



PARLIAMENTARY FORUM
ON SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS

**General Assembly of the
Parliamentary Forum on Small Arms and Light Weapons**

**15th December 2023
Geneva, Switzerland**

REPORT





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Executive summary

During the 15th December 2023, the Parliamentary Forum on Small Arms and Light Weapons, (hereinafter the Forum) organised the Forum's General Assembly in Geneva, Switzerland. 17 parliamentarians from Africa, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific and the Middle East provided strategic advice on future priority guidelines to the Board, discussed and approved the Report from the Secretary General since the last Assembly, elected a new Board for the period 2023 – 2025 as well as adopted the Geneva Declaration and approved the revised Statutes of the Forum.

Introduction

According to the Global Peace Index 2023, the world has become less peaceful over the last fifteen years, with 2022 being the deadliest year for armed conflicts since 1994.¹ The United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals Report 2023 highlights that the year 2022 witnessed a more than 50 percent increase in conflict-related civilian deaths.² Armed conflicts and violence, independent of scale, are perpetuated by the uncontrolled availability of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW). Hence, the prevention and reduction of the illicit proliferation of SALW is vital for safeguarding human security, sustainable development and peace, and to regain momentum in efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda, including paving the way for socio-economic development.

The General Assembly is the highest organ of the Forum, and it is constituted by the regular Members and presided by the President of the Forum. The Assembly provides strategic advice on future priority guidelines to the Board, elects the Board Members, discuss and approve the report since the last Assembly and adopt revisions of the Statutes, among other functions. The Assembly is an invaluable opportunity to gather Members, exchange ideas regarding the work towards the achievement of more peaceful and sustainably developed societies. While the General Assembly was originally planned for 2020, based on decision by the Board, it was postponed until 2023 due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

General Assembly

Session I: Report since the last Assembly (2018) & Presentation of future strategic guidelines

The first session was introduced by Ms. Maria Pia Devoto, Board Member of the Forum who started by handing the floor to the President of the Forum Hon. Dr. Raphael Chegeni who in turn formally opened the General Assembly. He began by introducing himself as acting President since November 2022, and expressed pride in the work done by the Board and the organisation since the previous General Assembly in 2018. He further proclaimed the universal nature of the organisation, and the global reach it has

¹ Institute for Economics & Peace (2023), *Global Peace Index 2023*, available at:

<https://www.visionofhumanity.org/wpcontent/uploads/2023/06/GPI-2023-Web.pdf>

² United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), *The Sustainable Development Goals Report: Special Edition*. <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2023/The-Sustainable-Development-Goals-Report-2023.pdf>



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achieved. Finally, he underlined the shared vision of its Members in working towards a more peaceful and sustainably developed world. Subsequently, Ms. Devoto invited Ms. Karin Olofsson, Secretary General of the Forum, to briefly welcome the Members to the Assembly. Ms. Olofsson expressed her gratitude to the Members for their continued support over the previous years, and highlighted the urgency of actions to reduce SALW-related violence for more peaceful and sustainably developed societies. She explained the importance of the General Assembly, and expressed her high expectations for the event. Finally, a minute of silence was held for former President and long-term Member of the Forum, Hon. Daisy Tourné, who passed away in November 2022.

Ms. Devoto thereafter gave the floor to Ms. Olofsson to share the highlights and a summary of results since last Assembly in Brussels 2018.

Item 1: Highlights – Summary of narrative and financial results since last Assembly 2018 (Information)

App 1. Report from the Secretary General

App 2. Annual Accounts 2018-2022

The Secretary General shared with the Members the report of achievements since the previous Assembly, the period 2018-2022, summarised below and available in full in App 1. The Forum achieved several key results, including 25 key activities, such as national, regional and international seminars were realised. Three Policy Statements were also made on; Parliamentary Strengthening for Democratic, Peaceful and Sustainably Developed Societies, the Role of Parliamentarians for the Achievement of the 2030 Agenda, Goal 16.4 in a Changing World affected by COVID-19, and Preventing Violence Against Parliamentarians in the Global Context of Democratic Backsliding. The Forum also celebrated its 20th Anniversary in 2022, with for example a Publication highlighting the vital efforts of parliamentarians across the world in preventing SALW-related violence and recollecting lessons learned. Further, eight Parliamentary Action Plans (PAPs) were adopted at the regional seminars. Importantly, the Forum's Members reported approximately 300 parliamentary actions on the reduction and prevention of SALW-related violence.

The Forum increased its follower base considerably on both Facebook and Twitter and relaunched its LinkedIn account. The social media campaign “Words over Bullets” with the aim to raise global awareness on the importance of preventing and reducing SALW-related violence reached over 242 100 people with over 340 parliamentarians, civil society representatives and representatives of the diplomatic community participating in the campaign with photos and videos. The Forum and its Members have also been featured in over 170 media appearances, spreading awareness of the Forum and the importance of reducing and preventing SALW-related violence. The Forum also increased its membership base, reaching in total of 324 members in 2022, out of which 30% are women.

The Forum has also strengthened its partnerships, with a focus on enhancing cooperation with regional parliaments such as the Pan-African Parliament (PAP), the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (AIPA)



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and the Latin American and Caribbean Parliament (PARLATINO). Further, the Forum has Memorandums of Understanding with PAP, PARLATINO as well as Small Arms Survey, and has been granted permanent observer status to the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU).

Organisational and financial sustainability has been a key priority of the Forum, and further quality assurance of processes has been a continuous and successful effort as the overall financial control and management is currently operating at a satisfying level. Policies, measures and routines implemented in 2016 are continuously strictly applied with positive results for overall quality assurance. For example, an external independent certified audit and review has been conducted by Gotting Revision AB for each year in the period 2018-2022, out of which all audit reports have been of approval character, and resulted in non-qualified statements without any remarks. The precarious financial situation of the organisation in 2015, along with the increasing global challenges of securing funding for civil society have constituted significant challenges for the Forum. However, through determined work in funding diversification, the Forum has continued to yield positive results in terms of financial sustainability. The Forum has continued to work actively to further diversify the funding base and outreach to new potential donors occurs continuously. Utilising its strengthened Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (PMEL) methodology has further reinforced the Forum as a knowledge-based organisation in terms of measuring and reporting narrative results, and a new Strategic Plan for 2023-2026 has been adopted.

The Secretary General further presented the financial results in line with App 2. She confirmed the positive results for each year during the period 2018-2022. She further noted that the Forum retains a negative equity capital of 151 398 SEK as of end 2022, yet that this figure has decreased from 250 011 SEK in 2018, showing a positive trend. The overall financial situation is therefore improved and stabilised as compared to the severe situation in 2015, yet not fully recovered and the Forum remains financially vulnerable. The Forum received financial support from five donors during the years 2018-2022: the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Sweden (MFA Sweden), the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) and its UNSCAR Fund (UN Trust Facility Supporting on Arms Regulation), The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), Folke Bernadotte academy (FBA Sweden) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Canada (MFA Canada). Moving forward, the Forum continues to focus on achieving solid funding diversification, as well as reducing the negative equity capital.

The Forum Members congratulated the Forum and the Secretariat on the achievements for the period, and recognised the various organisational and thematic consolidation efforts made.

Item 2: Discharge of the Board's liability (Decision)

Following the previous item, including approval of the report of the Secretary General based on the presentation of the financial results and the Annual Accounts 2018-2022, the Forum Members approved to discharge the Board of liability for the period.



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Item 3: Presentation of future strategic priorities guidelines for the Forum (Information)

The Secretary General presented the key elements of the [Strategic Plan 2023-2026](#). While the Forum's mandate is maintained in the new Strategic Plan, the terminology has been streamlined and updated. For example, the organisation's overall vision and mission were clarified, and the outcomes were updated in consistency with overall revisions in the PMEL methodology, including clarification regarding the three key functions of a parliamentarian; legislative, oversight and awareness-raising. The gender-equality perspective and youth perspectives were highlighted by the Secretary General as strategic priorities along the line of UN Security Council Resolutions (UNSCR 1325 and 2250), as well as financial and operational sustainability.

The floor was opened to questions and suggestions from the Members. Some suggestions for the future were to further highlight the humanitarian consequences of the uncontrolled spread of SALW for example in chapter two describing the problem statement, alongside the currently mentioned social and economic consequences. The role of the Forum in relation to non-signatory states of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) was also discussed in relation to promote further universalisation, along with the possibility of considering a firmer stance in relation to signatory States not complying with the ATT. Finally, the main direction of the new Strategic Plan for 2023-2026 was applauded, in particular the increased focus on gender equality and youth inclusion.

Hon. Dr. Chegeni thanked the Secretary General and invited the Members to share their individual reports.

Item 4. Reports from Members (Information)

Hon. Mumtaz Binti Md Nawir, Malaysia highlighted the need for an increased collection of data at both national and international levels. While she acknowledged the work conducted by international organisations which gather and report on SALW-related violence, she emphasised the need for a deeper understanding of both global trends and of local contexts. On this note, she applauded the ongoing regional collaboration between the Forum and AIPA in Southeast Asia. Finally, she provided the example of border-trafficking of SALW as a major source of proliferation.

Hon. Wade Mark, Trinidad and Tobago explained the devastating effects which SALW have in his country, with 90% of homicides being committed using SALW, and where women, girls and boys are especially victimised. He further discussed his own experience of using various parliamentary tools, such as those provided by the Forum, for example to domesticate the ATT, and stretched a hand out to civil society for further cooperation.

Hon. Margarita Stolbizer, Argentina discussed the need for extensive cross-national sharing of experiences on policy and politics, as well as ensuring regional cooperation to tackle trafficking of uncontrolled SALW.



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She also presented the need for further efforts in producing National Action Plans (NAPs) on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) as well as the increased focus on the implementation of UNSCR 1325. Hon. Stolbizer herself was working actively on transforming the aforementioned initiatives into national legislation, and to further raise awareness of the dangers of SALW based on the mentioned regional co-operation.

Hon. Biyika Lawrence Songa, Uganda called for international transparency regarding the arms trade and Government's foreign involvements, drawing from experiences from his national context, where international conflicts and a historical lack of regulation, along with other illicit activities such as trafficking of animals, has led to widespread proliferation of SALW. He underscored the need for support for the more vulnerable nations, and took the opportunity to present the successful recent efforts to ensure effective legislation on SALW control in Uganda. Hon. Songa himself was working actively on lobbying for the ratification of the ATT by the national Government.

Hon. Fobeh Soro, Côte d'Ivoire noted the impact of previous crises in forming policies to reduce the proliferation of uncontrolled SALW and shared the experience from Côte d'Ivoire where the population has been effectively rallying against SALW because of the experiences following the political crisis in 1999. He also noted the need for substantial regional cooperation, as proliferation of SALW can easily be spread across borders without proper regulation and management in place.

Hon. Vincent de Paul Emah Etoundi, Cameroon presented his involvement in increasing awareness on and control of SALW in Cameroon, as well as his involvement in the Forum's activities, such as the co-hosting of a seminar in June 2022 on the linkages between SALW and the WPS Agenda. He further highlighted the need to cascade the effects at national levels to the grassroots level by collaborating with Civil Society Organisations (CSO), and by doing so ensure a broader movement to regulate uncontrolled SALW.

Hon. Lenora Qereqeretabua, Fiji explained the correlation between drug trafficking and the proliferation of SALW, and noted with concern several areas in her own region where uncontrolled SALW was causing massive devastation, most notably Bougainville and the Solomon Islands, as well as Tonga. She also presented Fiji's own history of SALW-related violence. Hon. Qereqeretabua concluded by opening up for regional organisations such as the Pacific Island Secretariat as potential avenues for further regional collaboration and as potential pathways for universalisation efforts.

Hon. Dr. Chegeni, President of the Forum thanked the Members for their brief reports, and congratulated them for vital efforts in respective countries.

Session II: Item 5: Discussion and adoption of revised Statutes of the Forum (Decision)

App 4. Suggested revised Statutes



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The second session was introduced and facilitated by Hon. Dr. Chegeni, President of the Forum. He gave the floor to Ms. Olofsson, Secretary General to present the suggested revised Statutes and the rationale for the suggested revisions, mainly focused on aligning the Statutes with the new Strategic Plan for 2023-2026, minor editorial revisions and clarifications as well as an overall streamlining of the language used.

The revised Statutes were adopted by the Members with a few minor changes: “Humanitarian” was added in the Preamble related to social and economic consequences of SALW-related violence. “Multi-stakeholder dialogue” was added to Article 1 as a requirement for the realisation of the Forum’s overall vision and mission. “Civil society organisations” replaced “non-governmental organisations” under Article 3 to clarify the language.

Session III: Item 6: Discussion and Adoption of the Final Declaration (Decision)

The third session was introduced and facilitated by the President of the Forum, Hon. Dr. Chegeni.

The Assembly held a constructive discussion, making a few modifications to the draft text and the parliamentary recommendations. The changes were focused on updating the statistics with newly released data (page 1, paragraph 3), clarifying the regional scopes (page 1, paragraph 3), highlighting the gender equality perspective (page 1, paragraph 3 as well as parliamentary recommendation 2.1) and streamlining the language (parliamentary recommendations 1.4, 2.1, 2.3 and 3.3.). The participating parliamentarians adopted the updated final declaration; [The Geneva Declaration](#) which provides ten parliamentary recommendations based on the three roles of a parliamentarian; legislation, oversight and awareness-raising.

Session IV: Discussion and election of new Board

Item 7: Presentation of Electoral Committee’s report (Decision)

App 6. List of proposed Board Members PFSALW 2023-2025

The final session was presided and facilitated by Mr. Christer Winbäck, as the convening Member of the Electoral Committee. Mr. Winbäck presented the Committee’s proposal, in line with App 6, as elaborated by the Committee in consultation with the Secretariat. He further explained the guidelines applied by the Committee to select candidates, based on gender equality, competence, commitment, political diversity and equitable geographical representation of the Forum’s membership. Mr. Winbäck also offered a correction to the document aforementioned, clarifying Hon. Kollçaku should be presented as a former General in Albania, not Kosovo.

The proposal included a total of eight candidates, four men and four women, of which three stood as candidates for re-election and five as candidates to be elected for the first time.



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President of the Board: Suggested for re-election to the Board: election to President – Hon. Dr. Raphael Chegeni, MP Tanzania, Africa.

Vice-President of the Board: Suggested to be newly elected to the Board and for the position as Vice-President – Hon. Lorena Fries Monléon, MP Chile, Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC).

Member of the Board: Suggested for re-election to the Board – Hon. Vincent de Paul Emah Etoundi, MP Cameroon, Africa.

Member of the Board: Suggested for re-election to the Board – Ms. Maria Pia Devoto, Argentina, representing Civil Society.

Member of the Board: Suggested to be newly elected to the Board – Hon. Elias Hankach, MP Lebanon, Middle East and North Africa (MENA).

Member of the Board: Suggested to be newly elected to the Board – Hon. Esther Matiko, MP Tanzania, Africa.

Member of the Board: Suggested to be newly elected to the Board – Hon. Lenora Qereqeretabua, MP Fiji, Asia-Pacific.

Member of the Board: Suggested to be newly elected to the Board – Hon. Bardhyl Kollçaku, MP Albania, Europe.

Subsequently, Mr. Winbäck proceeded to the voting procedure, according to the stipulations in the Regulations regarding election of the Board.

The General Assembly elected Hon. Dr. Chegeni as President, Hon. Monléon as Vice-President, Hon. Etoundi, Hon. Hankach, Hon. Qereqeretabua and Hon. Kollçaku as ordinary Members of the Board and Ms. Devoto as Civil Society representative. After a brief discussion, the Assembly decided not to elect the eighth candidate Hon. Matiko with reference to the geographical distribution of the Board, and to avoid having two Board Members from the same country. The Assembly further delegated the task of taking the decision on the possible election of an additional Board Member to the newly elected Board, if assessed as necessary.

Election of Adjunct Board Member – Swedish Representative

The floor was given to the Secretary General who explained the important role of the Swedish Board Member, both in terms of political anchorage with Sweden, one of the Forum's main donors, but also the role as employer representative on behalf of the Board, following Swedish labour law. The role includes



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tasks such as maintaining continuous communication with the Secretariat of the Forum and its staff as well as approval of relevant expenses of the Secretary General for financial transparency.

Given the political situation in Sweden, the Secretary General presented an interim solution of electing Mr. Christer Winbäck, former Member of the Swedish Parliament, co-founder of the Forum and former Member of the Board, as adjunct Member.

Mr Winbäck was elected as adjunct Board Member by the General Assembly until a new Swedish Member of Parliament is expected to be identified, tentatively in 2024.

In sum, the following new Board was elected by the General Assembly:

Hon. Dr. Raphael Chegeni, Tanzania, President
Hon. Lorena Fries Monléon, Chile, Vice-President
Hon. Lenora Qereqeretabua, Fiji, Member
Hon. Vincent de Paul Emah Etoundi, Cameroon, Member
Hon. Elias Hankach, Lebanon, Member
Hon. Bardhyl Kollçaku, Albania, Member
Ms. Maria Pia Devoto, Civil Society representative, Member
Mr Christer Winbäck, Sweden, adjunct Member

Item 8: Appointment of the new Electoral Committee (Decision)

Mr Winbäck, Sweden was re-elected as convener of the Electoral Committee. Hon. Dr. Sahar Qawasmi, Member of Parliament in Palestine and Hon. Wade Mark, Member of Parliament in Trinidad and Tobago, were elected as new Members of the Electoral Committee. For transparency reasons, it was clearly stated that Mr. Winbäck's assignment as adjunct Board Member will not coincide temporally or in substance with his role in the Electoral Committee. The assignment in the Board is expected to be of interim character until a new Swedish Member has been identified tentatively during the coming year 2024, while the work of the Election Committee mainly takes place in the latter part of year 2025 and furthermore is of another substance.

Concluding remarks

Ms. Olofsson, Secretary General took the opportunity to express gratitude to all participants and Members of the General Assembly for their continued efforts towards fulfilling the Forum's overall vision and mission. She briefly presented the conclusions of the General Assembly, including a summary and discussion on narrative and financial results since the last Assembly in 2018; revision of the Statutes, election of a new Board and the adoption of the Geneva Declaration. Furthermore, she reached out a hand to the Members to continue to support the work of the Forum, and emphasised the Secretariat's



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commitment to further improvements of the Forum's organisational and financial situation as well as the importance of continued effective parliamentary actions nationally, regionally and internationally by the Members.

Hon. Dr. Chegeni, President conveyed gratitude to the Members for the trust placed in him as newly elected President of the Forum. He provided a brief overview of the challenges faced by the Forum, and called upon the Members to continue their vital efforts to reduce and prevent SALW-related violence. He underlined the need for further funding diversification, and asked the Members for their support in this endeavour. Furthermore, he highlighted the need to use the lessons learned at the preceding international seminar and the General Assembly to enhance parliamentary actions at the national, regional and international levels. Finally, Hon. Dr. Chegeni thanked the Secretariat for the work of organising the aforementioned events, and proceeded to close the General Assembly.

List of Participants

Country/organisation	Name	Committee/function
Members of Parliament		
People's Republic of Algeria	Hon. Mohamed Mechegueg	Member of the Committee on Health and Information
Argentine Republic	Hon. Margarita Stolbizer	Member of the Committees on Constitutional Issues and Foreign Relations
Kingdom of Cambodia	Hon. Kheng Samvada	Vice-Chairman of the Commission on Education, Youth, Sport, Cult, Religious Affairs, Culture and Tourism
Republic of Cameroon	Hon. Vincent de Paul Emah Etoundi	Member of the Constitutional Law Committee
Republic of Costa Rica	Hon. Gilberto Campos Cruz	Committee on Citizen Security
Republic of Côte d'Ivoire	Hon. Fobeh Soro	Member of the Committee on Security and Defence



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Republic of Fiji	Hon. Lenora Qereqeretabua	Deputy Speaker and Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs
Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan	Hon. Dina Al Bashir	Member of the Committee on Foreign Affairs and the Legal Committee
Republic of Kosovo	Hon. Haki Abazi	Chair of the Committees on Foreign Affairs and Diaspora
	Hon. Hisen Berisha	Chairman of the Committee on Security and Defence
Republic of Lebanon	Hon. Elias Hankach	Member of the Committees on Youth, Sports, Information and Technology
	Hon. Halimeh Al Kaakour	Member of the Committees on Education and Justice
Malaysia	Hon. Mumtaz Binti Md Nawi	Member of Parliament for Constituency of Tumpa
United Republic of Tanzania	Hon. Dr. Raphael Chegeni	Member of the Public Investment Committee
Republic of Trinidad and Tobago	Hon. Wade Mark	Member of the Committees on Business, Standing Orders and Public Administration and Appropriations
Republic of Uganda	Hon. Biyika Lawrence Songa	Member of the Committees on Climate Change, Environment, Natural Resources, Budget, Rules and Discipline, ICT, Science and Innovation
Oriental Republic of Uruguay	Hon. Germán Cardoso	Member of the Committees on Human Rights and Petitions, Security and Coexistence and Transportation, Communication and Public Works



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Civil Society and Other Representatives		
Civil Society Representative	Ms. Maria Pia Devoto	Director, Asociación para Políticas Públicas (APP), Board Member of the Forum
Kingdom of Sweden	Mr. Christer Winbäck	Former Member of the Swedish Parliament
Secretariat of the Forum		
Kingdom of Sweden	Ms. Karin Olofsson	General Secretary
Kingdom of Sweden	Ms. Emmanuelle Texier	Programme Officer
	Mr. Theodor Stensö	Programme Officer

Annexes

Annex 1. Geneva Declaration (approved version)

Annex 2. Statutes (approved revised version)