



**United Nations Office
for Disarmament Affairs**

**Ninth Biennial Meeting of States on the Programme of Action
on Small Arms and Light Weapons**

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As delivered



1 June 2026
New York

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Welcome to the Ninth Biennial Meeting of States on the Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons and the International Tracing Instrument. Later this week, the Open-Ended Technical Expert Group will convene for the first time, as mandated by the Fourth Review Conference in 2024.

Twenty-five years ago, you adopted the Programme of Action out of grave concern for the humanitarian, social, and economic costs of illicit small arms and light weapons, and the threat they pose to peace, security, and sustainable development.

Since we last met in 2024, those costs have only grown. Violence has intensified. Humanitarian needs continue to mount while financing for development declines. As the Secretary-General observed in his report *The Security We Need*, skyrocketing global military expenditure stands in direct tension with our development goals.

In response to insecurity, too many States are only increasing military defence rather than investing in dialogue and peace. This shift has coincided with an erosion of the norms and laws meant to limit the harm done by armed conflict.

Illicit small arms and light weapons remain a primary driver of that harm. They are involved in nearly half of all homicides and enable crime, displacement, terrorism, and political violence. The burden falls hardest on the Global South, where they obstruct humanitarian access, endanger UN personnel, and undermine sustainable peace and development.

These impacts and our responses to them are uneven. These weapons are used to perpetrate sexual and gender-based violence, with women and girls facing heightened risks, while remaining underrepresented in arms control decisions. Young people are both victims and recruits for armed groups — and when they lead prevention efforts, they often do so without adequate support.

Technological change compounds the challenge. Advances in manufacturing and design are outpacing regulatory responses, making illicit production easier and tracing harder. Yet the same wave of innovation offers tools to strengthen the International Tracing Instrument (ITI), improve marking, and help prevent diversion.

Excellencies,

The Pact for the Future reaffirms our commitment to combat illicit arms transfers and uphold disarmament obligations, in support of SDG 16 and its target to reduce illicit arms flows.

For 25 years, the Programme of Action and the ITI have helped States strengthen control over the manufacture, transfer, and export of small arms. I thank those Member States that submitted their 2026 national reports, and I would like to underline the importance of regular reporting by all states.

This Meeting is our opportunity to take stock — and to ensure these instruments remain fit for purpose. To meet today’s threats, we must move from commitment to concrete action.

To make the Programme of Action more effective, we must act decisively, including by:

- Mandating end-to-end digital traceability, with tamper-resistant marks and real-time records for all newly manufactured weapons and, as appropriate, ammunition;
- Cutting off diversion at the source through pre-transfer risk assessments that can prevent exports where a substantial risk is identified;
- Strengthening international efforts to address emerging technologies, including 3D-printed weapons and modular firearms, in accordance with national legal frameworks;
- Funding prevention by directing a percentage of SALW assistance to community-based initiatives, with direct support for women’s and youth-led efforts;
- And; strengthening implementation through voluntary measures that link reporting to impact and support targeted assistance.

Reducing human suffering is our mandate.

The PoA and ITI remain areas where consensus has prevailed amid wider disarmament gridlocks. Let us continue that tradition at BMS9 and chart a practical, forward-looking path against illicit small arms and light weapons.

This is our moment to deliver on commitments for a safer world. I urge you to make full use of it.

I thank you very much for your attention.
