



KINGDOM OF BELGIUM

Statement delivered by

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Arria formula meeting of the UN Security Council "The threat to international peace and security posed by the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons"

New York, 16 September 2021

Mr. President,

Belgium warmly welcomes the initiative of Mexico to organize this Arria meeting. The illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons has devastating consequences on peace and stability in numerous countries. Action on this issue by the Security Council is therefore crucial. Six years after the adoption of Resolution 2220, it is opportune to take a closer look at current challenges.

Mr. President,

Effective prevention of illicit arms flows calls for a clear picture of diversion routes and weaknesses in supply chain control. In conflict areas, the capacity for traditional law enforcement investigation is often lacking. UN peace missions can step in if they have the mandate and technical capacity to record and support tracing efforts of all weapons recovered or seized during their operations. The creation of arms embargo cells within missions has also proven to be an effective tool in order to collect relevant information on arms flows through a combined civilian-military effort.

Moreover, peace missions are uniquely placed to provide assistance to the host country on the safe and secure management of stockpiles and on the collection and destruction of surplus weapons and ammunition. Sometimes this task starts with the improvement of the management of the peace operation's own weapons and ammunition.

UN Panels of Experts have a complementary role since they monitor respect for arms embargoes, and their reports provide invaluable information about traffickers and trafficking routes. Here, the build-up of a readily available institutional memory should be encouraged and cross-referential research should be facilitated. Panels of experts and UN peacekeeping operations should closely collaborate in their efforts to chart arms flows and trace the origin of illicit small arms, which requires dedicated resources and skilled staff.

Indeed, too often a lack of detailed reporting on recovered arms hampers efforts to correctly trace their provenance. Expertise on marking methodology and solid visual documentation are needed to allow an effective investigation. Technological developments will further complicate these efforts since weapons using polymer frames or modular weapons can present specific challenges for tracing operations. These challenges could best be addressed through a coherent international approach. It is therefore discouraging that after many years of discussion, we are not yet closer to adapting the International Tracing Instrument in this regard.

Mr. President,

The findings of the experts should be followed up, especially through outreach towards countries of the region, since they are often the last step before a diversion occurs.

Action by the Security Council should go hand-in-hand with action taken elsewhere. For instance, the Arms Trade Treaty recently created the Diversion Information Exchange Forum. This provides States Parties with a dedicated forum to exchange information in a confidential setting, allowing for greater mutual trust while sharing sensitive information. This forum should help identify diversion routes and methods and therefore strengthen the arms export assessment procedures. The ATT may not be a universal instrument, it will nevertheless reinforce the implementation of other instruments like the UN Programme of Action, as well as UN arms embargoes, decided upon by this Council.

I thank you.