



**Statement by the High Representative for the Global Week
of Action Against Gun Violence, 2-9 June 2019**

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Armed violence continues to devastate communities everywhere, undercutting security, economic opportunity and social and human rights. Guns are used to kill more than 200,000 people each year, and more than 80% of those killings take place outside of battlefields.

Civilians, not soldiers, are the most common victims of armed violence. And for every person killed, many more sustain gun-related injuries, disabilities and psychological trauma.

In much of the world, easy access to weapons is a key driver of this violence. With an estimated one billion firearms in circulation worldwide, our firm commitment is crucial to controlling the wide circulation and availability of guns. It is essential to rise to this challenge and promote peaceful and just societies as envisioned under Goal 16 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. To achieve this Goal, States have committed to making measurable progress on significantly reducing all forms of violence, related deaths and the illicit flow of arms.

The Secretary-General, for his part, has pledged to strengthen the efforts of the United Nations to rein in the excessive accumulation of and illicit trade in conventional arms. In his Agenda for Disarmament, Securing Our Common Future, he underlines that the control of small arms and light weapons must be integrated into broader work on conflict prevention and sustainable development, with the primary objective of saving lives.

At the national level, a key to addressing diversion and rampant misuse are solid controls on civilian possession, achieved through adequate legislation and enforcement.

In addition, it is incumbent upon governments to secure state-held arms and ammunition. Identifying surplus ammunition and weapons is an important starting point. Too often, excess arms and ammunition are stockpiled, transferred or resold, increasing the risk of them ending up in the hands of unauthorized groups such as criminals and terrorists.

Destruction of surpluses is the most effective option as well as the most economical one. Every year on 9 July, the UN joins governments, regional organizations and civil society in marking “International Gun Destruction Day”. This occasion provides an excellent opportunity for improving the safety and security of firearms, and we should observe it with due seriousness.

Reducing the availability of guns and their ammunition will be impossible without also transforming cultural and social norms which often underpin the demand for weapons.

Gender plays an important role. Men can perceive owning a gun as an easy path to increased status and security, and as a – flawed – expression of masculinity. For women, intimate-partner violence is even more perilous when guns are involved, abetting sexual and domestic violence, and potentially femicide. Consequently, governments should deny access to guns to those who have been convicted of domestic or interpersonal violence. Through gender-responsive legislation and licensing policies, violence against women can be punished, prevented and eliminated.

But women are not only victims or survivors of gun violence. They represent half of the global population and are powerful agents for peace. Their contribution to disarmament and arms regulation is vital. Yet, women remain chronically underrepresented in discussions and fora on these topics. We must strengthen our efforts to amplify women’s voices to be heard at all decision-making tables.

During the Global Week of Action Against Gun Violence, let us all combine our efforts as we jointly work towards saving lives today and tomorrow.