



Remarks by the Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Marcelo Ebrard Casaubon, during the United Nations Security Council open debate on "The impact of the diversion and trafficking of arms on peace and security"

Good morning to all of the distinguished participants at this event.

It is of course an honor for me to chair today's debate in the Security Council.

I am grateful for the strong presence of delegations that are meeting here to analyze the important issue of "the impact of the diversion and illicit trafficking of arms on peace and security."

The illicit trafficking and diversion of small arms and light weapons and their accumulation and proliferation in various parts of the world is a threat to international peace and security.

Arms trafficking is a global issue that seriously affects the civilian population in many ways: it destroys the social fabric and leads to violence, especially against vulnerable groups. It causes the displacement and irregular movement of people wanting to escape from insecure situations.

The United Nations has made many efforts to strengthen cooperation and joint action to prevent and counteract the illegal practices present in the market for small arms and light weapons and their terrible consequences.

However, we must admit that our efforts have been insufficient.

The Programme of Action on small arms and its International Tracing Instrument (ITI), the Protocol against the Illicit Trafficking in Firearms that complements the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, the Arms Trade Treaty, the efforts of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, and the specific work done by the Security Council to establish and monitor arms embargoes are clear examples that the international community has shown its willingness to fully address this challenge with specific mandates, recommendations and lines of common action.

However, we have to do more. We must do more to reduce the diversion and trafficking of arms and their negative consequences, especially in countries that are struggling with high levels of criminal violence.

In Mexico, we believe that governments and the private sector should work together to curb arms trafficking and its harmful effects on communities. Private actors must contribute with decisive actions to self-regulate and monitor their distribution chains to avoid the diversion and illicit trafficking of the weapons they produce and sell, and must also ensure that the weapons that they make lawfully do not reach the hands of criminals.

The number of civilian deaths caused by small arms and light weapons in armed conflicts, and the number of fatalities caused by armed violence that is unrelated to conflicts, is truly alarming. Various sources estimate that, every day, about 500 people lose their lives and another 2,000 are injured by gunshot wounds around the world.



In our region, Latin America, there are annual figures of violence and deaths from firearms that are even higher than those seen in areas of the world with armed conflicts. In about 75 percent of homicides and femicides, a weapon is involved.

I do not want to fail to mention the disproportionate impact that the trafficking in and diversion of small arms and light weapons have on women and children. According to United Nations data, more than 8,000 children have died or been mutilated in 21 situations of armed conflict. And although the availability of weapons affects both women and men, it is crucial to recognize the gender repercussions that arise from the trafficking and diversion of these weapons, which facilitate all kinds of violence, including sexual violence in conflicts and many other dynamics that affect the safety and lives of women and children.

The diagnosis of the problem posed by the uncontrolled flow of weapons at a global level is clear and overwhelming. The Arria Formula meeting convened by my country in September, the signature event chaired by Kenya last month and the presentations that we have just heard all confirm the magnitude of the problem.

Excellencies:

The guiding theme of Mexico's presidency of the Security Council has been prevention, especially regarding the need to address the various catalysts of violence. What better way to prevent the escalation of armed conflicts than through actions that truly address the trafficking and diversion of arms and ammunition?

Arms trafficking is an issue that is part of all armed conflicts and that seriously affects the civilian population in many ways, destroying the social fabric and leading to violence, especially against the most vulnerable groups. In contrast, the companies that produce and distribute these weapons have high and increasing revenues.

Put simply and clearly: if there were not an almost unlimited availability of weapons, most of the armed conflicts on the Council's agenda would have more opportunities for peaceful solutions. As long as the actors involved in conflicts, especially non-state groups, mercenaries and criminals, maintain their military and material power, they will choose the route of force over dialogue, politics and diplomacy. The situations in Myanmar, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia and Yemen, to name a few, would be very different if there were better control of cross-border arms trafficking.

Our actions, as an international community, must recognize that the fight against trafficking and diversion, both in the country of destination and the country of origin, is a shared responsibility and that these actions must be complementary at all levels:

- At the bilateral level, to begin with. To mention an example, in early August 2021, the Mexican government filed a lawsuit against private U.S. companies for intentional and negligent practices in the manufacture and sale of weapons that encourage illegal trafficking and, consequently, affect our people and increase violence. This lawsuit does not question the right of countries and individuals to sell arms legally, but rather denounces the negligent practices that have serious consequences for other societies.

In the lawsuit, Mexico denounces the fact that certain negligent practices in the arms trade cause serious damage to our societies. Mexico considers this lawsuit to be a matter of principle and a moral obligation to avoid causing pain and harm to thousands of families that have been affected by the use of illegally trafficked weapons, even if they are classified as small arms and light weapons.



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- At the regional level. We have a substantial framework of treaties and initiatives in various geographical areas. The African Union's "Silencing the Guns" initiative, the Western Balkans roadmap and the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives and other related materials, to name just a few, demonstrate the evolution of visions and strategies that respond to the needs of each region.
- At the multilateral level. The primacy of the United Nations and instruments such as the Arms Trade Treaty, the Programme of Action on small arms and its International Tracing Instrument (ITI), and the Protocol against the Illicit Trafficking in Firearms that complements the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime are clear examples that the international community has shown its willingness to fully address this challenge with specific mandates, recommendations and common lines of action.

My country believes that it is precisely within the Security Council that there should be serious deliberations on the tangible impacts of arms diversion and trafficking, and on the decisions the Council could promote to strengthen cooperation and improve the implementation of international commitments. It is not a question of replacing but rather of strengthening the efforts already undertaken in other United Nations forums.

Mexico firmly believes that it is not enough for the Council to promote and strengthen plans to manage weapons and ammunition, but rather that it is imperative to address the entire life cycle of weapons, including the intermediaries, their transfer and the end users. Our efforts must focus on prevention, as was debated here last week, in order to better identify the risks and prevent weapons from falling into the wrong hands.

The mandates of the peacekeeping missions and the renewal of sanctions regimes are strengthened with components designed to prevent and counteract the trafficking and diversion of weapons and their consequences. As an example, we believe that progress has been made in the resolutions on renewing the mandates of the missions in the Central African Republic and in Mali, which contain features that reinforce this perspective.

It is also important to ensure effective and comprehensive border controls and to promote coordination between the authorities of the different countries through which the weapons are trafficked. This specific recommendation is contained in the Secretary-General's report that seems very pertinent for future actions by the Council.

These and other considerations must be based on specific information gathered on the ground to ensure that any decision made reflects reality and addresses the constantly changing dynamics. For this reason, we encourage the creation of rigorous statistical databases and accurate diagnoses of the dynamics, routes and trends of arms trafficking and diversion in situations of armed conflict and of the humanitarian consequences.

Mexico is convinced that by fully complying with the Security Council mandates and avoiding any duplication of efforts with other multilateral bodies, forums or processes, we can contribute to designing an international regime that allows us to better control arms and ammunition transfers, and leads to a more responsible arms trade that prevents diversion and cross-border trafficking.

Excellencies:

Guaranteeing the security of our countries and societies will only be possible with the commitment and action of all the actors involved: governments, organizations and companies.



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We have the opportunity to show our societies that we are capable of redoubling our efforts of sustainable development and peace as the only priorities for States by effectively preventing the diversion and trafficking of arms, thus contributing to achieving Target 16.4 of the 2030 Agenda.

Mexico makes a forceful call for establishing and improving mechanisms to monitor and prevent illicit international arms transfers, diversion and cross-border trafficking. In addition, it calls on Governments so that together we encourage our respective private sectors to establish self-regulatory measures in accordance with our respective domestic laws to prevent their business practices from actively promoting the illicit trafficking of their products.

Before concluding, I would like to express my appreciation and thanks for the strong presence of the delegations in this open debate, proof of the priority that this issue demands at the global level.

Thank you.

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