

Assessing Arab States Compliance with UNPoA on SALW

Analysis of National Reports Submitted by Arab Countries from 2018 to 2024

(Issued by Maat on the sidelines of RevCon4 of UNPOA on SALW)



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Preamble

Spread of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) contributes to fueling violence and exacerbating human suffering in many Arab regions, particularly those affected by armed conflicts. The misuse and irresponsible flow of these weapons within Arab countries jeopardize the lives of millions and undermine efforts to build and sustain security, peace, and promote sustainable development.

Commitment to United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eliminate Illicit Trade in SALW in All Its Aspects (PoA) is a crucial lifeline for several Arab countries. PoA provides a framework to address a wide range of small arms problems and limit the negative consequences of their proliferation. Reports submitted by countries on implementation of PoA offer an essential opportunity to highlight the basic needs of Arab countries in combating this phenomenon, identify the obstacles and challenges they face, and ensure that assistance efforts are directed as effectively as possible to overcome it. Addressing small arms problems requires cooperation, assistance, and exchange of information between countries.

Regrettably, despite PoA importance in reducing illicit trade in SALW and enhancing international safety and security, many Arab countries have neglected to submit reports to the programme. This is particularly concerning given the continued proliferation of small arms and the ongoing suffering of their citizens from the negative impacts.

The primary purpose of the reports submitted by states is to reduce the devastating human suffering caused by SALW and to enhance collective action to respond to the dangers posed by these weapons. I call on all Arab countries that have not submitted their reports to PoA to do so, as this will enable progress in combating the abuse and misuse of SALW. This study serves as a wake-up call, alerting us to the urgent need to address the dangers of small arms proliferation and take immediate action to respond to PoA and identify the challenges faced by our Arab countries. Addressing this terrifying phenomenon is essential to reduce the constant state of crisis, terror, and dread experienced by millions of people.

Ayman Okeil

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Executive Summary

Proliferation of SALW poses a significant obstacle to sustainable peace and security in Arab societies. These weapons remain the primary tools used in criminal activities, terrorist attacks, and acts of violence during armed conflicts and civil wars. They also facilitate human rights violations and breaches of international humanitarian law, including torture, enforced disappearance, mutilation, rape, and other forms of sexual violence, both in conflict and non-conflict settings. This, in turn, hinders the promotion of sustainable development efforts. The escalation of armed conflicts in Syria, Yemen, and Libya has led to the flooding of black markets with large quantities of these weapons, which are often transferred to criminal groups and terrorist organizations.

2001 UN PoA to Prevent, Combat and Eliminate the Illicit Trade in SALW in All Its Aspects, and 2005 Supplementary International Tracing Instrument, are essential tools for reducing the negative effects of SALW and their impact on sustainable peace and development. Within this framework, states submit biennial national reports to the UN, containing data on seized SALW that have been registered and traced in accordance with international standards and legal instruments. These reports allow for the assessment of the degree of implementation of PoA at the national, regional, and global levels, and identify areas that require further attention or resources. Despite the widespread proliferation of SALW in Arab countries and their detrimental impact on human rights, security, and sustainable development efforts, Arab states' compliance with reporting to PoA remains limited and marginal.

This study, conducted on the sidelines of the fourth Review Conference (RevCon4) to assess the progress made in implementing PoA, examines the extent of Arab countries' commitment to submitting national reports to UN PoA between 2018 and 2024. It also analyzes the reports submitted in order to strengthen and improve efforts aimed at reducing the spread and misuse of SALW in the Arab region.

Study Methodology

Arab countries submitted a total of 35 national reports to the United Nations Program of Action from 2018 to end of June 2024. This analysis employed a mixed-methods human rights approach, which involved a comprehensive review of all the national reports submitted by Arab countries during this period.

The study categorized the national reports based on topics that reflect the countries' commitment to implementing PoA. If a country submitted multiple reports over the years, the analysis considered the reports in chronological order, from oldest to most recent. In many cases, states repeated previous information in their later reports; in these instances, the study referenced all the years in which the same data appeared in the national reports. It is important to note that the information provided by the countries in their reports was not compared to other external sources. Therefore, **the analysis relied solely on data presented by states themselves to evaluate their implementation of Action Plan.**

Additionally, the study took into account the opinions of human rights experts who participated in a discussion organized by Maat on June 24, 2024. This discussion addressed the extent of Arab countries' commitment to submitting national reports to UN PoA during 2018-2024 period.

Overview of Arab Countries Compliance with Reporting to PoA

Between 2018 and the end of June 2024, approximately 14 Arab countries submitted a total of 35 reports on their implementation of PoA to the UN Secretary-General. During this period, Algeria, Iraq, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, and Morocco submitted their reports consistently. Sudan and Egypt each submitted 3 reports in different years, while Somalia and Saudi Arabia submitted 2 reports each. Djibouti, Kuwait, Lebanon, Mauritania, and Comoros each submitted only 1 report.

In 2024, 7 Arab countries submitted their reports on PoA implementation: Algeria, Iraq, Sudan, the UAE, Qatar, Morocco, and Djibouti. In 2022, 8 Arab countries reported: Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Morocco, Qatar, Sudan, the UAE, and Saudi Arabia. In 2020, 7 Arab countries submitted reports: Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Qatar, Somalia, the UAE, and Morocco. In 2018, 13 Arab countries reported: the UAE, Sudan, Somalia, Qatar, Iraq, Egypt, Algeria, Morocco, Kuwait, Mauritania, Comoros, Lebanon, and Saudi Arabia.

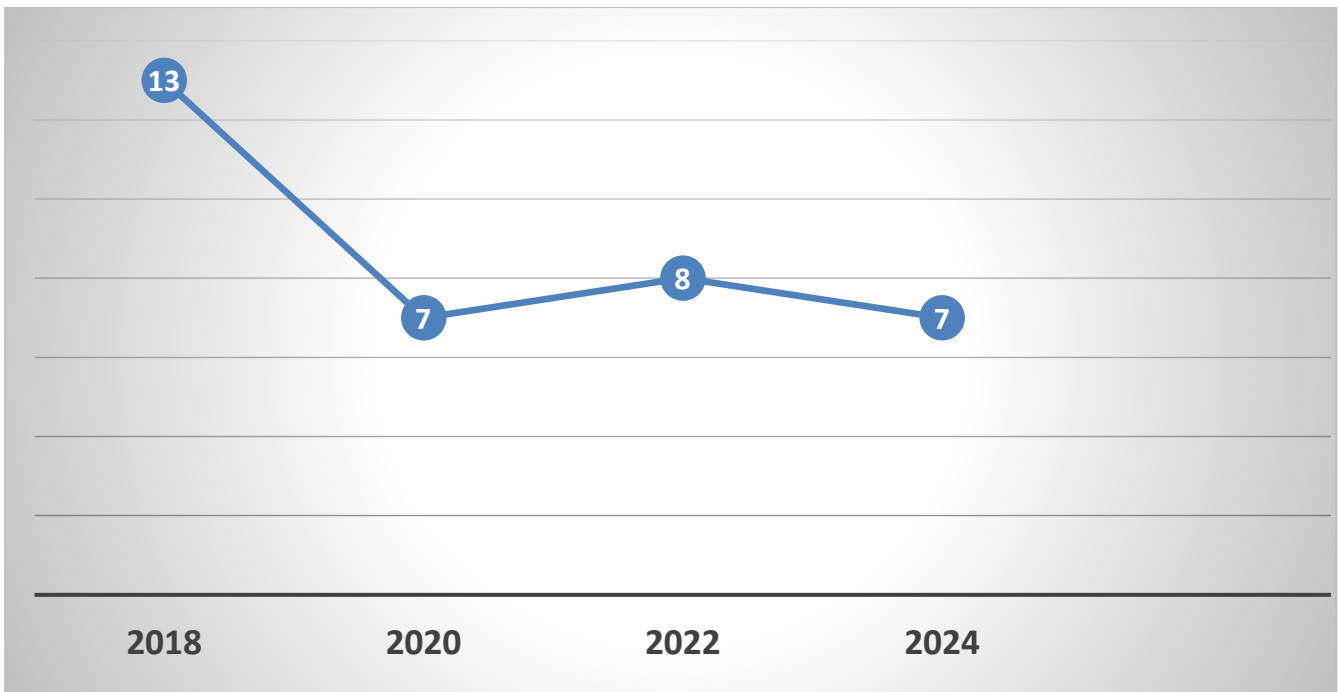


Figure showing number of reports submitted by Arab countries from 2018 to 2024

However, since 2018, 7 Arab countries have not submitted any reports: Bahrain, Yemen, Oman, Jordan, Syria, Libya, and Tunisia. Many fundamental reasons prevent countries from submitting their reports, perhaps the most important of which is that some of these regions are widespread in conflict and civil wars. Some other countries do not have the technical capabilities to submit their reports. These countries do not have a clear idea of

reporting procedures or how to distinguish between official and unofficial reports. Other countries do not have the political desire to submit reports, and other countries for which the issue of proliferation does not represent small arms are not yet a national priority, while Palestine has not submitted reports because it is not represented in United Nations.

Awareness of responsibility for reporting on implementation of work program varies from one region to another within the Arab countries. In the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) region, consisting of 7 Arab countries, UAE and Qatar have submitted their reports consistently, while Saudi Arabia and Kuwait have submitted only 2 and 1 report, respectively. Bahrain has not submitted any reports. Yemen and Oman have also not reported, likely due to the conflict in Yemen. Prior to 2011 conflict, Yemen submitted 3 brief reports focusing on some implementation measures, while Oman submitted 4 reports highlighting its national legislation and lack of weapons production and export. Bahrain also submitted 2 pre-2011 reports on licensing standards, weapon marking, and international cooperation to prevent arms smuggling.

In the Levant region, which includes Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, and Iraq, Iraq submitted all of its required reports, while Lebanon submitted only one report. Jordan, Syria, and Palestine did not submit any reports. Palestine did not submit reports due to its non-member observer status at the United Nations. Jordan submitted three reports before 2011, focusing on the international arms trade, legislation and administrative systems related to combating weapon proliferation, and the storage and disposal of ammunition. Syria submitted five reports before 2011, concentrating on laws to combat the spread of weapons. The ongoing conflict and civil war in Syria likely prevented it from submitting reports and addressing SALW control.

In North Africa, Sudan, Egypt, Algeria, Morocco, and Mauritania submitted at least one report to the Action Program during this period, while Tunisia and Libya did not. Tunisia submitted a brief 2011 report on administrative procedures and legislation to combat conventional weapon proliferation. Libya submitted a 2011 report focused on laws and standards regarding the manufacture, stockpiling, transportation, and possession of light weapons. The conflict in Libya has likely prevented it from submitting regular reports. The three East African Arab countries of Somalia, Djibouti, and Comoros each submitted at least one report to POA.

The length and quality of reports submitted by Arab countries vary greatly. Some provide comprehensive coverage of Action Program provisions, while others focus only on their small arms issues, achievements, and needs. However, some reports contain very limited information, only mentioning relevant legislation and administrative procedures that they have to combat proliferation of small arms and light weapons .

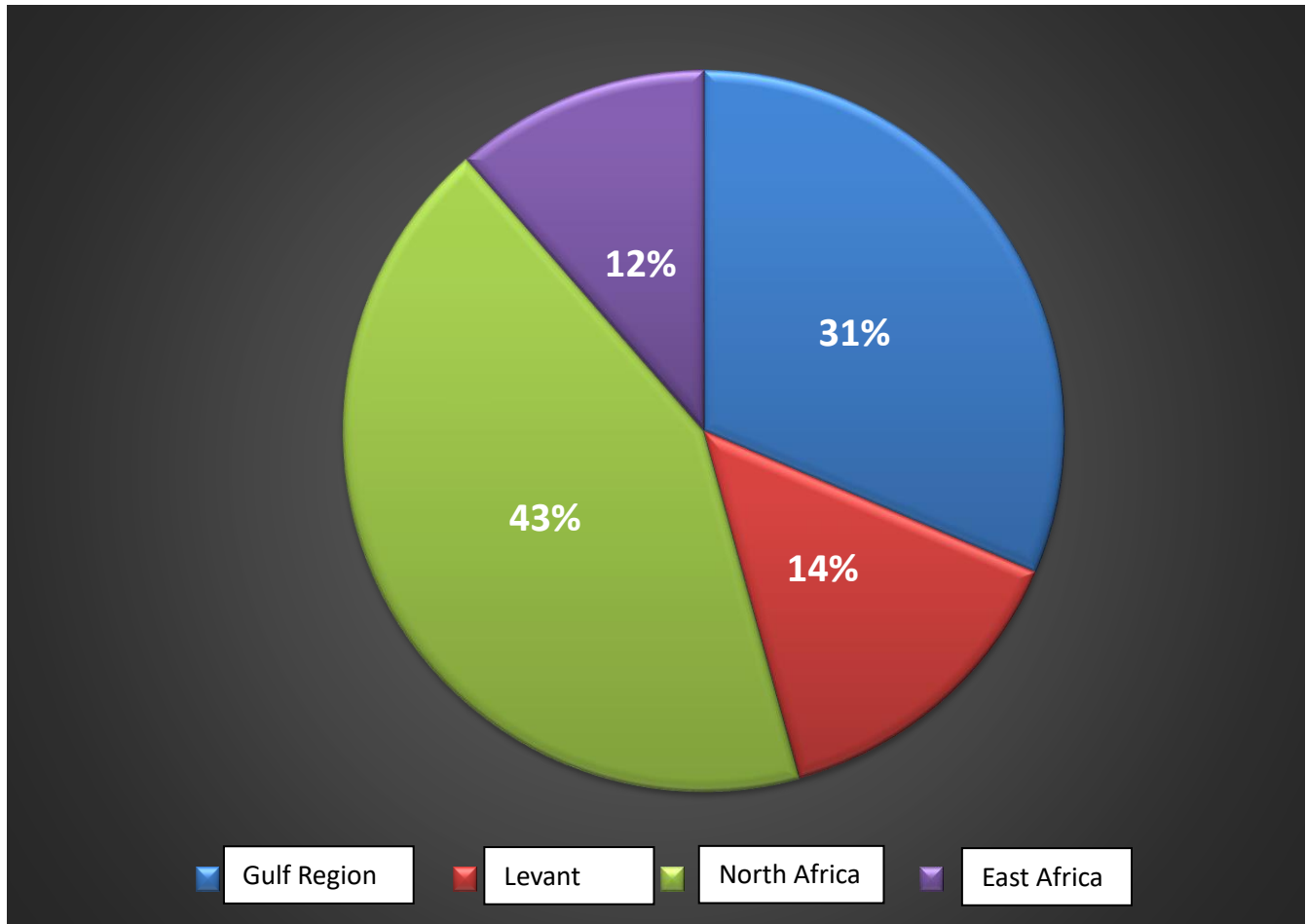


Figure showing percentages of reports submitted by Arab countries to work program since 2018, by region

Evaluation of Reports Submitted by Arab Countries to PoA

procedures, regulations, international assistance, and actions taken during the reporting period.

The fifth section addresses stockpile management. It covers laws, regulations, administrative procedures, procedures related to surplus stockpiles and their disposal, diversion issues in stockpile management, and international assistance. The sixth section includes data on weapons collected during the reporting period. The seventh section contains information on marking and record keeping, including methods, measures, and international assistance. The eighth section provides details on international tracing, including relevant laws, regulations, administrative procedures, and requests for international tracing assistance. The ninth section outlines the assistance required by countries to implement PoA. The tenth section covers gender considerations and any other relevant information ..

. National reports play a crucial role in allowing Member States, civil society and the international community to assess the current status of PoA implementation and support efforts to prevent illicit trade in SALW.

Overall, at least 14 Arab countries submitted at least one report between 2018 and June 2024. 68% of the reports covered most or all of the Action Program's provisions, while 32% focused on specific small arms-related topics, originally related to their small arms proliferation problems as well as its efforts to limit the phenomenon and its various needs. The state's report must fulfill 10 key sections, including bodies responsible for controlling small arms and light weapons, as well as national plan to control small arms and national goals. The second relates to industrialization and includes laws, regulations, administrative procedures, labeling, manufacturing, and record keeping by manufacturers and providing international assistance in this matter .

The third section includes details on international arms transfer operations. This covers laws, regulations, administrative procedures, licensing, authorization, post-delivery controls, import labeling, record keeping, weapons diversion, international assistance, and other information related to international transfer and assistance operations. The fourth section provides information on brokerage activities. This includes details on relevant laws, administrative

marked weapons without detailing the nature of information, and 33% did not provide any information on marking.

Regarding the record-keeping practices of manufacturers, 42% of countries confirmed that they require manufacturers to maintain production records, while 58% did not provide any information on this matter. When discussing measures taken against groups involved in the illicit production of SALW, 42% of countries reported taking strict actions, though they did not provide further details. Meanwhile, 8% of countries did not address this issue due to ongoing armed conflicts within their borders, and 50% did not specify the nature of their procedures. In terms of requesting international assistance to establish laws and regulations on small arms manufacturing, 50% of countries indicated a need for such assistance, and 8% confirmed a need for help with training and capacity building. In contrast, 8% stated that they did not require international support, while 34% did not mention their need for assistance in developing relevant legislation ..

Concerning third section, on international transfers of SALW, there was significant variation in the level of detail provided. 93% of countries confirmed having laws and administrative procedures to exercise effective control over the export, import,

Reviewing the national reports submitted by Arab countries, the analysis finds that 78% have established a national coordination mechanism, while 22% have not. 85% have identified a national contact point, while 15% have not. 43% have a national action plan to address SALW, though some plans lack specificity. In contrast, 7% of countries do not have an action plan to deal with small arms and light weapons, and 43% of countries did not mention whether they have a plan. National efforts are being made to reduce the phenomenon, and 7% of countries are still working on developing their plan.

Regarding national goals, 35% of Arab countries have goals related to PoA implementation, but these were not detailed. On the other hand, 22% do not have national goals and targets related to PoA implementation, and 43% of countries do not indicate whether they have such goals.

Regarding second section on manufacturing, 43% of countries reported having relevant laws and regulations, 8% indicated a lack of such laws, 8% mentioned having laws without providing details, and 41% did not clarify whether they have manufacturing laws and procedures. For marking weapons, 59% specified the information included when marking weapons, 8% indicated they

transfer of SALW, 50% of countries reported taking actions but did not provide sufficient details. The other 50% did not mention any information on this matter. 65% of countries requested international assistance in developing laws, administrative systems, and procedures, or in improving their ability to assess risks and exercise effective control over the export, import, transit, or re-transfer of weapons, particularly in terms of building and developing capabilities and transferring good practices and expertise. 15% of countries did not request any such assistance, while 20% did not provide any information on this.

In the fourth section on brokerage, 58% of countries indicated that they have laws regulating brokerage operations, though they did not provide specifics on these laws. 21% of countries acknowledged having no laws related to this, and another 21% did not mention anything about it. 36% of countries stated that they had taken measures against individuals involved in illegal brokerage, but did not provide details. 35% of countries requested international assistance in the field of brokering, particularly technical, military, and legal support, while 7% confirmed that they do not need such assistance, and 58% did not provide any information on this matter.

transit, or re-transfer of these weapons. 65% of these countries specified that they have licensing and authorization processes in place, including details on the required documentation. However, 28% did not provide any information on this matter, and 7% stated that they do not require permission or licensing for the transfer of SALW.

Regarding end-user controls, 50% of countries acknowledged having measures to ensure that weapons reach the intended recipient, while 28% indicated a lack of such controls, and 32% did not mention anything about this. In the area of import labeling, 57% of countries reported requiring the labeling of imported SALW, while 15% do not have this requirement. The remaining 28% did not provide any information on this practice. Finally, 70% of countries require exporters of SALW to maintain records of their activities, while 15% do not have this requirement, and 15% did not mention any information related to this matter.

Regarding the collection of information on diversion incidents related to international arms transfers at the local level, 28% of countries acknowledged doing so but provided no further details. The remaining 72% did not mention anything about this. When it comes to measures taken against groups and individuals involved in the illicit

did not mention any information about the preparation of the collected weapons, while 14% of countries stated that they do not conduct collection operations. 44% of countries did not report any information on this matter, and 28% requested international assistance to build their capabilities in addressing the illicit trade of SALW. 14% of countries did not request any assistance, while 58% did not provide information on this topic.

In the seventh section, focusing on marking and record-keeping, 72% of countries indicated that they mark and record information about the weapons, while 28% did not provide any information on this subject. 72% of countries kept records of the weapons, while 28% did not mention any record-keeping. 72% of countries requested international assistance to build the necessary capacities for marking and record-keeping, while 28% did not provide information about this matter.

In the eighth section, related to international tracing, 72% of countries stated that they have laws to trace SALW, while 7% indicated that they do not have such laws, and 21% did not provide any information. 72% of countries reported cooperating with INTERPOL on weapon tracing, while 14% did not cooperate, and 14% did not mention any information

In the fifth section, regarding management, storage, and security of SALW stocks, 93% of countries confirmed having laws, administrative procedures, and systems in place. 78% of countries reported having mechanisms for dealing with surplus weapons, while 22% did not mention anything about this. 36% of countries said they collect information on diversion incidents related to stockpile management at the national level, 7% confirmed that they do not collect such information, and 57% did not provide any details. 28% of countries mentioned destroying their surplus stocks, but did not provide further information, and 21% did not give any details on this. 51% of countries did not mention anything about stockpile management. 43% of countries requested international assistance to establish stockpile management procedures and build the necessary capacities for weapon destruction, particularly in terms of providing the necessary equipment. 15% of countries did not request any international assistance, and 42% did not provide any information on this matter.

In the sixth section, which addresses the collection of SALW, 42% of countries confirmed that they collect information about these weapons, but only 28% provided details on the preparation of the collected weapons. 14% of these countries

request international assistance, and 43% did not mention any information about this matter. In the tenth section, related to gender considerations, 72% of countries confirmed that they take gender aspects into account regarding the illicit trade in SALW, but they did not provide sufficient information about coordination with women's civil society organizations. 28% of countries did not mention anything about this matter.

about this. 72% of countries requested international assistance to establish procedures for tracing SALW, including capacity building and participation in meetings, 7% indicated that they do not need international assistance, and 21% did not provide any information on this topic.

In the ninth section, concerning international cooperation and assistance, 36% of countries requested and received the necessary support to implement the POA work program, while 21% did not

Challenges Facing Arab Countries in Complying with PoA

as well as the spread of terrorist movements and armed groups that fuel regional conflicts and obtain weapons illegally.

Compounding this issue is the weak performance of the League of Arab States in fulfilling its role in preserving regional peace and security, as well as reducing the illicit flow of conventional weapons to various conflict areas. Ineffective information-sharing and exchange between Arab nations, coupled with the proliferation of armed conflicts and civil wars in the region, further limit the capabilities of individual countries to comply with PoA. A common factor in these challenges is the lack of support, whether technical or financial, provided to civil society organizations. These organizations could play a crucial role in educating countries about PoA, its objectives, and the dangers of SALW proliferation, as well as the shortage of trained and qualified personnel with knowledge of PoA ..

Arab countries face several challenges in complying with the POA, the most significant being limited resources. Effective implementation requires robust law enforcement, border control, and record-keeping systems. Many states, especially those most affected by SALW violence, lack the financial, technical, and operational resources necessary to establish these structures.

One of the key challenges facing decision-makers regarding UN PoA on SALW is the lack of understanding about its potential benefits. Many have the misconception that PoA limits a country's ability to maintain national security, leading to a lack of political will to allocate the necessary resources for compliance. Additionally, many countries lack the qualified personnel required to properly implement and adhere to the obligations of PoA.

Another significant challenge facing Arab countries is the widespread proliferation of illicit small arms across their long, porous borders. These borders are plagued by smuggling, illicit trade, and the movement of small arms by rebel and criminal groups,

Recommendations

In general, it can be said that strengthening the response to PoA, submitting reports from all Arab countries, and complying with all provisions related to it is a first step to reducing spread of SALW in Arab countries. Given this reason, Maat for Peace, Development and Human Rights recommends the following: -

At National Level:

- Strengthen legislation: Enact and enforce comprehensive laws regulating the trade, ownership, and marking of SALW .
- Capacity building: States shall assume primary responsibility, according to their particular situation, for establishing and improving their legal systems, while continuously strengthening their capacities. To prevent diversion of licitly manufactured or transferred SALW into illicit channels, State officials and organizations responsible for implementing issues should be informed. SALW are subject to current United Nations resolutions, sanctions, embargoes and regional and global instruments, as well as training on current humanitarian and human rights law relating to small arms and light weapons in all its aspects.
- Reporting: Ensure submission of biennial reports to UN PoA, as required.
- Increase resources: Allocate adequate funding to combat proliferation of SALW and fulfill PoA obligations.
- Transfer controls: Consider exchanging detailed information on national practices and best practices regarding the import, export, transit, and re-transfer of SALW.
- Collection and Destruction of SALW: States should consider providing more information on safe and cost-effective methods of destroying ammunition, small arms, and light weapons, as well as details on national regulations for destruction. This information can serve as a guide for other countries.
- Stockpile Management and Security: States could consider providing more information on national procedures and requirements for disposing of surplus weapons, as well as details on national experiences in securing government stockpiles. This could contribute to the development of practical guidelines for Member States.

- **Public Awareness and Confidence-building Measures:** States are encouraged to determine how to integrate issues of demand, gender, religion, and culture into public awareness programmes, as well as strategies for engaging special interest groups, the media, civil society, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), as well as parliamentarians in their national context. This information can feed into potential guidelines for communication campaigns at national, regional, and international levels.
- **Community Engagement:** Strengthen dialogue with civil society and affected communities to understand local dynamics and build confidence regarding the proliferation of SALW.
- **Improved Tagging and Tracking:** Invest in new technologies to tag and track SALW to more effectively monitor their movement.
- **Information Exchange Platforms:** Develop secure platforms for exchanging information about illicit arms trafficking activities between countries.

At International and Regional Level:

- **Strengthening Cooperation:** Enhance cooperation between countries on information exchange, joint investigations, and capacity building for countries experiencing the spread of armed conflicts.
- **Financial and Technical Assistance:** Provide financial and technical support to countries working to implement the action plan, and address the need for such support.
- **Regulating Arms Brokers:** Develop and implement a strong international framework to regulate arms brokers and prevent them from facilitating illicit trade.
- **Transparency and Accountability:** Promote greater transparency in the global arms trade to track the movement of arms and hold violators accountable.
- **-Civil Society Participation:** Involve civil society organizations in discussions and decision-making processes related to combating the proliferation of SALW.
- **Activating Role of the League of Arab States:** LAS must prioritize SALW proliferation and cooperate with all stakeholders, including civil society organizations, to move forward towards PoA implementation.