

**THE SECRETARY-GENERAL**

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**REMARKS TO SECURITY COUNCIL OPEN DEBATE ON  
SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS****New York, 13 May 2015**

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**SALUTATIONS**

I thank the President for convening this important debate.

Over the last decade, the world has been afflicted by over 250 conflicts. While no two are the same, the widespread availability of small arms and light weapons, and their ammunition, is common to all.

More than 50,000 men, women and children have been killed each year as a direct consequence, and the number of those displaced has reached levels not seen since the Second World War.

Civilians – including children -- continue to suffer the most. Ruthless, targeted attacks against civilians continue – against all basic principles of international law.

Such attacks are increasingly being carried out with sophisticated or indiscriminate weapons such as rockets, mortars and heavy weapons. With strikes on schools, hospitals, and markets, vulnerable groups are relentlessly in the crosshairs.

The diversion of weaponry, including from government stockpiles, is further fuelling conflict, allowing rebels, gangs, criminal organizations, pirates, terrorist groups and insurgents to bolster their firepower.

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

Mr. President,  
Excellencies,

The recent entry into force of the Arms Trade Treaty laid the foundations for a global framework of arms transfer controls, including for small arms and light weapons and ammunition.

The ATT requires exporting States Parties to ensure that their arms exports will not be used, for instance, to violate arms embargoes, fuel conflict, or carry out gender-based violence. I encourage all Member States to accede to the Treaty and to faithfully implement it.

A universal ATT, adequately implemented, is critical to removing the tools for armed conflict. The ATT and other instruments can stem the misuse and illicit circulation of the thousands of weapons that are often part of the roots of conflict.

Mr. President,  
Excellencies,

My report to the Council highlights two key elements to tackle this world-wide challenge:

First, we need to ensure that the use of weapons and ammunition by national security forces conforms with commitments under global treaties and instruments. This also means ensuring the proper and safe storage of weapons and ammunition.

Second, we need further measures to combat the proliferation of illicit weapons.

States must enforce arms embargoes and strengthen United Nations missions tasked with arms and ammunition identification, record-keeping, tracing and stockpile management. States contributing troops and police can assist by deploying personnel with the relevant expertise.

I also encourage greater efforts to accelerate the exchange of operational information on arms trafficking.

In all aspects of arms and ammunition management, States can make use of the tested standards and guidelines developed by the United Nations.

And as an international community, we should think creatively. States may already be implementing good practices that could become a global standard.

One area that deserves far more attention is ammunition.

Monitoring ammunition flows can help identify sources, trafficking patterns and diversion points. It can remove source material for improvised explosive devices and stem the re-supply of ammunition into crime and conflict areas.

Cutting ammunition flows has an immediate impact on the intensity of armed activity. In situations where there is high risk to civilian populations, this should be a priority.

Mr. President,  
Excellencies,

The causes of conflict are complex. However, weapons and ammunition – and their storage facilities – are physical commodities. Guns can be licensed, marked, or confiscated; ammunition can be tracked, removed, or destroyed; and depots can be guarded, cleared, or secured.

Deny access to illegal weapons and ammunition, and you deny criminals and armed groups a central means to perpetrate violence, intimidation and harm.

This must be our common goal.

Thank you.