Frequently-asked Questions

Q. What is the Programme of Action?
Under the 2001 United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (PoA), all governments agreed to improve, where needed, national small arms laws, import/export controls, and stockpile management and to engage in cooperation and assistance to that end.

Q. What is the International Tracing Instrument?
In 2005 States adopted within the framework of the PoA the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons, also known as the International Tracing Instrument (ITI), which requires States to ensure that weapons are properly marked and that records are kept. Moreover, it provides a framework for cooperation in weapons tracing – fulfilling one of the commitments governments made in the PoA.

Q. What is the purpose of the Third United Nations Conference?
The Third Review Conference (RevCon3) will review progress made in the implementation of the existing PoA and its ITI. It will be chaired by Ambassador Jean-Claude Brunet from France. Countries aim to agree to a substantive outcome document at the end of the conference.
RevCon3 will not be negotiating a treaty nor re-negotiate the existing Programme of Action.

Q. Does the PoA ban or restrict the small arms trade within or among countries?
The PoA does not interfere with the legal trade in small arms and lights weapons. It is about countering the illicit trade in the weapons mentioned.
The PoA encourages States to put in place mechanisms of their own choice, to prevent the diversion of legally owned arms into illegal circuits.
Each sovereign State determines its own laws and regulations for the manufacture, sale and possession of firearms by its citizens. The United Nations has no jurisdiction over such matters.

**Q. Does the PoA – or do the United Nations – aim at taking away guns owned by civilians?**

There is no mandate, no plan, and no ambition to do so.

The PoA does not stand in the way of citizens of any country to legally possess firearms. Under the PoA, governments commit to adequate controls over the import, export, transfers and storage of small arms and light weapons, because an absence of such regulation enables diversion into illegal markets, and into the hands of armed groups, terrorists, pirates, drug traffickers and criminals. The United Nations is committed to these goals formulated by its Member States.

**Q. Is the Conference part of the United Nations Secretary-General’s Disarmament Agenda?**

On 24 May 2018, the United Nations Secretary-General announced his Agenda for Disarmament ‘Securing our Common Future’. As part of his agenda, he promotes coordinated efforts to tackle the illicit trade in small arms. He also highlights the need of an integrated approach to prevent conflicts and sustain development, in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. As such, the implementation of the PoA is relevant for his disarmament agenda.

However, it is not the Secretary-General who mandated the Conference. The third Review Conference on the PoA is mandated by the United Nations General Assembly. In its Resolution A/RES/72/57, adopted by consensus, States recall a decision taken in 2012 to hold a review conference on the PoA in 2018 in New York.

**Q. Is the PoA part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development?**

With the inclusion of Goal 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, it was recognized that durable conditions of peace and security are necessary to realize long-term development. All States have committed to such an integrated approach.

Agenda 2030 includes a target on significantly reducing illicit arms flows. Thus, the 2030 Agenda places arms control squarely within the scope of the world’s coordinated actions towards reducing poverty. Agenda 2030 also indicates that existing (UN) processes can feed into the SDG data collection.

In 2016, at the last PoA meeting, States acknowledged the link between the PoA and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and recognized that the full and effective implementation of the PoA is crucial to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda in general, and to successfully reducing illicit arms flows in particular.²

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Further information: [www.un.org/disarmament/revcon3](http://www.un.org/disarmament/revcon3)  

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³ A/CONF.192/8MS/2016/2.