

Gender Equality Network for Small Arms Control (GENSAC)

Accelerating Action on Peaceful Societies for 2030 Agenda

8:30 – 10 am, October 22, 2019, Permanent Mission of Germany to the UN

Summary of Discussions

Background

The Permanent Mission of Germany to the UN, and the Permanent Mission of Namibia to the UN, in collaboration with Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies at the NYU Center on International Cooperation, brought together a group of twenty experts, partners, UN and AU officials, women arms control leaders from Africa, and civil society representatives to shape the direction and goals of the proposed Gender Equality Network for Small Arms Control (GENSAC).

The network aims to accelerate action at the intersection of SDG5 and SDG16+ (especially targets 16.1 and 16.4) in the larger context of implementing the 2030 Agenda. The ongoing development of this network builds on joint efforts by the governments of Germany, Ghana, Namibia, and the African Union, the Group of Friends of the African Women Leaders Network (AWLN) to the UN, and the Pathfinders to harness women's leadership on small arms control to reduce violence and prevent conflict.* It also speaks to the desire to foster cross-regional learning through focused knowledge and experience sharing among a pilot group of women's rights groups and technical experts on gender and/or small arms and light weapons control, with the initial focus on Sub-Saharan Africa and the Western Balkans.

The event was also an opportunity to launch the *Pathfinders' Disarmament Challenge paper*[†] which highlights the centrality of disarmament within the broader context of violence prevention, and challenges the international community to advance the role of women in pursuing more effective prevention of violence via arms control, while proposing next steps to help advance cooperation and thinking.

In Detail

Ms. Xenia Jakob, Counsellor, Permanent Mission of Germany to the UN, opened the meeting by thanking the partners gathered around the table, and underscoring the German government's commitment to encouraging knowledge-exchange and best practice sharing between the ongoing gender-sensitive small arms control in the Western Balkans and those across the African continent.

H.E. Mr. Neville Gertze, Permanent Representative of Namibia to the UN, reminded participants that Namibia was part of the efforts on harnessing women's leadership on arms control for conflict prevention and

* [Summary of discussions in Addis Ababa](#) in May 2019, and during the [HLPF in July 2019](#).

† [Disarmament Challenge paper](#)

development since the initial consultations in Addis Ababa in the spring of 2019. He shared his government's concern that illicit trade in small arms has reached unprecedented levels, with the country seeing an influx of new arms being smuggled in addition to the leftover arms from the past conflicts. He also spoke of Namibia's active role in multilateral affairs on this issue, and the full support the government gives to the participation of women in these efforts. As a result, he said that the government intends to establish a women's peace center focused on national, regional, and international conflict resolution and management activities.

David Steven, Director, Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies, and Senior Fellow at the NYU Center on International Cooperation, shared with the participants that, according to latest trends, we are not on track to deliver on the promise of SDG16+. In particular, on the trends related to target 16.1 to significantly reduce all violence everywhere. Consequently, the Pathfinders are increasingly focused on re-framing the narrative and on an ambitious goal of halving global violence by 2030, by working across five violence dimensions: conflict prevention, urban and criminal violence, interpersonal violence (with a focus on ending violence against women and violence against children), human rights and mass atrocities, and violent extremism. To achieve this goal, he noted we will need stronger political will, a clear action plan, strengthened networks, and a massive mobilization. Weapons and gender are relevant issues across all five dimensions of violence, and he noted, the work of the proposed network is a tangible contribution to aid in efforts of realizing the 2030 Agenda.

In the coming year, David reminded participants that the UN will be celebrating its 75th anniversary in the fall of 2020, which will be completed by a mobilization around International Peace Day. The Secretary-General has called for an SDG Action Platform where states will be able to announce transformative initiatives which will kick off the Decade of Delivery and Action on the SDGs. He suggested that one of those initiatives can be the GENSAC, which can be further built up and activated over the course of 2020 – a year of other important anniversaries, including of Beijing+25 and the Women Peace and Security (WPS) agenda.

Fairlie Chappuis, Pathfinders' consultant and Geneva-based advisor, spoke briefly about her work to develop a Roadmap on Disarmament, Gender and Prevention – a research-based case for how women's leadership in arms control will further prevention aims and create a pathway for advocacy and accelerating action on the global commitment to eliminate all forms of violence by 2030. She emphasized the focus of her research is on Africa, a continent which has been a center of innovation and action on small arms with various regional and continent-wide initiatives.

Fairlie also shared some of initial findings relevant to the formation of GENSAC. Namely, that there is a "crowded space" with a variety of actions, approaches and strategies working to achieve a more gender responsive arms control. Including civil society organizations, development donors, multilateral, and regional organizations. While this is positive, it can also pose a challenge in a clash of actors she said. The distinction GENSAC adds is the framing as a development challenge, which opens the initiative to new ways of thinking, more long-term sustainable funding streams, and avoids competition and duplication with other initiatives.

Fairlie also reminded participants that GENSAC has three purposes: 1) to aggregate experiences and encourage learning by best practice sharing and connecting among practitioners and sector leaders, 2) to bridge the long identified gap between WPS and Disarmament agendas by encouraging cross-regional knowledge exchange; and 3) to further define and strategize its objectives, scope, and activities and identify potential points of cooperation and added value with existing initiatives.

Fairlie completed her intervention by kicking off the discussions and posing a pointed question to the participants: what makes a network effective? She noted that there is a desire to avoid duplication, while also wondering whether by having multiple conversations we are in a better position to surface more and better ideas and offer an opportunity for participation to a larger number of people. She also raised a question about

the cross-regional scope of the network, and what value cross-regional experience sharing can have to participants in light of the fact that action on arms control is often within the scope of national legislative and regulatory frameworks. In turning to the group, she asked them to think about these questions as a challenge and an opportunity for the network, which is just getting off the ground.

Open Discussion

In the open discussion, the point of duplication was taken up by many participants. There was a general sense of agreement that having a lot of actors moving towards the same goal (“the fleet”) can be beneficial in building a movement that can make a difference on the ground. One of the participants noted that duplication can be particularly helpful if successful projects are duplicated. Some participants shared specific initiatives they are working on, including the GLASS project, and emphasized the desire to coordinate efforts and map out how to best to work together.

It was also pointed out that network can facilitate access to women working on small arms issues to multilateral policy spaces from which they are often left out. Having women arms control leaders at the First Committee this year was commended as highly beneficial to add often unheard voices in the discussions.

Others outlined specific needs of the women arms control leaders the network can meet; they include micro-funding grants for projects, support with organizational set up (e.g. development of websites for women’s organizations working on small arms issues), engaging men in efforts to reduce gender-based violence (Trusted Men campaign was singled out as a good example), and linking the arms control agenda to the climate efforts since climate is a threat intensifier to violence.

Women arms control leaders from Africa were keen to hear more about the solutions the network can bring forward. They noted that problems are already well known, even if at times they lack data and evidence to illustrate them. Some have pointed out lack of funding as a problem to run their campaigns and scale up efforts such as running educational programs in schools on violence reduction and small arms. In addition, they emphasized the need to increase the participation of women in small arms trainings and policymaking, as well as in outreach to communities. However, one of the participants noted that even the most well-intentioned campaign at times runs into a problem of cross-border arms smuggling which keeps communities in fear and armed.

Next Steps

Pathfinders will share an updated GENSAC concept note incorporating the feedback from the working breakfast and bilateral consultations with partners. David Steven also referred to the next network gathering planned in Berlin in 2020.

Annex – First Committee Side-events Highlights

During the UN Disarmament Week, a series of small arms and gender relevant side events took place. These were also opportunities for women disarmament leaders from Africa attending the GENSAC working breakfast to gain access to multilateral arms control debates and actively engage in conversations with diplomats, officials and experts. Below are highlights from some of the events that took place:

- Small Arms Survey, in cooperation with the AU and the Permanent Mission of Equatorial Guinea, organized a discussion about the Silencing the Guns Initiative and shared the latest SAS research which [maps the illicit small arms flows in Africa](#), and makes the case that the more systematic reporting and research are required to paint a detailed picture of the gender dimensions of firearms-related violence on the continent.
- Control Arms, in cooperation with the Permanent Mission of Ireland to the UN, spotlighted the efforts to train arms experts officials to assess gender-based violence risks when dealing with arms transfers.
- IANSA, in collaboration with the Permanent Mission of Ghana, organized a discussion chaired by the Permanent Representative of Antigua and Barbuda to the UN, on efforts to make the Programme of Action on Small Arms more effective through ‘bottom-up’ and ‘top-down’ policy and organizing approaches.
- UNIDIR and the Permanent Mission of Germany to the UN zeroed in on the ammunition management efforts in an effort to address the risks of unplanned explosions and diversions of conventional ammunition to unauthorized users.
- BICC, in collaboration with the Permanent Mission of Germany to the UN, showcased different cross-border initiatives as part of the regional effort to SALW control. The event featured a series of photos, including of Christine Nanyka from the Ugandan police, who was in attendance.
- SAS and UN ODA’s event on gender-sensitive arms control was an opportunity to launch the new [Practical Guide to Gender-Responsive Arms Control](#) (part of the [GLASS project](#)), and share plans on how they intend to use evidence-based tools and strategies to mainstream gender into the arms control efforts as part of the [EU supported initiative](#). Armelle Tsafack, WILPF Cameroon, shared insights into WILPF’s work and efforts to reduce arms in the country.