

ZISMUN

Zurich International School MUN



Dear Delegates,

It is with great pleasure and excitement that we welcome you to the Economic and Social Council of ZISMUN 2026! As your chairs this year, we are looking forward to guiding you through what promises to be engaging, challenging and fruitful debate. Our committee will focus on both Promoting the Reallocation of Military Budgets to Achieve Sustainable Development Goals as well as Regulating Private Arms Production and Trade to Curb Armed Conflict in Fragile Economies. You are tasked with representing the position of the country you were assigned along with engaging in constructive debate and collaboration with other nation-states to find plausible and effective solutions.

However, as delegates your role is to not only represent your nation but to also embody the ideals of Model UN. First and foremost, that means maintaining a level of respect to all members present in this committee and conference. We encourage you to actively participate, engage in fruitful discussions while staying open minded and work towards a solution that tackles the pressing issues this committee has been tasked with solving.

In order to achieve this, you, as delegates are expected to come prepared. That entails reading this research report as well as having thoroughly researched the two topics we will be debating to ensure that you have a concrete understanding of your country's position (this may include policies, priorities, or relevant statements by country officials).

The primary goals of this committee will be to foster critical thinking, persuasive communication and problem solving through cooperation. We encourage you all, no matter their level of experience, to actively engage with your fellow delegates in both moderated and unmoderated caucus. To ask thought provoking and challenging points of information, to give passionate and informative speeches and to engage in debate where even contrasting perspectives can work towards effective solutions.

We look forward to seeing your preparation be reflected in your contributions to our community and the overall level of debate. We are confident that your efforts will ensure that this conference will be an enjoyable, memorable and impactful experience that you will have something to take away from.

Warm Regards,
Your Chairs,
Elizabeth & Abhinav

Regulating Private Arms Production and Trade to Curb Armed Conflict in Fragile Economies

General Overview of the Situation:

The topic of regulating private arms production and trade to curb armed conflict in fragile economies revolves around addressing the increasing role of private actors in the global arms market and the security risks arising from poor regulation. As private arms manufacturers and traders expand their cross-border trade, fragile economies with limited control of border security, trade, and non-state actors struggle to monitor and control the flow of arms. UN agencies and institutions warn that the unrestricted proliferation of small arms and light weapons is a large contributor to internal conflict, political instability, and prolonged violence. This issue focuses on strengthening regulations and oversight mechanisms to prevent arms diversion, reduce armed conflict, and support conditions necessary for sustainable development and long term peace.

Key Definitions:

State Manufacturer:

A manufacturer that produces goods and services that is run by a government. Because of this, profit is not the first priority for state manufacturers. Often, state manufacturers make use of the goods and services they produce. However, they can also be sold to others.

Private Manufacturer:

A company that produces goods and services for others for the purpose of sale. Not controlled by a government.

Private Arms Production:

The manufacturing of weapons and military equipment by privately owned companies rather than state-owned enterprises, often operating within global supply chains and exporting across national borders.

Arms Trade:

The international transfer of conventional weapons, including small arms, light weapons, ammunition, and related components, through legal sales, licensed exports, or illicit trafficking.

Heavy Weapons:

Large, powerful, weapons that are too heavy for a single soldier to carry, normally requiring a crew or mounting on vehicles/fortifications

Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW):

Portable weapons such as pistols, rifles, assault rifles, machine guns, and grenade launchers, which are commonly used in internal conflicts due to their low cost, durability, and ease of transport.

Fragile Economies:

Countries characterized by weak governance, limited institutional capacity, political instability, and high vulnerability to conflict, making them less able to regulate arms flows and enforce the rule of law.

Armed Conflict:

Sustained violent confrontations involving state or non-state actors, often fueled by the availability of weapons and exacerbated by weak regulatory and security structures.

Non-State Actors:

An individual or organization that has significant political influence but is not allied to any particular country or state.

Proliferation:

Rapid increase in the number or amount of something.

Regulatory Frameworks:

National and international laws, treaties, and monitoring mechanisms such as export controls and licensing systems. These are designed to govern arms production, trade, and use.

Historical Situation:

The Regulation of private arms production and trade has been a challenge within the international system for decades. Shown particularly as the global arms market expanded during and after the Cold War. Throughout the first half of the 20th century, arms production was dominated by government-run industries and regulated by alliances. However, the post-Cold War period led to a significant shift towards privatization and globalization of the defense industry, giving a larger role for private manufacturers operating across borders.

During the 1990s and early 2000s, the proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) became a major concern, as surplus weapons from cold war stockpiles entered fragile and conflict-affected economies. Weak regulations, corruption, and limited border control allowed weapons to fall in the hands of non-state armed groups, fueling the civil wars in Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, and parts of Latin America. For example, The Second Congo War. With a death toll surpassing 5 million people, it was the deadliest conflict since World War II. This war was fought largely with SALW, since there was a large surplus of them

after the cold war that ended up in the hands of the Congolese. Border patrol ended up being inconsequential in war-torn regions, and therefore arms were allowed to spread easily. To profit off the demand for SALW, smugglers and private manufacturers sold SALW through militia and black markets, further adding to the problem. The result of this was one of the bloodiest and most damaging conflicts in history. Through weak borders and large supply, SALW were too straightforward to access. Militia groups and private actors were allowed to further destabilize an already fragile state, and the consequences were devastating.

In response, the international community began developing mechanisms to tackle arms proliferation, including the United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons (UNPoA) (2001) and the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) (2014). While these initiatives were an important step in the right direction for establishing norms for responsible arms transfers, implementation, and enforcement have remained dissimilar. Many fragile economies continue to lack the capacity necessary to regulate private arms actors effectively, allowing illicit trade and arms diversion to continue.

As a result, the historical evolution of private arms production and trade shows a recurring pattern, one of rapid market expansion being a step ahead of regulatory oversight. This imbalance has allowed the prolonged armed conflict in fragile economies to persist and continues to pose a large obstacle to peace and stability. Both of which are issues that are central to ECOSOC's mandate.

Current Situation:

As of right now, the world is riddled with conflict globally. Situations like the Sudanese Civil War, The War in Gaza, and the Civil War in Myanmar are all being supported by private arms. The situation in Libya specifically is not only being supported by private arms, but instead has private arms as one of the largest contributors to the current instability. The Russian private military contractor known as 'The Wagner Group' has not only provided arms to Libya, but have been active in the fighting and human rights violations in Libya. The private company has been directly destabilizing an already unstable nation by fueling conflict. This support of Libya from a private company is exactly what ECOSOC is hoping to avoid. Another prevalent situation in the current day is the situation in Yemen. In the case of Yemen, the private arms trade is incredibly accessible. There have been multiple reports of arms dealers in Yemen using Social Media to advertise and sell arms. Over 130 'X' (formerly Twitter) accounts and at least 67 Whatsapp Business channels have been found openly advertising weapons for sale over the last year. Anybody could contact them directly, leading to a high likelihood of arms diversion to non-state actors. Furthermore, in cities like Sanaa, arms are reportedly being sold openly in street markets or with vendors with little to no oversight. This once again allows arms to fall into the hands of non-state actors, further destabilizing an already unstable nation. Finally, Yemeni markets do not operate in isolation. Multiple Houthi shipments have been intercepted, where smuggled arms have been found. This shows that the arms are not only being circulated in Yemen, but are being imported through larger smuggling routes. This transnational smuggling system allows for arms to fall into the hands of private actors, leading to perpetuated conflict. Finally, there is the situation

in Haiti. Although small arms imports are legally banned by a UN embargo, the issue of illegal weaponry persists in Haiti. The UN estimates that around 500,000 weapons are being circulated in Haiti, controlled by gangs or militia. The vast majority of these (~90%) are illegal. This has led to rival gangs having more control than the police in many areas, resulting in the chaos that Haiti is in today. This is relevant to the subject of private arms, as it seems that the weapons in circulation have been brought in through private trafficking networks. Most purchased weapons come from the United States, specifically states with relaxed gun laws. Middlemen purchase these weapons and smuggle them back into Haiti. This is made easier by the current political situation of the state. Haiti is a fragile state as of now, and because of this they lack the ability to control their borders with authority. Furthermore, the existing border officials have been accused of corruption and taking bribes to turn a blind eye. Private arms are being distributed and circulated in a country teeming with corruption and lacking the power to put a halt to armed conflict. By diverting arms to non-state actors in Haiti, the situation only worsens. The peace and stability of the citizens of the nation has been damaged severely by the smuggling of private arms into Haiti. These three current events all paint a picture of the overall state of the modern day issue of private arms production ending up in states in fragile economic situations. In all of these cases, the state has not been able to curb the proliferation of arms trafficking due to insufficient authority over arms trade. The instability and disastrous consequences that result from this are exactly what ECOSOC hopes to mitigate.

Key Treaties/Agreements:

ECOWAS Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons (06/2006):

This regional agreement in West Africa has the goal of preventing arms proliferation through collaboration in the monitoring and disarmament of arms. Signed by all ECOWAS member states, no major opposition.

United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons (PoA) (07/2001):

The PoA gives a global framework for states to combat illicit trade in small arms and light weapons through stockpile management and international cooperation. Adopted by Consensus and supported by all major international blocs. However, some members at the time (notably the United States), were not keen on restrictions of civilian gun ownership. They however did not block adoption of the PoA

Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) (04/2013)

The ATT is the first legally binding agreement regulating the export of arms to prevent diversion to conflict zones, non-state actors, or violators of human rights. Voted in by the UN General Assembly. Key blocks in favor were the EU and the African Group. Iran, Syria, and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea voted against. Notably, The United States signed the treaty and did not ratify it. They informed the UN in 2019 that they will not ratify the treaty in the end.

UNSC Resolution 2117 (09/2013)

This resolution reinforces global commitments to combat illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and calls for stronger international cooperation to create peace and security. Voted in unanimously by the Security Council, showing a combined international commitment rather than the position of certain blocs.

Key Country Positions:

United States:

The US promotes national sovereignty over arms exports and the role of private industry in national defense. They were an original signatory to the ATT, however they never ended up ratifying the treaty. Furthermore, it is a second amendment right of the United States constitution for civilians to be able to own a firearm. The United States would be very apprehensive about any resolution or treaty that infringes on this right.

European Union (EU):

EU Countries are in favor of strict regulation of private arms production and trade. They support the ATT and regional initiatives, linking arms control to security, conflict prevention, and sustainable development. They urge for the policies of the ATT to be implemented more rigidly and for the binding elements of the treaty to be followed to a greater degree.

Russia:

Russia still supports state-controlled arms production and strategic exports. They resist binding international restrictions on arms companies, and emphasize how important arms trade is in national security and for the economy. Russia is host to The Wagner Group, which is a very large private arms producer that also offers military services. Russia insists upon its sovereignty and sees private manufacturing of weapons an opportunity for economic growth.

China:

China is a nation of entirely state owned arms manufacturers. It does not support privatization of arms manufacturing. However, it does export its own state manufactured arms for economic benefits and strategic influence. China is however very wary of the west, and that international regulations may pander to their benefit. Because of this, China is reluctant to support fully binding treaties, and instead prefers voluntary or selectively binding agreements.

Nigeria:

Nigeria is an advocate for regional cooperation to control small arms proliferation in West Africa. They emphasize the need for capacity building, monitoring, and implementation of the ECOWAS Small Arms Convention

UN Member States in Fragile Situations (Afghanistan, Yemen Etc.):

These countries are the main discussion in this debate. The private arms trade is what leads to political and economic instability in these nations. It is because of this that these nations care deeply about this issue and would like for the proliferation of private arms, namely SALW, to cease. They urge for nations to follow the ATT rigidly and push for more restrictions on arms trade. This is greatly to these nations benefit, as if arms went out of circulation and went away from the hands of non-state actors, peace and stability would no longer be a dream.

Possible Solutions:

Improved International Coordination: The current system of regulation of private arms production is very fragmented, with most states acting independently. Establishing a better global coordination mechanism, working with the UN, could sync policies, share practices that work, and ensure both major arms exporters and fragile states are involved in decision making.

Strengthened Legal Frameworks: The current international agreements struggle with enforcement and getting states to comply. Developing stronger legislation with clearer obligations could prevent the diversion of arms to conflict areas or non-state actors, creating peace and security in vulnerable regions.

Enhanced Monitoring and Early Warnings: To detect illicit transfers before they can fuel conflict, effective surveillance is necessary. National and regional data sharing at the international level could identify high-risk areas and help states prevent conflict.

Targeted Assistance: Fragile economies likely lack the resources to enforce arms regulations. This allows for arms to move freely in fragile states. Financial support and technical assistance could strengthen institutions, improve management, and enhance border security.

Promotion of a More Responsible Private Sector: Private arms manufacturers play the largest role in proliferation. Incentives, ethical standards, and harsher compliance measures could encourage responsible trade. Additionally, training and support could be provided to these companies, further lowering the risk of diversion.

Connection to Broader Development and Security Goals: Arms control is connected to broader goals by organizations like the UN. By prioritizing conflict prevention and resilience, arms regulation can directly contribute to SDG 16, creating conditions for long term peace.

Further Readings:

What is the Arms Trade Treaty? By Oxford Academic

Youtube

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wasPiNwe6hQ>

The Illicit Arms Trade: Forever Wars in the Global South By Theo Dyer

Article - Atlas Institute

<https://atlasinstitute.org/the-illicit-arms-trade-forever-wars-in-the-global-south/>

Booming Global Arms Trade: Sellers, buyers, and profiteers **By DW News**

Youtube

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UjiFzmYVG7w>

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