

Forum: Disarmament and International Security Committee

Issue: Illicit trade of small arms in Africa

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Position: Co-Chair

PERSONAL INTRODUCTION

Dear Delegates,

My name is Alex Thomaz and I will be serving as your co-chair for this conference. I, like many of you, will be participating for the first time in a Platon School organised MUN and prior to the conference I have many different feelings, but I think excitement overshadows all others.

I am an IB 1 student and for those of you not knowing about or not doing IB, yes, it is as hard as you've heard. Then again, it has a very positive aspect going for it which is its requirements of having to do extracurriculars. This gives me an excuse to still continue participating actively in many MUN conferences given the difficulty of the course. Being able to finally get chairing positions in conferences is something that I'm very happy about but is also something that I didn't expect to be desiring when I first participated in such a conference. It is an activity that I am happy I got out of my comfort zone to explore further because it really has opened my mind about the issues circulating around the world. Firstly, you figure out just how many issues there are that you would have never thought of. Secondly, you figure out just how difficult it actually is to find solutions for these problems. Thirdly and most importantly though, you learn to work and come together with people that you have never met before from potentially all over the world and this is the aspect of MUN that drives me to go to as many as possible. I have met and made friendships with people that will last for a lifetime. This is what you should take from this and every other conference if it is your first time. (The older ones will know)

Lastly, I think it is important to note that you do not have to have aspirations in politics, economics or law in order to participate in an MUN. I personally want to study engineering yet I have realised many skills that I have improved through years of participation that will most definitely benefit me in my life. I want you all to be prepared and enjoy the conference as much as you can. Try to extract as much as possible from it and push yourself if you are young because you might be the one with the pleasure of writing a study guide in the future.

Kind Regards,

Alex Thomaz

Co-Chair of the Disarmament Committee

TOPIC INTRODUCTION

Illicit trade of small arms in Africa has been an ongoing issue both in the region where the issue prevails but also worldwide. Africa, when compared to the United States and Europe has comparably a significantly smaller number of small arms circulating in its region but that amount is enough to have a larger impact due to exploitation, lack of education and the illegal trade of diamonds.

The root of this concerning problem is the vast production of small arms that takes place in more than 90 countries and over 1200 factories worldwide making it more and more difficult to stop them from existing in the trade flow. This global trade of small arms and ammunition is a great source of income with the United States alone importing almost 1 billion USD and exporting 600 million USD of these weapons, in 2010 alone, signifying their importance to big countries in having small arms in the market. Africa though, has mostly been importing large amounts of small arms from long before 2000, meaning that the presence of small arms in the continent has been multiplying exponentially together with their demographic, hence allowing for more conflict and deaths.

This, coupled with inexperience and lack of education, resulted into many civil wars ending with greater casualties than ever recorded in the continent and further devastation in these LEDCs.

The sale of stockpiles of “leftover” weapons are also a source of income for countries who do not need them anymore, with ex-Soviet Union states baring large amounts of artillery. Although the around $\frac{2}{3}$ of weapon trade is done legally, the remaining third is a leading cause for great concern as not only do the result into victims from worldwide atrocities of war but at the same time the exporters are unknown and



therefore cannot take responsibility for them. When weapons are shipped to African regions where war prevails, there is a great instability and separation of people into opposing sides through the unfair distribution of power. This further increases conflict and consequently deaths, therefore raising a question on the upholding of human rights.

Photo from the article Making the Arms Trade Treaty work in practice is the real challenge for Africa

[Article Link](#)

KEY TERMS

Small Arms

There is no agreed definition for this term as it is difficult to distinguish it from **Light Weapons** but it commonly stands for “revolvers and self-loading pistols, rifles and carbines, assault rifles, sub-machine guns and light machine guns.”¹

Light Weapons

“heavy machine guns, hand-held under-barrel and mounted grenade launchers, portable anti-aircraft guns, portable anti-tank guns, recoilless rifles, portable launchers of anti-tank missile and rocket systems; portable launchers of anti-aircraft missile systems (MANPADS); and mortars of calibers of less than 100 mm.”¹

Illicit Trade

The illegal sale and buying of products or biotic creatures resulting into unwanted instability for governments and social morals.

Civil war

A civil war can be defined as “a war between citizens of the same country”. A violent revolution between government forces and the people against the regime of a country can also be considered as a civil war. Civil wars primarily occur in order to overthrow regimes and governments yet they can also occur afterwards over who will seize control of the country.²

DTM

Demographic Transition Model

SDG

Sustainable Development Goals

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Arguably one of the leading causes of this illicit trade of small arms in regions such as Africa was the Cold War. The competition on creating and developing weapons between the United States of America and the Soviet Union resulted in an unimaginable amount of “leftover” weapons in states such as Ukraine. Due to their economic situations, such states saw the weapons as an asset for income and development. Many legal and illegal deals were made between countries for large

¹ <http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/weapons-and-markets/definitions.html>

² https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/civil_war

amounts of money in the market for the sale of small arms and considering Africa was a large potential customer as a continent and closer, geographically than others.

The unregulated deals that were made were also the ones that resulted into more unwanted situations for the African states as weapons reached rebel groups that misused the weapons to create great instability. Liberia was the country that first saw the large devastation that can be caused through the illicit trade of small arms as in the early 2000's, a civil war exposed Liberia's civilians to death, disease and poverty. According to Conmay Wesseh, the Deputy Minister for International Cooperation and Economic Integration in Liberia's Foreign Affairs Ministry, this war was intensified by illicit guns and light artillery and the country's youth particularly suffered from the devastation of war which resulted into an, impossibly high to deal with, level of HIV/AIDS, lack of education and unsatisfactory levels of employment by the country's economically active. Such wars put countries such as Liberia into vicious cycles from which countries have to take decades to get out of due to the immense pause in development.

Similarly, the Rwandan civil war is another historical event which resulted into 800,000 - 2,000,000 deaths, making it a genocide which, barely received any global exposure. The uncertainty of the death toll is another indication of how wars in places such as Rwanda are greatly devastating due to the chaos and war crimes that take place. The great concern about this issue is that small arms appear in all wars and somehow end up resulting into large numbers of fatalities.

Small arms were also present in the civil wars of Sudan, which too, claimed thousands of lives in a recurring manner and over two long periods of war, but the country overall experienced some of the most horrifying humanitarian atrocities of the past half century until the country eventually split to two in 2005. This continuous act of war in the region though is not something that seems to be ending as even 12 years after calmer "air", unrest is increasing yet again and future wars will be fueled by more illicit trade of small arms from MEDCs.

More recently, in 2011-14, further instability struck the Northern part of the continent, particularly Egypt and Libya, resulting in political protest, outrage of the population and undemocratic decisions taking place. Though this resulted in less deaths than the examples mentioned earlier, small arms are responsible for many of the killings either by the government or the rebels further signifying the unrest caused by illicit trade of small arms due to their open market and customers, meaning that virtually anyone can purchase weapons.

COUNTRIES INVOLVED IN THE ISSUE

Country	Involvement
The United States of America	The USA plays a significant role in the issue as it amounts for the greatest “player” in the market of small arms trade with legal exports at over 1 billion USD-a-year triple the amount Germany exports in second place ~ According to BBC in 2001. The USA also encouraged the race to build more weapons during the cold war.
Ukraine	Ukraine is an example of a country taking up the opportunity to make money off small arms that remained from the cold war.
Russian Federation	The Russian Federation was also in the race for the production of small arms during the cold war and like Ukraine it generates a lot of income from the export of small arms.
South Africa	South Africa, as one of the five largest economies of Africa is also one of the few exporters of small arms in Africa but is also a greater importer of small arms, meaning that it is a gate for weapons into the continent. It suffers from high levels of crime in its prime cities suggesting illicit trade might be affecting its society
Liberia	Liberia as mentioned above is one of the countries that suffered the most from the trade of small arms and is an example of what can result from it.
Egypt	Egypt is an example of how social unrest can result into deaths much easier than before in the easier availability of small arms in a country, even in a country the size and significance of Egypt.
Rwanda	Rwanda is an example of how a civil war with more small arms can result into a genocide.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Date	Event
1947	Beginning of Cold War
1949	Invention of the AK-47 in the Soviet Union, a semi-automatic or automatic assault rifle
1947-1991	Competition for the production of small arms
1959	Sudan war breaks out
1990	Rwandan civil war breaks out
2001	Liberian civil war breaks out
2001-present	The UN start to consistently discuss the issue of illicit trade of small arms
2005-2007	Wars start to calm down, Sudan splits
2011-present	Political instability in the North of Africa with terrorist organisations killing people using small arms

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Education

Education is the foundation which shapes societies and consequently countries. Due to LEDCs being in different stages in the DTM than MEDCs, education lacks in many of the LEDCs resulting into a more unaware society. This, leads to exploitation, disease and poverty. Although surpassing any obstacles may be difficult in a poorer country, on the long run, ensuring that the SDG 4 concerning education progresses, will eventually start to eradicate irrational decisions from societies and will start to eradicate the weaknesses a country faces. **For example:** The outbreak of Ebola in East Africa in 2015 was contained through education by teaching locals about contraception and self-protection.

Sanctions

The fact that illicit trade of small arms on the scale that it contributes to $\frac{1}{3}$ of the market signifies that not enough work is being done to ensure legal and transparent deals. Therefore, it is necessary to invest more on reducing illicit trade and sanction in whichever way is deemed fit the criminals that are disturbing the prosperous development of developing Nations in the African Continent **As GA 1 it is important to remember that delegates can only mention and not impose sanctions.**

Resolutions

Revisiting passed and unsuccessful resolutions on the matter is of utmost importance so as to point out the effective and ineffective measures that were taken to eradicate the issue. When done so, it is important to create a new resolution by setting a foundation on the popular and humanitarian solutions that have proved to make a change taking into consideration that the last resolution on this matter was discussed in 2015.

SOME RESOLUTIONS ON ILLICIT TRADE OF SMALL ARMS

- [56/24 V of 24 December 2001](#)
- [57/72 of 22 November 2002](#)
- [58/241 of 23 December 2003](#)

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MULTIMEDIA RESOURCES

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r0sC3CSp24E&t=28s>
- <http://armsglobe.chromeexperiments.com/>

APPENDIX

- [UNREC](#): United Nations Regional Centre For Peace and Disarmament in Africa
- [UN](#): Illicit Small Arms Trade in Africa fuels conflict, contributes to poverty, stalls development, say speakers on second day of UN review Conference