IMUN 2026 Research Report

General Assembly Issue #2: The question of proliferation of small arms in post-conflict regions.

The United Nations describes small arms as "any man-portable lethal weapon that expels or launches, is designed to expel or launch, or may be readily converted to expel or launch a shot, bullet or projectile by the action of an explosive, excluding antique small arms and light weapons or their replicas" ("Small arms"). The proliferation of small arms and other light weapons, in relation to other types of weapons, represents a clear and present danger in post-conflict regions, as these weapons are manufactured and exported *en masse*, difficult to track, easily operated, and many times either aren't disposed of properly or are traded illegally, ending up in the hands of terrorist and organized crime groups. According to the Arms Control Association, "Tens of thousands of people are killed or wounded each year in conflicts that are fought primarily with these weapons… [and] approximately half of the international terrorist incidents documented in the 2003 Department of State report on global terrorism were perpetrated with small arms and light weapons" (Schroeder).

The United Nations, as a body that promotes peace, transparency, and the international rule of law, has repeatedly tried to reduce and eradicate the proliferation of small arms and other light weapons. The current framework employed to oversee that process is the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (PoA), adopted in 2001, which urges Member States to establish national regulations over the manufacturing and handling of such weapons, as well as international customs enforcement and intelligence sharing. In the 2005 amendment of the PoA, the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner,

Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons (ITI) was established with the stated aim to "enable States to identify and trace, in a timely and reliable manner, illicit small arms and light weapons," through appropriate marking, record keeping, and international cooperation ("Small Arms").

One of the main issues that must be addressed in relation to the proliferation of small arms is the illicit trafficking and trade of such weapons. For example, shipments of weapons in 1999 and 2000 from Ukraine to Liberia, totaling 180 tons of weapons, fueled the regime of President Charles Taylor and the "Revolutionary United Front, an insurgent group that gained control of Sierra Leone's diamond mines through a campaign of rape and mutilation" (Schroeder). Further and more recently, the market of illicit small arms has been expanded with the introduction of illicit 3D-printed small arms, strengthening criminal and terrorist groups. At any rate, trends related to small arms in conflict zones remain alarming: newly published research shows eighty-eight percent of sexual violence related to conflict involves such weapons, and that fewer than half of all seized firearms can be traced back to their origin (*Small Arms*).

Delegates should focus on strengthening frameworks of international tracking and accountability. They should further explore options to halt the proliferation, such as industrial regulation, native tracking mechanisms, anti-terrorism measures, customs enforcement, or trading regulation. There must also be a focus on criminal justice responses to the aforementioned proliferation. Additionally, delegates should expand programs of weapons disposal and destruction to prevent illegal weapon reutilization and trafficking and should have the protection of civilians as their utmost priority.

Works Cited

Schroeder, Matt, and Rachel Stohl. "Small Arms, Large Problem: The International Threat of Small Arms Proliferation and Misuse." *Arms Control Association*, www.armscontrol.org/act/2006-06/features/small-arms-large-problem-international-threat-small-arms-proliferation-and. Accessed 3 June 2026.

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