Statement by the High Representative for the Global Week of Action Against Gun Violence

“The Road to Development and Peace Begins with Silencing the Guns”

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Every day, guns wreak havoc across the world as women, men and children suffer from the scourge of gun-related violence. It is a problem not limited to situations of armed conflict – it affects all societies.

The destructive illicit trade in small arms and the ammunition which make them lethal is one of the primary obstacles preventing communities from achieving the sustainable peace and development they deserve.

The Global Week of Action Against Gun Violence is an opportunity to remind the world about this stark reality. However, it is also an opportunity to remember how much can be achieved through collective action.

This year’s theme, “The Road to Development and Peace Begins with Silencing the Guns”, comes at a time when the international community is beginning to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, an ambitious roadmap of seventeen concrete goals intended to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure prosperity for all.

The Goals form the basis of a universal, transformative and integrative agenda. Goal 16 of this agenda acknowledges the inextricable link between development and peace, specifically highlighting the need to reduce illicit arms flows. We must remember that development is given a chance to flourish when States effectively control their national arsenals; businesses are given a chance to succeed when weapons do not flow into the wrong hands; men, women, girls and boys are given a chance to pursue their dreams when their lives are not cut short by a bullet. Our duty to “silence the guns” is part of our common quest to build healthy and prosperous communities.

Armed violence aggravates poverty, inhibits access to social services and diverts energy and resources away from the bedrock elements of sustainable development such as infrastructure, education, health, clean water and sanitation. It contributes to the displacement of communities and the loss of livelihoods. It exacerbates inequalities and impedes women’s empowerment. During this Week of Global Action Against Gun Violence, I urge all stakeholders, Governments, regional and international organizations and civil society alike, to rally around the cause inherent in the SDGs—building a safer, more prosperous and more peaceful world for all.

In 2018, the international community will convene at the United Nations in New York for the third review conference of the Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons – the weapons of choice for armed violence across the globe. The conference will be a prime opportunity to strengthen efforts to silence the guns for a better world, an opportunity to use the Programme of Action to transform gun control policies into concrete outcomes.

The Sustainable Development Goals have made clear that promoting peace, providing access to justice and building effective institutions necessarily include actions that contribute to a significant reduction in illicit arms flows. Communities awash in weapons cannot achieve the prosperity, justice and security we all deserve.