



HIGH LEVEL SIDE-EVENT ON “DISARMAMENT THAT SAVES LIVES”

**Remarks by Ms. Izumi Nakamitsu
High Representative for Disarmament Affairs**



New York
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Your Excellency Ambassador Heusgen,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me start by expressing my deep appreciation to Germany for partnering with my Office on this side-event, which is on a topic at the very core of our current work.

“Disarmament that Saves Lives” is one of the three main components of the Secretary-General’s Agenda for Disarmament, “*Securing Our Common Future*”, launched in May this year.

It is an agenda that is predicated on a critical premise: that disarmament – from arms control to non-proliferation, prohibitions, restrictions, confidence-building measures and, where necessary, elimination – is an essential component for securing our world and our future.

This agenda is not about utopian ideals. It promotes a clear-eyed understanding of the tangible role disarmament can play in preventing conflict, mitigating violence, and resolving conflict.

It stresses the importance of disarmament in promoting stability and security, and as a tool for ensuring national security, as well as the contribution it makes to upholding the principles of humanity, promoting sustainable development and safeguarding the protection of civilians in conflict.

It seeks to remind UN Member States of the reason why they placed disarmament at the heart of the collective security system articulated in the United Nations Charter.

Its primary aim is to reinvigorate international disarmament discussions, explore new ideas and create new momentum for joint action.

The Agenda is comprehensive in seeking to create a clear and credible vision for sustainable security that serves humanity, draws from the past and builds towards the future.

The Agenda’s section on “Disarmament that Saves Lives”, addresses the devastating effects of the excessive proliferation and misuse of conventional weaponry, from mortars targeted at schools and hospitals, to small arms in the hands of pirates and criminal groups, to Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) in serial production by terrorists.

This chapter also focuses on prevention through military transparency and confidence-building, in which we have still so much more progress to make.

“Disarmament That Saves lives” is, indeed, a reminder to us all to return to the basics: to concentrate on bringing down the massive death toll in particular of civilians in conflict, and to address the root causes of gun violence.

The Secretary-General has outlined the following range of **eight broad areas** for concrete progress in “Disarmament that Saves Lives”:

First: Explosive weapons in populated areas. An urgent issue long overdue. Conflict is now mainly fought in urban settings, and we must work on the consequences. It means we will support States in the development of appropriate limitations and common standards. And we will step up awareness-raising on the impact of explosive weapons and to facilitate the sharing of policy and practice.

Second: Better casualty-recording and improved mitigation of civilian harm. We all share the belief that effective responses must be based on solid baseline information. In particular, regarding weapons mainly used by those other than military and police – such as small arms and IEDs – data collection becomes an even more complex and essential task. We aim at establishing casualty-recording in all relevant human rights components of UN peace operations and other human rights missions. And we recommend establishing civilian harm mitigation cells in our operations wherever that makes sense.

Third: Further improvement of coordination on countering the use of improvised explosive devices. The UN system is committed to deepen its coordination for a coherent whole-of-system approach to combat the growing threat of IEDs, which have in recent years been used in over half of Member States.¹

Fourth: Armed uncrewed aerial vehicles. We will support States in exploring common standards for the holding, the transfer and the use of armed Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) to ensure transparency, accountability and oversight.

¹ (S/2014/41).

Fifth: More integrated and comprehensive action on small arms and light weapons. We will establish the ‘Saving Lives Entity’, or SALIENT – a dedicated window in the Peacebuilding Fund to sustainably, and more ambitiously, address the challenges posed by small arms. I will come back to this in a minute.

Sixth: We will work on enhancing the UN’s risk assessments, in particular regarding weapons situations. It means that across the system, from our reporting to the Security Council to the level of in-country development assistance frameworks, in our analyses we will need to consistently take into account the impact of arms availability, trafficking patterns, craft production, ammunition sources, etcetera.

Seventh: Excessive and poorly-managed stockpiles of arms and ammunition require our constant attention. We’re better aware today how national stockpiles, often of surplus weaponry, are at risk of exploding or of being looted by armed groups and the like. We plan to increase support to States and regional organizations for further mitigating the brazen risks of unwanted blasts and frequent diversion of stockpiles of weapons and ammunition.

And eighth: on military confidence-building measures we consider that much more can be done. We will foster sub-regional dialogue and will support States to more actively promote military restraint, information sharing, and confidence-building.

Together, these points represent the section on ‘Disarmament that Saves Lives’ in our Secretary-General’s Disarmament Agenda. They constitute concrete and practical actions, meant to make real progress in protecting and improving the lives of as many as possible.

It is not a UNODA agenda; all relevant parts of the UN system are actively involved.

We also look forward to continuing our dialogue with Member States on the implementation of the various parts of the agenda. In this connection, I am grateful for the offer by Germany to support a follow-up meeting next year at Greentree on “disarmament that saves lives”. We hope this meeting will be an opportunity for both strategic discussions on our common objectives as well as on practical measures that can be taken in key priorities areas, including on small arms, explosive weapons in populated areas and on other issues.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

As mentioned, I will elaborate a bit more on the ‘SALIENT’ trust facility we are in the process of setting up.

It has become increasingly evident that the cross-cutting issue of small arms and light weapons requires a coherent, sustained, cross-sectoral response. We cannot afford to approach the small-arms issue only from a narrow national-security or military angle. It is a central component of preventing and reducing conflict and violence, and as such, needs to be part of a broader, more sustainable work such as community safety and violence reduction programmes, developing alternative livelihoods for blacksmiths producing craft guns, training of police, public health interventions, and working with inner-city youth, in addition to establishing a regulatory framework for small arms control and associated capacity building efforts.

What is needed for an effective small-arms control and regulation is a more integrated and coordinated programmatic approach at scale, supported by a flexible, development-oriented funding mechanism in most-affected countries. After all, this is what member states also called for in the recent review conference of the United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms. This is the reasoning behind the initiative to establish the SALIENT facility, and we receive very positive reactions to it.

With the Peacebuilding Support Office and other relevant parts of the UN system, we’re currently working out the details.

SALIENT will be a facility within the Peacebuilding Fund. This allows for synergies and pooling of expertise to ensure small arms actions be part of our broader sustaining peace efforts. In principle, the facility will be able to fund programmes in any affected country.

The governance structure is foreseen to have three main levels.

An **Advisory Council**, for strategic advice and oversight. The Advisory Council is expected to include donors, PBSO, UNDP, UNWOMEN, and UNODA. It will provide broad guidance on the objectives and direction of the facility.

Below the Advisory Council would be a **Coordination Taskforce**, within the UN system, at Headquarters, for coordination and decision-making. The Taskforce would include those UN system partners that participate in any of the SALIENT programmes.

And lastly, **SALIENT In-country Steering Committees**, or **SISCOMs**, will be formed within programme countries. They are on top of programme design, implementation, and reporting. SISCOMs would be comprised of government agencies, plus different representatives of the UN country team, regional organizations, and possibly local government representatives and local civil society.

We will design the fund in such a way that it is always demand-driven, and that host-country governments feel full ownership of the purpose and content of the planned activities.

In its first two years of operation, programmes will be established in a limited number of pilot countries. Successively, the facility is expected to grow to include more countries wishing to make measurable, sustained progress across the many thematic areas related to small arms control.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

We expect the SALIENT fund, when it has matured, to secure at least 12 million dollars per year. This is the amount required to achieve cost-efficient approach in supporting programmes. I take this opportunity to request member states and partners to consider contributing to SALIENT.

A first **pledging meeting** could be considered for mid-2019 in New York, potentially coinciding with the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development which will review SDG Goal 16.

SALIENT represents a paradigm shift in small-arms control. Recipient countries will work on small-arms control as an integral element in their programmes towards SDG implementation and sustaining peace efforts. Likewise, we urge donors to recognize the value of placing their assistance to combating the illicit trade in small arms in the broader framework of official development assistance. Some already do. If others follow suit, it would fortify the notion that

spending on small-arms regulation and control measures is a true investment in a country's long-term social and economic development, rather than a remedy to a short-term, isolated public-security issue.

We hope to make the SALIENT facility a useful catalytic instrument of our joint efforts in ensuring that disarmament “secures our common future” and can actually “save lives”.

Thank you.