

**French Presidency
of the Third Review
Conference
of the UN Programme
of Action on the Illicit
Trade in Small Arms
and Light Weapons
—
2018**



Illicitly held small arms and light weapons (SALW) continue to kill scores everyday around the world, whether they are used in conflict settings, terrorist acts, organized crime, or street violence. Since 2001, the international community has effectively mobilized to fight this scourge and curb violence by SALW, which cause more casualties than any other weapon.

France is grateful to United Nations Member States for entrusting her with the responsibility to assume the presidency of the Third Review Conference of the United Nations Programme of Action to prevent, combat, and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects (RevCon 3).

The 2018 third RevCon will offer a unique occasion to move forward in our fight against the illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons. France is committed to organizing a robust, transparent and inclusive preparatory process. Aiming to make the Review Conference an effective and important meeting to bring about concrete progress in the fight against the trafficking of SALW, we intend to focus on the following priorities.

I. Recognizing the urgency of the threat

The illicit trafficking of SALW is a source of great concern and an immediate threat to international peace, security and development.

SALW are thought to cause about 500,000 deaths per year and account for more than 90% of victims in armed conflicts, while the value of the undocumented small arms trade may run in the billions of dollars per year. In many countries, because of a lack of regulations and controls, it is too easy to divert small arms to the illicit market through theft, leakage, corruption or pilferage.

Illicit flows of SALW have a wide range of humanitarian and socio-economic impacts, threatening peace, reconciliation and sustainable development, undermining respect for international human rights law and international humanitarian law. In addition, armed conflict and high levels of armed violence form a serious impediment to economic growth.

Moreover, the illicit trade in SALW is a cross-regional threat, impacting all regions of the world, while still provoking specific challenges and diverse preoccupations.

As President of the Third Review Conference of the Programme of Action, France intends to work on mobilizing the security, arms regulation and development communities to bring attention to the fight against the illicit trade of SALW. Fighting illicit SALW is not a battle for tomorrow: the concrete need for continued efforts is felt today, all over the world.

II. Strengthening and sustaining our commitment

The PoA has already brought about progress in the fight against all aspects of the illicit trade of SALW. Its ambitions should be maintained, and our resolve strengthened.

In its 15 years of existence, the PoA has contributed to, inter alia, promoting the fight against the illicit trafficking of SALW, a better acknowledgment of the threat posed by their dissemination, the development of regional initiatives, the sharing of good practices, and the adoption of the International Tracing Instrument.

Although a solid framework has been laid, more needs to be done. We firmly believe it is necessary to intensify efforts to implement the provisions of the PoA and ITI at an operational level.

We reaffirm that international cooperation is an integral part of this approach, and that sustainable and comprehensive assistance in implementing best standards and practices to fight the illicit trade in SALW can contribute to international peace and security.

As President of the Third Review Conference of the Programme of Action, France has a responsibility to renew States' commitment to fight the illicit trade of SALW in all its aspects. It will seek to reinforce national, regional and international mobilization, including at the highest level.

III. Ensuring a comprehensive approach

The UN Programme of Action is a consensual, comprehensive instrument that covers various levels of action.

The challenge posed by the illicit trade in SALW is multifaceted, and curbing this scourge requires a global approach that includes actions on stockpiles and their security, transfers regulation and control, border management, illicit reactivation, marking and tracing, and conflict resolution.

The international community has undertaken to fight the illicit trade of SALW through various initiatives, including the Firearms Protocol under the Convention on Transnational Organized Crime, the Arms Trade Treaty, which includes SALW, the International Tracing Instrument, various regional and subregional instruments, declarations and programmes, as well as a great number of operational projects.

The UN Programme of Action and its International Tracing Instrument remain the only universal instruments addressing the illicit trade in SALW, and working on the basis of consensus.

In our fight against the illicit trafficking of SALW, we should also take into account the differentiated impact of policies and programmes on men, women, boys and girls. Women's participation in the prevention and elimination of the illicit trade in SALW should be promoted.

As President of the Third Review Conference of the Programme of Action, France commits to remain vigilant to preserving the consensual nature of the Programme, and to cover all aspects related to the illicit trade of small arms and light weapons in a comprehensive manner.

IV. Prioritizing concrete achievements

The PoA provides orientations and represents a body of commitments. National governments bear the primary responsibility in preventing, combating, and eradicating the illicit trade in SALW in all its aspects.

Beyond the necessary declarations and commitments, operational work and progress is needed today to curb the illicit trade of SALW on the ground.

Adequate laws need to be effectively implemented, national regulations and administrative procedures enacted, effective controls carried out, illicit stockpiling and trade fought consistently.

The UN Programme of Action covers a range of very concrete aspects on which to focus for tangible progress, among which stockpile management and security, exchange of information, marking and tracing, and the disposal of surplus stocks.

As President of the Third Review Conference of the Programme of Action, France considers it a priority to strengthen the operational implementation of the PoA in order to improve its contribution to the effective fight against the illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons.

Points of contact

Ambassador Michèle RAMIS

President-designate of the Third Review Conference of the PoA, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Development

In New York

Ms. Alexia JARROT, Counsellor

In Geneva

Ambassador Alice GUITTON, Permanent Representative of France to the Conference on Disarmament

Ms. Marie-Gaëlle ROBLES, Counsellor

In Paris

Mr. Yann HWANG, Head of Department for Arms Control and O.S.C.E

Ms. Camille PINTOUT, Counsellor