27. Small arms

During the period under review, the Security Council held one meeting in connection with the item entitled “Small arms” which took the form of a briefing.\(^782\) The last time that the Council considered this item prior to this meeting was on 18 December 2017.\(^783\) More information on the meeting, including on participants, speakers and outcomes, is given in the table below.\(^784\)

On 5 February 2020, further to the biennial report of the Secretary-General,\(^785\) the Council held a meeting on the item, and was briefed by the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs and the Deputy Director of Operations, Conflict Armament Research.\(^786\) In her briefing, the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs addressed “two themes of high relevance to the work of the Council”, notably, the role of illicit small arms, light weapons and their ammunition in conflict and pervasive crime and the deeply crosscutting and wide-ranging impact of illicit small arms and light weapons flows. She noted that those two fundamental themes had been consistently raised throughout the biennial reports of the Secretary-General, as well as in the context of the two thematic resolutions adopted on small arms and light weapons, namely, resolutions 2117 (2013) and 2220 (2015). She stated that with an estimated one billion small arms in circulation worldwide, the use of these weapons in lethal violence, whether in conflict or non-conflict settings, was prevalent across regions and subregions from the Americas to Africa to southern Europe and that no State was immune from the challenges posed by illicit arms flows. Additionally, she provided an overview of significant trends and developments over the previous two years and expressed her concerns regarding the continued rise in global military expenditure and the role that small arms and light weapons continued to play in hindering peace, security and sustainable development. She further emphasized that the gender dimension had not been sufficiently integrated into policies regulating small arms and light weapons, while

\(^782\) For further information on the format of meetings, see part II, sect. I.
\(^783\) See S/PV.8140. For more information, see Repertoire, Supplement 2016-2017, part I, sect. 31.
\(^784\) See also A/75/2, part II, chap. 17.
\(^786\) See S/PV.8713.
stressing the need for mainstreaming small arms and light weapons consideration across the work of the Council.

The Deputy Director of Operations, Conflict Armament Research (CAR) recounted that since the early 1990s the international community had sought to control the conventional arms trade to minimize weapons diversion and explained that the lack of detailed reporting had consistently hampered those efforts. He highlighted the work of his organization in this regard. He also described the work of his organization in support of United Nations sanctions monitoring groups and panels of experts, as well as embargo and sanctions enforcement, and expressed the hope that his briefing had demonstrated the importance of an evidence-based approach to tackle the illicit proliferation of weapons.

Following the briefings, Council members welcomed the report of the Secretary-General and its recommendations. However, the representative of the Russian Federation questioned references to the Arms Trade Treaty, citing that the instrument was far from universal and did not fully allow for the implementation of its own provisions. In addition, the representative of the United States raised concerns with regard to civilian ownership of firearms as reflected in the report. The representatives of the Dominican Republic and Estonia called for the promotion of gender equality and the meaningful participation of women in combating the illicit arms trade.

Many Council members emphasized that the proliferation of and illicit trade in small arms and light weapons posed a serious threat to international peace and security. In that regard, they pointed out that the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons had contributed to terrorism and transnational organized crime, and called for a comprehensive approach in addressing the fight against illicit trafficking. Many speakers drew attention to the implementation of several crucial international mechanisms intended to combat the illicit trade, such as the Arms Trade Treaty, the International Tracing Instrument, the Firearms Protocol, the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and the 2020 Group of Governmental Experts on problems arising from the accumulation of conventional ammunition stockpiles in surplus.

Most Council members commended the efforts of regional organizations, such as the African Union’s Silencing the Guns by 2020 initiative, in dealing with the challenges of illicit...
small arms and light weapons and called for strengthening the partnership between the United Nations and regional organizations. In that connection, the representative of Indonesia emphasized the important role of other regional organizations such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in the implementation of the Programme of Action to address arms smuggling and related issues.

Meetings: Small Arms

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