan, Iraq, Israel, Nigeria, the State of Palestine and the Syrian Arab Republic, have become alarmingly widespread (see [A/HRC/28/54](#)). Children also continue to be particularly susceptible to injury from picking up explosive remnants of war (see [A/68/878-S/2014/339](#)).

B. Transnational organized crime and terrorism

23. The Security Council recently confirmed its concern at the growing nexus between transnational organized crime networks and terrorist groups (see Council resolution 2195 (2014)). Indeed, terrorist groups benefit from transnational organized crime activities, including the trafficking of arms, drugs and artefacts, and from illicit trade in natural resources, kidnapping for ransom and other crimes, to finance and support their activities.

24. The linkage among, and combined presence of, transnational organized crime, terrorism and violent extremism is of particular concern in regions already affected by armed conflicts, where this combination can further negatively affect security, stability, governance and social and economic development, exacerbate armed conflicts and sexual violence, and jeopardize any serious effort in respect of conflict prevention and resolution.

⁶ United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), “Afghanistan: annual report 2014 — protection of civilians in armed conflict” (Kabul, February 2015).

Foreign terrorist fighters

25. In September 2014, the Security Council expressed concern that foreign terrorist fighters increase the intensity, duration and intractability of conflicts (see Council resolution 2178 (2014)). They may pose a serious threat to their States of origin, transit and destination and to neighbouring zones of armed conflict. In the Council resolution, it was noted that the threat of foreign terrorist fighters may affect all regions and Member States, even those far from conflict zones. An influx of foreign fighters increases the probability of weapons and ammunition crossing borders, may fuel conflict and may extend technical know-how of armed groups in the area.

Improvised explosive devices and man-portable air defence systems

26. The use of improvised explosive devices by terrorist and other armed groups is on the rise. Between 2011 and 2013, more than 4,300 improvised explosive device events in 66 countries resulted in an estimated 65,400 casualties, the vast majority of them civilian.⁷ In Afghanistan, improvised explosive devices now kill 10 times more civilians than landmines do. Improvised explosive devices also continue to pose a major threat in Mali. Ten such attacks against United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) personnel were recorded from December 2014 to March 2015 alone, resulting in 28 injuries and 1 fatality (see [S/2015/219](#)). The proliferation of these weapons is fuelled by ease of access to components and low technology in assembly requirements. Although improvised explosive devices are typically constructed from products that are commercially available and relatively inexpensive, their main charges and boosters are frequently sourced from conventional ammunition, such as artillery shells and mortar bombs.⁷ Better control over ammunition therefore reduces risks relating to improvised explosive devices.

27. The use of improvised explosive devices is increasing in sophistication. Noticeable has been the introduction of the magnetic improvised explosive device, observed from Somalia and Iraq to Afghanistan, and improvised explosive devices that contain components that are difficult to detect.

28. The continued proliferation of man-portable air defence systems among armed groups, including terrorist groups, poses the additional threat of putting civil aviation at risk.

C. Armed violence

29. Armed violence occurs both within and outside of conflict situations. The absence of effective government institutions often leads to the use of armed violence as an engrained means of resolving individual and group grievances and conflicts. In such cases, legal and peaceful dispute resolution mechanisms are eroded, violence at gunpoint against children and sexual and gender-based violence can become endemic, and the rule of law cannot be upheld.

⁷ Small Arms Survey, “Countering improvised explosive devices”, *Research Notes*, No. 46, October 2014.

30. Crime and armed violence contribute to “unproductive” expenditures that divert public resources away from key services and capital investment. Research suggests that developing countries may spend between 10 and 15 per cent of their gross domestic product on law enforcement, compared with 5 per cent in more affluent States.⁸

31. Countries suffering from sustained levels of armed conflict or violence are also those furthest from reaching their Millennium Development Goal targets. The complex linkages among arms, violence, conflict and development continue to play out in States around the world, as demonstrated in recent reports to the Security Council on Afghanistan, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia, South Sudan, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic and elsewhere.

Women and men; boys and girls

32. The causes and consequences of the use of weapons are highly gendered. Women have traditionally been perceived as being on the receiving end of armed violence but their role as users of weapons, combatants or arms traffickers is increasingly being noted. Still, across all affected societies, young men are the most common perpetrators of armed attacks, as well as the most likely direct victims. The phenomenon is of particular concern in societies with a high percentage of young people combined with high youth unemployment.

33. Sexual violence in settings of conflict and violence continues to affect women, men and children with shocking frequency and impunity. Sexual and gender-based crimes are often perpetrated by armed individuals. Increased military or armed group activity can bring a greater risk of attack (see [S/2015/19](#)). The victimization of women and children through gender-based violence, including rape, violence in the home and sexual exploitation, is an important and still underrecorded consequence of armed violence. The impact is felt most strongly at the family level, where children or women have to care for victims or become de facto heads of households. In situations where they have restricted access to livelihood opportunities, women and children struggle to provide for their families and often suffer from deepening levels of poverty. Although adolescents and young men may be its most prominent direct victims, younger boys and girls also suffer directly and indirectly from armed violence, including armed conflict.

34. In my report on conflict-related sexual violence ([S/2015/203](#)), I presented information on parties to conflict credibly suspected of committing or being responsible for rape and other forms of sexual violence and on efforts to prevent and respond to violations. Sexual violence against girls continues to be a prominent trend and includes rape, harassment, sexual slavery and forced marriage.

35. Children are disproportionately affected by hostilities, both directly as victims and through their association with armed forces and armed groups. In my 2014 report on children and armed conflict, I highlighted the grave violations perpetrated against children in situations on the agenda of the Security Council ([A/68/878-S/2014/3349](#)).

⁸ Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), *Reducing the Involvement of Youth in Armed Violence: Programming Note*, Conflict and Fragility Series (Paris, OECD Publishing, 2011).

36. Child protection actors within the United Nations continue to note with concern that the character of and tactics used in armed conflict pose unprecedented threats to children. In areas where illicit arms and ammunition are common, children are more vulnerable to injury, death, displacement, psychosocial distress and recruitment and use by armed forces and groups.

Recommendation 1

Given the wide-ranging impact of the misuse and illicit circulation of small arms and light weapons, it is recommended that the Security Council consistently address the arms situation when considering both geographic and thematic issues on its agenda.

Recommendation 2

The real value of small arms and light weapons depends on the availability of ammunition. Effective measures to stem the illicit use of small arms and light weapons must include, or may even focus on, efforts to prevent the supply of ammunition.

Recommendation 3

More research to assist policymakers in addressing the causes and consequences of armed violence is required. The criminal violence that frequently replaces political violence in post-conflict periods is often difficult to redress through disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes and small arms control measures. In such environments, weapons-collection measures and related activities need to be accompanied by development programming geared towards preventing and reducing armed violence, coupled with other measures to enhance the protection of the civilian population.

Recommendation 4

Recognition of the gendered nature of armed violence and conflict must inform policy and programmatic responses. If the gendered aspects of armed violence, including the male social roles that often shape it and the structural subordination of women and girls, are not addressed, some of the key root causes of armed violence and its various impacts on girls, boys, women and men risk being neglected.

Full and meaningful participation of women in policymaking, planning and implementation processes related to combating the misuse and illicit transfer of small arms, in line with the women and peace and security agenda, remains essential.

III. Addressing the risk of misuse, diversion and illicit circulation of small arms and light weapons

A. Small arms and light weapons held by national security forces

1. Arms Trade Treaty and other instruments relating to the regulation of small arms and light weapons

37. For weapons to be used for lawful purposes only, Governments need to effectively fulfil their tasks — from the national to the community level — of providing security, putting in place regulation and enacting control and oversight. Only when institutions function adequately can safe and secure environments prosper and citizens' trust in their societal fabric thrive. The importance of assistance to institutions in situations of poorly controlled circulation of arms and ammunition is therefore critical. Such assistance may focus on legislation, stockpile management, the marking, record-keeping and tracing of weapons, surplus destruction and training on adequate use of force. Apart from regional arrangements, a number of global agreements are immediately relevant for such endeavours.

38. With the entry into force of the Arms Trade Treaty, on 24 December 2014, the foundations were laid for a global system of arms transfer controls, including small arms and light weapons. States parties to the Arms Trade Treaty will have to undertake an assessment in advance of any transfer covered by the Treaty and deny the transfer in situations specified by the Treaty. Importantly, they have a legal obligation to take measures to regulate the transit, trans-shipment and brokering of conventional arms and to prevent weapons diversion.

39. The Treaty's provisions on assistance — and the commitment to establish a trust fund only for States parties — promise that acceding to the Arms Trade Treaty may open up significant avenues for cooperation, bringing adequate weapons management within reach of any country.

40. The Arms Trade Treaty is a robust treaty with the potential to have a significant place in stemming arms flows to conflict zones and supporting the monitoring of Security Council arms embargoes. The effectiveness of the Arms Trade Treaty will depend on its global appeal and the levels of good faith with which it is implemented.

41. The Arms Trade Treaty complements and builds upon other global legal instruments, including the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. The Firearms Protocol provides complementarity to the Arms Trade Treaty, in particular through its provisions on marking, record-keeping, import, export and

transit control and by criminalizing the offences of illicit manufacturing, trafficking and tampering with marking.

42. Under the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects⁹ and the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons (the International Tracing Instrument) (see General Assembly decision 60/519; and [A/60/88](#) and Corr.2, annex) progress has been made in particular in improving national laws. In addition, increased stockpile destruction and weapons-marking initiatives have been noted, and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes have been developed and implemented. However, many of the requirements of the instrument for implementation at the national level remain unfulfilled. In 2014, at the most recent meeting under this process, States agreed to further strengthen stockpile management and to focus on the impact of new technologies on the tracing of weapons. Cooperation and assistance, including the transfer of technology and equipment, remain high on the agenda.

43. The Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials, adopted by consensus,¹⁰ provide sound guidance for when the lawful use of force and firearms is unavoidable. It should be noted that this agreed document includes the provision that exceptional circumstances such as internal political instability may not be invoked to justify any departure from the Basic Principles. Also, the document tasks Governments to regulate the control, storage and issuing of firearms, including procedures for ensuring that law enforcement officials are accountable for the firearms and ammunition issued to them. The document underlines the need for training, which should also comprise alternatives to the use of force and firearms, including the peaceful settlement of conflicts, the understanding of crowd behaviour and the methods of persuasion, negotiation and mediation. There seems to be ample room for further training on these principles.

44. The International Small Arms Control Standards, developed by the United Nations, provide guidance on establishing effective national controls over the full life cycle of small arms and light weapons. The International Small Arms Control Standards translate into practice the objectives of the key global agreements and international law aimed at preventing the illicit trade, destabilizing accumulation and misuse of small arms and light weapons.¹¹

45. Similarly, the International Ammunition Technical Guidelines, developed upon request by the General Assembly under the United Nations SaferGuard programme, assist national authorities, industry and others in enhancing the safety and security of ammunition stockpiles, thus reducing the dual risks of explosions and diversion.¹²

⁹ *Report of the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, New York, 9-20 July 2001 (A/CONF.192/15)*, chap. IV, para. 24.

¹⁰ See *Eighth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, Havana, 27 August-7 September 1990: report prepared by the Secretariat* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.91.IV.2), chap. I, sect. B.

¹¹ See www.smallarmsstandards.org/isacs/.

¹² See www.un.org/disarmament/un-safeguard/.

2. Improving stockpile management

46. National stockpile management and control has emerged as one of the greatest challenges related to small arms (see [S/2008/258](#), [S/2011/255](#) and [S/2013/503](#)). Stocks are susceptible to diversion if they are not appropriately secured and managed. Diversion tends to feed and sustain the activities of armed non-State actors, terrorist organizations and organized criminal networks: it is one of the principal sources of illicit ammunition and explosives (see [A/63/182](#)).

47. A central element in adequate stockpile management is the identification of surpluses, namely, the weapons and ammunition that do not constitute an operational need. When surpluses are not recognized, the entirety of the national weapons stockpile may continue to be seen as of operational value. Although not used, weapons and ammunition surpluses thus continue to fill warehouses and to pose a grave year-on-year risk.

48. Defective stockpile management has been assessed as the norm rather than the exception in many developing countries and in States recovering from armed conflict.¹³ In those circumstances, it is not only surplus stocks that should be the focus of attention, but the lack of appropriate policy behind this situation. Governments remain unaware of surpluses; their national stockpiles remain a risk to public safety and continue to be a source of illicit weaponry used in crime and armed violence.

49. Destruction is the preferred solution for surplus stockpiles of arms and ammunition, not only from a safety and security perspective, but also when considering the costs of destruction over the costs associated with safe long-term storage and maintenance.¹³

50. Key parts of the United Nations system, including the United Nations regional centres for peace and disarmament of the Office for Disarmament Affairs of the Secretariat, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Mine Action Service, the United Nations police and others, are contributing to securing stockpiles and to relevant training of national law enforcement and security forces of affected as well as troop-contributing countries.

51. Consistent application of the robust International Ammunition Technical Guidelines is essential. Similarly, making use of the International Small Arms Control Standards will also improve challenging small arms control situations. Both modular sets of standards, which complement each other, are voluntary, but provide the best available advice on ammunition management and small arms control.

52. Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia may be seen as successes. In Côte d'Ivoire, UNDP and the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa, utilizing international standards, put in place procedures and training tools on physical security and stockpile management. The United Nations Mine Action Service also provided national authorities in Côte d'Ivoire with a multi-year programme of assistance on weapons and ammunition management.

53. In Liberia, the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa and the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) have recently provided

¹³ Mandy Turner, *Costs of Disarmament: Cost Benefit Analysis of SALW Destruction versus Storage* (Geneva, United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research 2006).

technical assistance and training on marking and registering small arms and light weapons. The training is assisting Liberia in assuming complete security responsibilities by June 2016, including on small arms, and in registering and tracking arms used by its security forces (see Security Council resolution 2190 (2014)).

54. More can be done to mainstream physical security and stockpile management programmes in peacekeeping mandates and concepts of operations, based on standards and guidelines developed by the United Nations on arms and ammunition management. It is crucial that the Security Council, while drafting or renewing peacekeeping mandates, carefully assess the need to include relevant provisions.

3. Other measures strengthening government control

55. The tracing by national law enforcement officials of small arms back to their last legitimate owner constitutes an effective measure against the diversion of weapons. For that purpose, it is essential to mark the weapon upon production and import and ensure that appropriate records are kept. In addition, existing stocks should be marked. Many weapons and batches of ammunition are marked when produced and some weapons are marked when imported, but international cooperation in marking, record-keeping and tracing of small arms needs further attention.

56. More needs to be done in related fields as well. These include adequate small arms control legislation (which should cover arms brokering), weapons and ammunition destruction and reintegration programmes.

57. Many United Nations system entities are assisting Governments in these tasks, mostly depending on extrabudgetary funding. Entities such as the United Nations regional centres for peace and disarmament, UNDP, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Mine Action Service, UNODC, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) and others work within their respective mandates to support the development of national small arms action plans, provide marking machines and the relevant training, including record-keeping, produce guidance on standard operating procedures related to small arms, deliver assistance in legislation, set up collection and destruction programmes or develop reintegration programmes.

4. Potential applications of small arms and light weapons technologies

58. Innovative ways for Governments to address the management of weapons in conflict areas have become technologically feasible. Such technologies have already been put to broad use in commercial sectors such as the parcel business or the food industry. Options include radio frequency identification and fingerprint recognition, technologies that make it possible to personalize and track weapons and to secure weapons depots.

59. New technologies in relation to small arms are at present being discussed under the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. Assistance and the possible transfer of technologies are important elements of this topic. I encourage Member States, international and regional organizations, non-governmental organizations and representatives of industry to engage in further dialogue on their potential application in weapons management.

Recommendation 5

The Arms Trade Treaty has the potential to provide a global framework for a responsible arms trade and could become a key instrument fostering capacity-building in the areas of adequate transfer controls and preventing weapons diversion. I encourage Member States that have not done so to accede to it.

Recommendation 6

States should aim to have their relevant law enforcement officials trained in the Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials.

Recommendation 7

The Security Council should ensure that peacekeeping and special political missions are consistently mandated to assist host countries in the effective management of their arms and ammunition stockpiles.

This includes, in accordance with the good practice demonstrated in Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia, provisions on the training of national security forces in weapons disposal, marking and recording and large-scale weapons collection and destruction programmes, in addition to the refurbishment of weapons and ammunition storage facilities and the promotion of compliance with existing standards.

Member States should consider the provision of adequate technical and financial assistance in this regard.

Recommendation 8

The Security Council should consider, on a case-by-case basis, the relevance of technologies such as time limitation or geographical limitation devices or biometric or radio frequency identification, to improve weapons stockpile management and reduce the diversion of weapons. A main hurdle for equipping weapons with such devices is their limited commercial viability. I encourage Member States to support further initiatives on the development and use of such technology.

B. Addressing the circulation of illicit small arms and light weapons

60. Small arms and light weapons in illicit circulation have left immediate government oversight; different control measures are therefore required.

1. Arms embargo monitoring efforts

61. The work of the Security Council sanctions committees and sanctions expert panels has continued to shed light on arms and ammunition trafficking routes. Council arms embargoes can serve as powerful tools to address the illicit trade and brokering in small arms and light weapons as well as the destabilizing effect of their circulation. Adequate implementation of arms embargoes includes solid control of a country's borders, including at airstrips and seaports, and inspections inside the country. Effective monitoring of arms embargoes depends on active information exchange among different actors, including national authorities in the country subject to the embargo and in other countries, sanctions monitoring entities, peace operations and international and regional organizations.

62. Lack of sufficient capacity constitutes a key challenge for many States in the effective monitoring and enforcement of arms embargoes. For instance, with regard to Somalia, my assessment in March 2014 found a limited capacity of the Government to adequately respond to notification requirements in connection with the partial lifting of the arms embargo on the Government (see [S/2014/243](#)). The United Nations is now working to support this gap in notifications. In the context of a broader rule of law and security programme, UNDP, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) and the United Nations Mine Action Service have strengthened the capacity of the authorities to manage and report on arms imported under the partially lifted arms embargo, including through the development of a national import-marking standard using international standards and through technical assistance on weapons and ammunition management and training.

63. Other challenges to the implementation of arms embargoes need to be addressed as well. Where States under an arms embargo are allowed exemptions, there is no systematic procedure in place for tracking their procurement. In managing the exemptions for the delivery of arms and related materiel, sanctions committees often have no reliable baseline reference point for the amount of weapons and ammunition needed by the Government for the purposes of equipping national security forces and promoting security sector reform.

64. To make an inventory of its weapon stockpiles as a first step towards the lifting of an embargo, a State could be encouraged to report to the voluntary United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. Through this existing transparency instrument, any State Member of the United Nations can make available national data on arms, including the totals of its national holdings.¹⁴ If reported in the context of partial embargo lifts and of sanctions regimes that foresee exemptions, the Security Council and relevant sanctions committees would therewith be enabled to assess the acquisition needs of the State in taking a decision.

65. Arms embargoes have varied greatly in terms of their scope and content. There is currently no across-the-board reference regarding arms and related materiel. A general guide on arms embargoes, which would complement committee-specific

¹⁴ See www.un-register.org/NationalHoldings/Index.aspx.

implementation assistance notices, could serve as a useful reference for sanctions committees and Member States, both on the supplying and the receiving end, to improve their understanding and implementation of the technical dimensions of an arms embargo. The guide could also serve as reference for mapping assistance activities offered by various United Nations entities.

Recommendation 9

Countries subject to an arms embargo should consider reporting to the existing transparency mechanism of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. This important element in determining the necessary baseline of its national weapons holdings would inform the consideration of a possible lifting of an arms embargo by the Security Council. The United Nations can assist any country in reporting to the Register.

2. Role of United Nations missions in supporting arms embargo monitoring

66. Several United Nations missions have been mandated with sanctions monitoring, including aspects related to arms embargoes.¹⁵ It is essential that these field missions deploy personnel, including police, who are well trained in the management and tracing of weapons.

67. In some missions, such as the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI), dedicated embargo monitoring units have been established. I also recommended the establishment of a small arms embargo cell in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA).¹⁶ In others, ad hoc arrangements have been made for field missions to cooperate with expert panels, for example through the mission's Joint Mission Analysis Cell.

68. In my previous report, I highlighted some of the good practices of the UNOCI Integrated Embargo Monitoring Unit, which was established to monitor the implementation of the embargo pursuant to Security Council resolution 2045 (2012). It may, within Côte d'Ivoire, inspect all sites and equipment of relevance to the embargo, when necessary and appropriate without notice. The UNOCI Integrated Embargo Monitoring Unit also assists the Group of Experts on Côte d'Ivoire (see [S/2014/266](#), para. 28).

69. During the course of one year, the Integrated Embargo Monitoring Unit of UNOCI conducted more than 600 inspections of installations and sites of armed

¹⁵ The United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI), the African Union/United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), and the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO).

¹⁶ See [S/2014/142](#), paragraph 78, in which I recommended that a small embargo cell be established within the proposed peacekeeping operation comprising experts on arms, natural resources and customs in order to support the group of experts in monitoring the sanctions regime and to advise my Special Representative.

State actors in Côte d'Ivoire. Importantly, the Monitoring Unit also drew up arms and ammunition profiles, which help to identify possible embargo violations. I am pleased that a similar practice of creating ammunition profiles is now being used by the Panel of Experts on the Central African Republic (see [S/2014/762](#)) and by the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo (see [S/2015/19](#)).

70. Overall, an internal review on United Nations sanctions considered the Integrated Embargo Monitoring Unit in UNOCI useful as an expert technical interlocutor with the host country and observed that it enjoyed a mutually beneficial relationship with the Group of Experts. In this regard, I will request the relevant field missions to reflect in their regular reporting, where appropriate, lessons learned from their sanctions monitoring work.

71. I am pleased that United Nations entities enhanced their support to the fulfilment of arms embargo obligations during the reporting period. In 2014, my assessment missions on sanctions issues — one on the partial lifting of the arms embargo on Somalia and another on the termination of sanctions in Liberia — supported the identification of the needs of the States concerned and provided assistance in understanding and implementing the respective arms embargoes, including the improvement of weapons and ammunition management capacities. The missions also enhanced coordination within the United Nations system to support sanctions implementation in these countries.

72. An increase in expertise and capacity within the United Nations means that more coordination with stakeholders needs to take place. The recent internal review of United Nations system support to Security Council sanctions also found that the existing expertise within the United Nations system to assist in monitoring, training and building national capacity on the implementation of arms embargoes was not sufficiently utilized. For this reason, I have decided to make the Inter-Agency Working Group on United Nations Sanctions, established in 2014, a standing body to coordinate support.

73. This is of particular importance in situations, as described above, where a partial embargo lift is being considered and the country has to put in place initial measures on arms and ammunition management required by the Security Council before the lift is authorized. When States appear to be in need of technical assistance in this phase, a thorough assessment is required regarding the precise assistance needed. Subsequently, relevant project proposals need to be developed and international or regional coordination mechanisms need to be engaged to match assistance needs with available resources. I note that in its resolution 2117 (2013), the Council called for enhanced coordination of efforts at the national, subregional, regional and international levels to address traffic in arms, but often it remains unclear which stakeholder could assume ownership at which stage in the process.

Recommendation 10

In contributing to the force generation for peacekeeping missions where there is an arms embargo in place, troop- and police-contributing countries should consider providing, in particular, personnel possessing relevant arms and ammunition identification, record-keeping, tracing or stockpile management expertise.

I also recommend that the Security Council mandate relevant mission components to work more closely with United Nations country teams to strengthen national arms control capacities.

3. Specific attention to illicit flows of ammunition

74. Expert panels monitoring Security Council arms embargoes have suggested that the popularity of certain types of weapons among armed groups corresponds to the availability of their ammunition (see, for example, [S/2010/91](#)). Interestingly, patterns of supply may influence the development of a conflict, including by causing changes in shooting discipline and rendering existing weapons useless. Therefore, a focus on preventing the resupply of ammunition, in particular in situations of high risk to civilian populations, should be a priority.

75. Controlling the supply of ammunition can have an immediate impact on the intensity of armed violence.¹⁷ Ammunition production and supply chains in military markets are different from civilian markets. Therefore, monitoring flows of the military-style ammunition generally used in armed conflict offers greater scope for identifying sources, trafficking patterns and diversion points than monitoring ammunition for handguns and pistols. If, particularly in settings of conflict, large numbers of ammunition are found, a process of elimination may lead to likely sources of diversion.¹

76. Ammunition marked with its production year remains a critical element in monitoring the implementation of Security Council arms embargoes. Panels of experts tasked with such monitoring rely on recovered ammunition to determine whether it was transferred to embargoed actors or destinations after the imposition of the embargo.

77. Expert panels that monitor arms embargoes would be aided in their work if Member States provided information about the markings applied to ammunition for small arms and light weapons by producers under their jurisdiction and the markings on ammunition recovered from illicit use.

78. The systematic collection, adequate recording and publication of information regarding the markings on recovered illicit ammunition for small arms and light weapons would greatly enhance transparency and accountability in the arms and ammunition trade and help significantly to limit the scope of the illicit trade.

79. Contrary to the arms themselves, bullet cartridges contain explosive chemicals. Adequate ammunition management may include specific procedures on determining the origin of ammunition and on ensuring its safety. The Panel of Experts on the Sudan has made a first analysis of the precursors and components necessary for the manufacture of small arms ammunition. These and similar approaches aimed at better determining the origin of ammunition could be considered for effectively restricting illicit supply (see [S/2015/31](#)).

¹⁷ Small Arms Survey, *Ammunition Tracing Kit: Protocols and Procedures for Recording Small-calibre Ammunition* (Geneva, 2008).

Recommendation 11

Short training in the correct recording of information from recovered ammunition should be targeted at the mission personnel most likely to encounter ammunition, including members of an embargo monitoring cell, military observers and, critically, police personnel. Just as with records of weapon markings, the collected information could then be made available to sanctions expert panels.

Recommendation 12

Given the distinct production process and trade patterns of ammunition, Member States, with the assistance of the United Nations, should explore further approaches to combating illicit ammunition flows in particular in the context of arms embargoes.

4. Enhanced operational information exchange on arms trafficking

80. In its first-ever resolution on small arms and light weapons, the Security Council called upon States to intensify and accelerate the exchange of operational information regarding trafficking in arms and to enhance the coordination of efforts at the national, subregional, regional and international levels (see Council resolution 2117 (2013), para. 9). This call was reiterated by the Council in its resolution on threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts, adopted in August 2014 (see resolution 2170 (2014), para. 10).

81. These calls echoed recent agreed ways forward in the framework of General Assembly processes related to small arms and light weapons. In the agreed outcome of the Fifth Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and its International Tracing Instrument, held in June 2014, States undertook to enhance the exchange of information at the national, regional and international levels, including information relevant to preventing, combating and eradicating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and to preventing their diversion to the illicit trade, illegal armed groups, terrorists and other unauthorized recipients (see [A/CONF.192/BMS/2014/2](#), annex, para. 27 (a)).

82. The call also dovetails with the Arms Trade Treaty, which encourages its States parties to share relevant information with one another on effective measures to address the diversion of conventional arms, including information on illicit activities including corruption, international trafficking routes, illicit brokers, sources of illicit supply, methods of concealment, common points of dispatch or destinations used by organized groups engaged in diversion (see article 11 (5)).

83. Similar calls were made at the seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, at which States parties were encouraged to develop or strengthen coordination among

relevant and competent national authorities, with a view to enhancing capacities for statistics and data collection, analysis and information-sharing related to illicit trafficking in firearms.

84. Several initiatives with regional and police organizations for operational information exchange at the national and regional levels have been undertaken, including in South-East Europe through the South East Europe Firearms Expert Network established by UNDP. Other examples of increased cooperation between United Nations entities and national officials include the joint border patrolling initiative of the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization of Liberia, in which United Nations police components participate, and the national technical working groups established in the Central African Republic — co-chaired by the United Nations Mine Action Service — and in the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO). For all operational information exchange on small arms, the Illicit Arms Records and Tracing Management System firearms database of the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) remains a key tool.

Recommendation 13

Member States should continue to strengthen their cooperation among each other and with relevant international, regional and subregional organizations with regard to the sharing of operational information for the tracing of illicit weapons and to make full use of the Illicit Arms Records and Tracing Management System global firearms database of the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL).

5. Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, security sector reform and strengthening of rule of law institutions

85. Increasingly, conflict and post-conflict environments are characterized by a proliferation of irregular armed groups, including militias, criminal networks, self-defence groups, private security companies and other non-State groupings. In order to address these possible sources of insecurity, mandates of United Nations peacekeeping and special political missions often include the design and implementation of programmes for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and for the reform of the host country's security sector. Such efforts are supported by a growing number of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and security sector reform capacities in these missions and by system-wide efforts by the Inter-Agency Working Group on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration and the Inter-Agency Security Sector Reform Task Force.

86. In addition, the United Nations, often supported by the global focal point for the police, justice and corrections, provides support to strengthen the effectiveness and accountability of institutions in such areas to uphold the rule of law.

87. However, if illicit weapons continue to be easily accessible to armed groups and civilians in post-conflict situations at the same time that efforts are made to dismantle armed groups and movements, the risk of relapse into conflict will remain high and the prospects of building sustainable peace will diminish. It is therefore

vital that traditional arms control measures be linked and integrated with disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and security sector reform efforts and informed by national strategies. It is also important to complement short-term measures to take weapons out of circulation with a longer-term vision on how to improve safety at community levels through strengthening security institutions and addressing the underlying causes of conflict.

88. Throughout these processes, the rights of children must be protected and their specific requirements taken into account. This holds true, in particular, for children who have been recruited by armed forces and groups. Security Council resolutions on children and armed conflict often are not accompanied by sufficient funding to monitor and implement the mandated action plans to end and prevent grave violations.

89. I welcome the recent recognition given to the role of United Nations police components in combating illicit arms and ammunition. In its resolution 2185 (2014) adopted on 20 November 2014, the Security Council reiterated that United Nations peacekeeping operations and special political missions, including police components, may — if mandated by the Council — assist in capacity-building for host Governments to address the illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons. This police assistance could be aimed at areas such as weapons collection, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes; physical security and stockpile management practices; record-keeping and tracing; development of national export and import control systems; enhancement of border security; and strengthening judicial institutions, policing and other law enforcement capacities (see Council resolution 2185 (2014)). United Nations police components can be further strengthened to take on these tasks.

90. The delivery of security services at the community level is a crucial component in the mitigation of armed violence and crime. Such efforts should be planned in an integrated manner with other mission and United Nations country team components, including police, justice, corrections, security sector reform, gender and human rights. Only a comprehensive approach can sustainably improve the delivery of security services at community levels and make communities safer.

Recommendation 14

Mission mandates, in particular on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and security sector reform, should be designed on the basis of a comprehensive analysis of short-, medium- and long-term security needs. More integrated approaches need to be adopted, which would include the participation of relevant United Nations agencies providing support in these areas at the planning, mission and transition phases. In all instances, funding should accompany mandated activities.