



Small Arms Survey Statement to Arms Trade Treaty Working Group on Effective Treaty Implementation Sub-working Group on Current and Emerging Implementation Issues

26th February 2025

Thank you, dear facilitator.

Excellencies, dear delegates, colleagues and friends.

As an impartial organisation seeking to strengthen the capacity of governments to reduce illicit arms flows and armed violence through the generation of policy-relevant knowledge, the Small Arms Survey welcomes the continued engagement of this sub-working group on addressing the risk of conventional arms being used for gender-based violence and violence against women and children.

While the development of the voluntary guidance on the application of articles 6 and 7 was a positive step, we have identified some remaining challenges in its implementation.

Conflict-related sexual violence is a serious crime for which the Arms Trade Treaty has an important role to play, as part of a comprehensive response. Our [global violence deaths](#) database, however, indicates that most lethal, arms-related violence against women is committed within the context of intentional homicide. These deaths can occur in situations of organised crime, but also through acts of domestic violence committed by civilians as well as by public and private security personnel misusing their service weapons, especially at home.

Therefore, the assumption that most acts of gender-based violence and violence against women and children will be prevented automatically through risk assessments conducted under article 6 is not supported by the available evidence, which indicates a need for risk assessments to consider article 7 in its own right.

This means that assessing the risk of *serious* acts of gender-based violence, or of violence against women and children, would need to look beyond cases where a single end user commits a crime against multiple victims, such as violations of international humanitarian law. It would also need to consider contexts where weak regulations and legislation have led to the systemic use of arms by a large number of unrelated individual end users to commit GBV and violence against women and children. Given its scope, the ATT has an especially important role to play in preventing cases where the misuse of service weapons to commit domestic violence is widespread and committed with impunity.

For export licensing officers, this would mean assessing whether regulatory frameworks pertaining to public and private security agencies contain adequate measures to control weapons when personnel are off duty, whether there is data on arm-related GBV committed by security personnel, and whether high rates, or a lack of plausible data, would suggest that there is a serious risk of GBV.

One of the biggest challenges in assessing the scale of arms-related GBV and VAWC in a given context, however, is that too often, data on violent crime is not disaggregated by (a) sex or gender of the victim and perpetrator, (b) the relationship between the two, (c) whether an arm was used and (d) the status of the weapon as licit or illicit. Moreover, where we have identified sex-

disaggregated data on arms-related deaths, it tends to be [at least six years old](#). This means that export licencing officers have to conduct risks assessments using old data.

Over the last few years, the Small Arms Survey has been working to address these issues through projects that may be of interest to states parties when to comes the national implementation of the ATT, including through international cooperation and assistance, and the VTF.

In Ukraine, we have been conducting collaborative research with national NGOs as well as state actors to identify ways that the country's national control system can better mitigate the risk of arms-related gender-based violence, given the increased levels of arms circulating for national defence.

In Chile, we have also undertaken collaborative research with national actors in order to provide them with a snapshot of the strengths and weaknesses of current national practices in preventing GBV. The validation workshop held last month drew on this evidence base in order to identify entry points for interagency cooperation and assistance in preventing and mitigating arms-related gender-based violence. It also fed into national discussions on the potential gendered impacts of proposed changes to the national control system.

In both of these countries, it has been important to foster deeper reflections on how arms can facilitate gender-based violence and violence against women and children in each specific context. In another example, a blog co-authored by NISEA and the Small Arms Survey looked at how GBV in the Indo-Pacific region occurs in specific forms, such as forced surrogacy, that are not commonly found in other regions. One objective of these activities is to support export licencing officers in understanding what forms of GBV and VAWC to consider, in order to conduct accurate risk assessments. Additional exchanges on context-specific forms of GBV and VAWC in forums like WGETI could therefore support exporting states in the effective implementation of article 7.4.

The overall lesson we have drawn from these experiences is that applying a gender perspective has the biggest impact when we move beyond general discussions, and look towards practical applications in technical areas, such as risk assessments, data collection and legislative reform. For this reason, we were encouraged by the proposal adopted at CSP10 to consider appointing gender focal points for the ATT working groups. We look forward to hearing the views of states parties on the proposal shared by Mexico, and we stand ready to support states parties should they decide to move forward with this suggestion, as well as the future focal points themselves.

Thank you.