Statement to the First Committee of the 2015 General Assembly
International Action Network on Small Arms, IANSA
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Mr. Chair,

I speak on behalf of the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA), the global civil society movement working against the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. We are the official coordinator of civil society participation in the UN small arms process.

Two years ago, the UN Secretary General observed that ‘The world is over-armed, and peace is under-funded’. We could not agree more.

The Small Arms Survey tells us that there are close to one billion guns in circulation – one for every 7 people on the planet. Around 8 million new guns are being produced each year, while less than one million are eliminated in weapons collection and destruction programs. So for every one step forward, we are taking 8 steps backwards. This is a destabilizing accumulation on a global scale.

The problem of proliferation and misuse of small arms and light weapons has been highlighted by many delegations here. The nations of the world need to stop accumulating guns and to start reducing them.

During the past couple of years, the Programme of Action on small arms suffered a loss of visibility as other topics in security and arms control took priority. Yet the PoA, which guides the national policies most likely to reduce gun proliferation and gun violence, remains as relevant and necessary as ever.

IANSA remains deeply concerned by the slow pace at which the majority of States are reforming their small arms legislation – and even when the laws are updated, the actual practices are even slower to change.

We are gratified by several important developments in the past year:

- In May, the Security Council passed Resolution 2220 on small arms and light weapons that contained new provisions to strengthen UN coordination and action. The Resolution followed the Security Council’s open debate on the Human Cost of Small Arms and Light Weapons, under the Presidency of Lithuania. An IANSA member from Cote d’Ivoire, Mr Karamoko Diakité, shared his first-hand experience of the devastation caused by the flood of guns in Africa.

- At the open debate, the Secretary General launched his 2015 report on small arms and light weapons. He stressed the need to include ammunition in all efforts to deal with small arms.

- He reiterated the obligation on states to promote full and meaningful participation of women in small arms policymaking, planning and implementation processes, as agreed at BMS5.

- He reminded States that their police should apply the UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms. We have seen too many examples in the news of the misuse of firearms by police.
We join in the celebrations of the Sustainable Development Goals, including Goal 16 which includes significantly reducing violence and illicit arms trafficking. IANSA members worked hard for the inclusion of Goal 16 and its Indicators on Disarmament, which is a necessary condition for so many of the other goals. For example, we won’t eliminate violence against women or achieve safe cities unless we do something about guns.

The dominant theme for this year’s Meeting of Governmental Experts on small arms (MGE) was new technologies. If groups like Boko Haram or Al-Shabaab acquire the capacity to mass-produce guns that cannot be marked or traced, the results will be a security nightmare, undermining national and regional capacity to implement all the instruments dealing with small arms.

However, as some African delegates observed during the MGE, many countries in the developing world have yet to encounter 3D printing or polymer weapons, but are still struggling with the same old problems that led to the creation of the PoA in the first place, for example:

- poor stockpile management
- out-dated legislation, and above all,
- a severe lack of capacity, skills and resources in their administrative, law enforcement and security agencies.

IANSA offers the following recommendations:

- Reduce the production of small arms and light weapons, and dramatically increase destruction programs.

- Increase international cooperation and assistance to support the vital activities of governments and civil society, particularly those countries affected by high levels of gun trafficking and gun violence.

- States should acknowledge and support the important work of civil society in interrupting the flood of guns and preventing violence.

- And to help further the cause of global disarmament, please support the disarmament indicators for Goal 16 when you vote on the Indicators next year.

Pope Francis recently spoke out against the relentless production and sale of guns on a planet that, as Ban Ki Moon said, is already over-armed. He referred to the “shameful and culpable silence” that permits untold suffering to be inflicted on individuals and society by the flood of guns.

It’s time to break that silence.

IANSA stands with Ban Ki Moon and Pope Francis. We ask Member states to stand with us too.

Thank you.