

# Report

January 2019



## WEAPONS COMPASS

Mapping Illicit Small Arms Flows in Africa





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# Credits

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Cover photo: A gendarme holds a seized craft-produced weapon in Banfora, Burkina Faso, near the border with Côte d'Ivoire and Mali. Source: Matthias Nowak/Small Arms Survey

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# List of abbreviations and acronyms

<b>AFRIPOL</b>	African Union Mechanism for Police Cooperation
<b>ATT</b>	Arms Trade Treaty
<b>AU</b>	African Union
<b>AU Roadmap</b>	African Union Master Roadmap of Practical Steps to Silence the Guns in Africa by Year 2020
<b>CAR</b>	Conflict Armament Research
<b>DDG</b>	Danish Demining Group
<b>DDR</b>	Disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration
<b>DRC</b>	Democratic Republic of the Congo
<b>EAPCCO</b>	Eastern Africa Police Chiefs Cooperation Organization
<b>ECOWAS</b>	Economic Community of West African States
<b>ECOWAS Convention</b>	ECOWAS Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and Other Related Materials
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>iARMS</b>	INTERPOL's Illicit Arms Record and Tracing Management System
<b>IATG</b>	International Ammunition Technical Guidelines
<b>ITI</b>	International Tracing Instrument
<b>MINUSMA</b>	United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali
<b>MNJTf</b>	Multinational Joint Task Force against the Boko Haram Terrorist Group
<b>MOSAIC</b>	Modular Small-arms-control Implementation Compendium (formerly known as International Small Arms Control Standards – ISACS)
<b>PoA</b>	(UN) Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects
<b>PSC</b>	(AU) Peace and Security Council

<b>RB</b>	Regional body with a small arms mandate
<b>REC</b>	Regional economic community
<b>RECSA</b>	Regional Centre on Small Arms in the Great Lakes Region, the Horn of Africa and Bordering States
<b>SADC</b>	Southern African Development Community
<b>SARPCCO</b>	Southern African Regional Police Chiefs Cooperation Organization
<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goal
<b>SOP</b>	Standard operating procedure
<b>TCC</b>	Troop-contributing country
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UN Comtrade</b>	United Nations Commodity Trade Statistics Database
<b>UNIDIR</b>	United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research
<b>UNODC</b>	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
<b>UNREC</b>	United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa
<b>UNSC</b>	United Nations Security Council
<b>UNSD</b>	United Nations Statistics Division
<b>USD</b>	United States dollar(s)

## Foreword

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Illicit small arms and light weapons constitute a serious threat to safety, security, and stability in Africa. Equally, small arms and light weapons have long been considered the primary tools and enablers of violence throughout the history of conflict in the continent. In conflict situations, small arms are often used to commit a wide range of human rights and humanitarian law violations, including mass killings, forced displacements, gender-based violence, and attacks on peacekeepers and humanitarian workers. Outside the immediate context of armed conflict, illicit small arms aggravate both inter-communal conflict and competition over natural resources, and facilitate a broad spectrum of criminal activities.

Therefore, controlling the illicit proliferation, circulation, and trafficking of small arms and light weapons is at the heart of the African Union's efforts to prevent conflicts, mitigate their adverse impact, and consolidate peace. Over the past decades important policy and legal instruments have been adopted at the continental level in response to this problem, with significant progress being made in their implementation. However, serious gaps persist in Africa's efforts to eliminate illicit small arms.

The adoption of the African Union (AU) Master Roadmap of Practical Steps to Silence the Guns in Africa by 2020 offers a window of opportunity for renewed and serious efforts to deal with the problem of illicit small arms. As an essential component of the AU's attempts to realize this bold commitment, controlling illicit small arms should form a central part of Africa's efforts to prevent, manage, and resolve conflicts. This requires, among other measures, paying closer attention to arms flows into conflict-affected and fragile zones, and holding accountable the individuals and entities responsible for illicitly supplying non-state armed groups with weapons. Greater efforts should also be geared towards addressing the legal, political, social, and economic factors that contribute to the high rate of civilian possession of firearms.

I am therefore pleased to present the first-ever continental study mapping illicit small arms flows in Africa. The AU Commission spearheaded the study, which was undertaken

with the objectives of, firstly, providing Member States, AU Policy Organs, and regional inter-governmental organizations with an updated assessment of the extent and nature of illicit small arms proliferation across the continent, and, secondly, of better informing small-arms-related policy development and targeted response measures. With the launch of this study, the AU Commission further aims to promote transparency and a stronger commitment among its Member States to utilize evidence-based approaches to controlling the illicit proliferation, circulation, and trafficking of small arms, both of which remain essential principles underlying effective action and the achievement of measurable outcomes for efforts to deal with this scourge.

I wish to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to the Small Arms Survey for collaborating with the Commission in undertaking this study and for sharing valuable data that it has gathered over years of research in the area of small arms. I also wish to thank the AU Member States that have responded to the questionnaire that informed this study, as well as the regional economic communities, United Nations agencies, international organizations, and research institutions that contributed to it in a variety of valuable ways.

**—Ambassador Smaïl Chergui**

Commissioner for Peace and Security  
African Union Commission

# Preface

In June 2015 the African Union (AU) Commission and the Small Arms Survey signed a memorandum of understanding to cooperate in the implementation of the AU strategy for tackling illicit small arms and armed violence. For the Survey, this agreement represented an important opportunity to engage the AU directly and support one of the key areas of the regional organization's work. In 2016 the AU followed up with a request to operationalize the cooperation agreement, asking the Survey to undertake a mapping of illicit arms flows on the continent. It framed this mapping as an essential component of its Master Roadmap of Practical Steps to Silence the Guns in Africa by Year 2020.

The Survey was able to embark on the ambitious project that led to the publication of this report thanks to the important political support of the AU and the generous financial support of Germany. Working with the AU, and taking into consideration political deadlines and available resources, the Survey tapped into the existing network of organizations and specialists already working on small arms issues on the continent. First and foremost, this included the AU's member states—often through their dedicated national commissions—21 of which provided written responses to our questionnaires. The AU's ten regional economic communities and regional bodies with a small arms mandate contributed actively to delineating the scope of the research and reviewing the findings. A number of specialized UN agencies and civil society organizations also provided valuable content and insights to the report.

The findings and conclusions of the study confirm what one would expect: there is no quick fix to the problems of illicit arms flows and armed violence in Africa. The challenges that need to be addressed are multiple and particularly complex. There is no single illicit arms market that needs dismantling, and there is no single broker fuelling conflicts on the continent. Often, communities procure illicit weapons because they live in remote areas where the state is unable to provide security. Overall, the study identifies at least six major types of sources of illicit weapons in Africa. Some originate from outside the continent, while several others, such as unlicensed craft production,

are exclusively continental. Each of these flows of illicit small arms comes with its own set of actors, and presents unique operational challenges to anyone who attempts to control it.

Likewise, many of the potential solutions remain unproven. The continent has been particularly active on the diplomatic front, adopting several subregional conventions and mandating more than 20 regional and subregional organizations to support the implementation of these and other international instruments. But the sharing of information on the successes and failures of efforts on the ground is still suboptimal, which hampers the provision of lessons learned and the development of practical guidance for expanding the most promising initiatives. The challenges facing the coordination of implementation—including donors’ agendas—also mean that the efforts to date have tended to focus on tackling some types of illicit arms flows, while largely ignoring others.

That said, there is reason for optimism. African states and their regional and subregional organizations have significant experience in developing strategies and programmes to reduce illicit weapons flows. The AU has recognized the challenges facing the continent and shown leadership to move this agenda forward and to create space for civil society organizations to share their expertise and to work with African governments to control illicit weapons flows and reduce the incidence of armed violence. It is our hope that this study will assist the AU in coordinating and prioritizing the use of resources to support the most promising efforts to deal with these closely related issues. The Survey stands ready to support the AU, the various subregional organizations, and their member states to fulfil their vision of a continent where the guns are silent.

**—Eric G. Berman**

Director, Small Arms Survey  
Geneva, Switzerland

# Acknowledgements

The authors are particularly indebted to the AU Commission for initiating this project, supporting it politically, and ensuring that it benefitted from a broad and high-level consultative process. Special thanks are due to Einas Osman Abdalla Mohammed, who accompanied and supported the initiative from inception to conclusion, and worked tirelessly to mobilize the needed expertise and political will, while also contributing significant and substantial knowledge and guidance to the report. We also wish to thank Dr Tarek Sharif, whose trust in the Survey was essential to moving the initiative forward, as well as Tsege Teferi for her flawless logistical support. The AU's regional economic communities and regional bodies with a small arms mandate also played an essential role in steering the project, as well as mobilizing and liaising with their member states. Their representatives' active participation in workshops and their following up on requests for information were critical to the data collection process and for validating our findings.

Hardy Giezendanner, Mike Lewis (Conflict Armament Research), and Savannah de Tessières drafted expert background papers whose findings were integrated into this study. INTERPOL and the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali provided detailed responses to our requests for data, while the UN Institute for Disarmament Research provided access to analysis it had assembled on end-use and end-user controls in Africa. Among the participants in the project's inception and validation workshops, Leonardo Lara (UN Office on Drugs and Crime), Jonathan Rickell (Conflict Armament Research), and Mohamed Sesay (UN Department of Political Affairs) deserve special thanks for the sharing of additional materials and for providing substantial comments.

At the Survey it will be obvious to many that Eric Berman's longstanding efforts to engage with African regional and subregional organizations were key to building the political momentum necessary to undertake this study. The following colleagues and consultants also supported the project at various stages: Jovana Carapic, Olivia Denonville, Emilia Dungal, Robert Harding, Gergely Hideg, Paul Holtom, Stephanie Huitson, Hasnaa el Jamali, Rick Jones, Natasia Kalajdziovski, Luigi De Martino, Mathieu Morelato, Alex Potter, and Mihaela Racovita.

## Executive summary

The 28<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the Union, held in January 2017, adopted the African Union (AU) Master Roadmap of Practical Steps to Silence the Guns in Africa by Year 2020 (AU Roadmap) (AU, 2016). The AU Roadmap encompasses a number of practical steps and modalities for action to address the underlying drivers of conflict, as well as the tools and enablers of violence, including preventing the illicit flows of weapons on the continent and to conflict zones. In an effort to provide AU policy organs and member states with more comprehensive and updated analysis, the AU Commission partnered with the Small Arms Survey in undertaking a regional mapping of illicit arms flows. This report provides a synthesis of relevant information on the subject collected from AU member states, regional economic communities (RECs), regional bodies with a small arms mandate (RBs), and specialized civil society entities. In doing so, the report aims to help identify policy-relevant trends and patterns in illicit small arms proliferation in Africa, as well as remaining policy and knowledge gaps.

## Key findings

- AU member states identify the trafficking of arms and ammunition across land borders as the main type of illicit flow they are confronted with. Armed groups, including terrorist organizations, have demonstrated their capacity to move weapons across borders or carry out attacks.
- While the pool of illicit weapons in Africa remains dominated by old, often cold war-era models and makes, seizures of recent models of varied origins point to new and emerging sources of small arms for the armed and criminal actors active on the continent.
- External sources of illicit small arms include embargo-breaking transfers from the Middle East and Eastern Europe, the trade in readily convertible imitation firearms, and the diversion of recently authorized imports of both arms and ammunition. Some of this equipment is diverted quickly to armed groups after reaching African soil.
- Regional sources of illicit weapons include the trafficking of already illegal weapons across borders; the diversion of national stockpiles—including stockpiles held by peacekeeping forces—and civilian holdings through theft, loss, or corruption; and the production of craft or artisanal firearms. Craft-produced firearms on the continent range from rudimentary pistols and shotguns to sophisticated assault-type rifles.
- Because data on illicit weapons holdings is scarce, currently the magnitude of the phenomenon can at best only be very roughly estimated. It is, however, better understood in a limited number of countries that have undertaken nationwide assessments and that rely on multiple sources of information and methods for gathering data.
- As both the AU Roadmap and the relevant subregional conventions exemplify, AU member states have showed strong political will to tackle the scourge of illicit weapons flows. The practical steps identified in the AU Roadmap, notably capacity building for states in the areas of stockpile management, record keeping and tracing, and the destruction of illicit firearms, can contribute to reducing the threat. An important challenge lies in prioritizing, coordinating, and implementing these commitments and initiatives.
- AU member states' participation in international information-sharing platforms that can help to provide critical weapons-trafficking intelligence has been very limited to date. Prioritizing this area has the potential to provide the continent with timely and actionable information on new and emerging trends in illicit firearms trafficking.
- The continent has hosted innovative interventions, notably in the areas of weapons collection in (post-)conflict settings, joint border initiatives, and end-user controls, that merit further dissemination and development into practical guidelines.



Reliable information and analysis are critical to understanding the extent, nature, and impact of illicit small arms proliferation; identifying and developing relevant and effective measures to deal with the issue; and monitoring and evaluating their impact.”

## Introduction

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The AU Roadmap recognizes that while the causes of conflicts in the continent and the factors driving them have changed, the use of small arms and light weapons has remained a common feature of these conflicts. The availability of illicit small arms has long-term and widespread pernicious effects, causing deaths, population displacement, and the disruption of livelihoods; exacerbating intra- and inter-state violence and conflicts; and hampering peacebuilding. The AU Roadmap contains a number of steps and modalities for action, with a focus on preventing the illicit flow of weapons throughout the continent.

Reliable information and analysis are critical to understanding the extent, nature, and impact of illicit small arms proliferation; identifying and developing relevant and effective measures to deal with the issue; and monitoring and evaluating their impact. Yet few African states have put mechanisms in place to keep track of arms trafficking and armed violence. Moreover, the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) currently lacks the tools to monitor flows of weapons into conflict zones, as required by its broader conflict prevention and management mandate. The resulting lack of empirical knowledge hampers the African region's ability to respond effectively to the scourge of illicit arms flows and to measure progress in doing so.

Against this background, this report maps the issue of illicit arms flows in Africa and, specifically, endeavours to:

- highlight trends and emerging issues in arms production and the arms trade;
- provide a better understanding of the size of small arms imports, exports, and production in Africa;
- clarify sources of armaments in conflict zones and associated suppliers, supply routes, and financiers;
- identify remaining gaps in knowledge and national control measures; and
- provide a tool for the prioritization, monitoring, and evaluation of counter-trafficking activities.

The report draws on a review of existing knowledge combined with new research, including consultations held with and contributions received from multiple stakeholders, notably AU member states, RECs, RBs, and specialized UN and civil society entities. At the project's inception meeting held in Addis Ababa on 13–14 June 2017 the AU Commission and participating RECs and RBs agreed to facilitate the sending of country questionnaires to AU member states (in Arabic, English, French, and Portuguese), and data requests to international and subregional bodies that collect relevant information (Small Arms Survey and AU, 2017). Twenty-one member states<sup>1</sup> and several international actors<sup>2</sup> submitted written responses to the questionnaires between November 2017 and June 2018. The report further benefits from the Small Arms Survey's recent and ongoing research projects on the continent, as well as from written contributions

by subject matter experts and specialized organizations such as Conflict Armament Research (CAR, 2017; de Tessières, 2018c; Giezendanner, 2018). On 19–20 September 2018 the AU Commission hosted a validation workshop in Addis Ababa to review the draft of the report and further develop the policy recommendations it presents. Twenty-three participants representing member states of the AU PSC,<sup>3</sup> RECs, RBs, and specialized UN and civil society entities took part in the workshop. Unless otherwise specified, the information reviewed covers the period between 2011 and mid-2018.

The report is divided into three main sections that examine the topics identified during the June 2017 inception meeting. The first section examines the scale and availability of illicit arms in Africa, including a discussion on the main available indicators and a review of existing knowledge on the types and distribution of illicit arms on the continent. The main characteristics, supply patterns, and actors in illicit arms flows are analysed in section 2, which looks at the various ways in which legal weapons are being diverted to unauthorized users and at sources of already illicit weapons. Section 3 reviews examples of existing good practices and summarizes the recommendations developed at the project’s validation workshop to tackle these illicit flows. The report concludes with a series of policy-relevant observations regarding the state of knowledge on illicit arms flows in Africa, the remaining gaps in our knowledge, good practices, and priorities for action.

While the report focuses on identifying cross-cutting trends and issues, the issue of illicit arms flows in Africa is also heavily context specific. In order to capture national-level perceptions of threats and priorities, the Small Arms Survey compiled country profiles summarizing AU member states’ reporting to the project and official information they had submitted to international arms control frameworks. These profiles will be made available on the AU’s website. ●





While there is global and regional political momentum to tackle illicit small arms flows, measuring progress towards achieving this goal is challenged by the secrecy of this trade and its complex, multifaceted, and context-specific nature.”

## **Section 1. Assessing the scale and availability of illicit small arms in Africa**

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Concern for the impacts of illicit small arms flows extends well beyond the African continent. In 2015 UN member states adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which identify violence and illicit arms flows as impediments to development. Under SDG Target 16.4, UN member states committed to ‘significantly reduce illicit . . . arms flows’ by 2030 (UNGA, 2015). In the outcome document of the 2018 Third Review Conference of the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms (PoA), UN member states declared that they remained ‘convinced that the full and effective implementation of both [the PoA and the International Tracing Instrument (ITI)] is essential for sustaining peace, furthering reconciliation and security, protecting lives and promoting sustainable development’ (UNGA, 2018, p. 7).

While there is global and regional political momentum to tackle illicit small arms flows, measuring progress towards achieving this goal is challenged by the secrecy of this trade and its complex, multifaceted, and context-specific nature. This section reviews reporting and transparency on small arms issues on the continent, as well as the main indicators available to monitor illicit arms flows in Africa. Existing knowledge about the distribution of small arms on the continent and the main types of equipment in circulation is then discussed.



Nigerian father and son take photos in front of the ‘Non-violence’ (or ‘Knotted Gun’) sculpture outside the United Nations Headquarters in New York. Source: Kim Haughton/UN Photo

# Definitions of small arms and light weapons

## Small arms

Revolvers and self-loading pistols, rifles and carbines, sub-machine guns, assault rifles, and light machine guns.



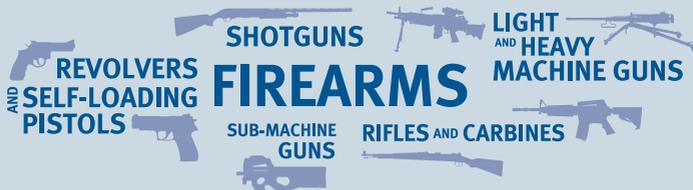
## Light weapons

Heavy machine guns, grenade launchers, portable anti-tank and anti-aircraft guns, recoilless rifles, portable anti-tank missile and rocket launchers, portable anti-aircraft missile launchers, and mortars of less than 100 mm calibre.



## Firearms

Revolvers and self-loading pistols; rifles and carbines; shotguns; sub-machine guns; and light and heavy machine guns.



## Illicit small arms

Weapons that are produced, transferred, held, or used in violation of national or international law.



## 1.1 Definition and indicators

This report uses the term ‘small arms and light weapons’ to cover both military-style small arms and light weapons, as well as commercial firearms (handguns and long guns). Except where noted otherwise, it follows the definition used in the UN *Report of the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms* (UNGA, 1997):

- *small arms*: revolvers and self-loading pistols, rifles and carbines, sub-machine guns, assault rifles, and light machine guns;
- *light weapons*: heavy machine guns, grenade launchers, portable anti-tank and anti-aircraft guns, recoilless rifles, portable anti-tank missile and rocket launchers, portable anti-aircraft missile launchers, and mortars of less than 100 mm calibre.

The term ‘small arms’ is used in this report to refer to small arms, light weapons, and their ammunition (as in ‘small arms trafficking’), unless the context indicates otherwise, whereas the terms ‘light weapons’ and ‘ammunition’ refer specifically to these items. The use of the term ‘firearms’ refers to types of weapons belonging to the following categories only: revolvers and self-loading pistols; rifles and carbines; shotguns; sub-machine guns; and light and heavy machine guns.

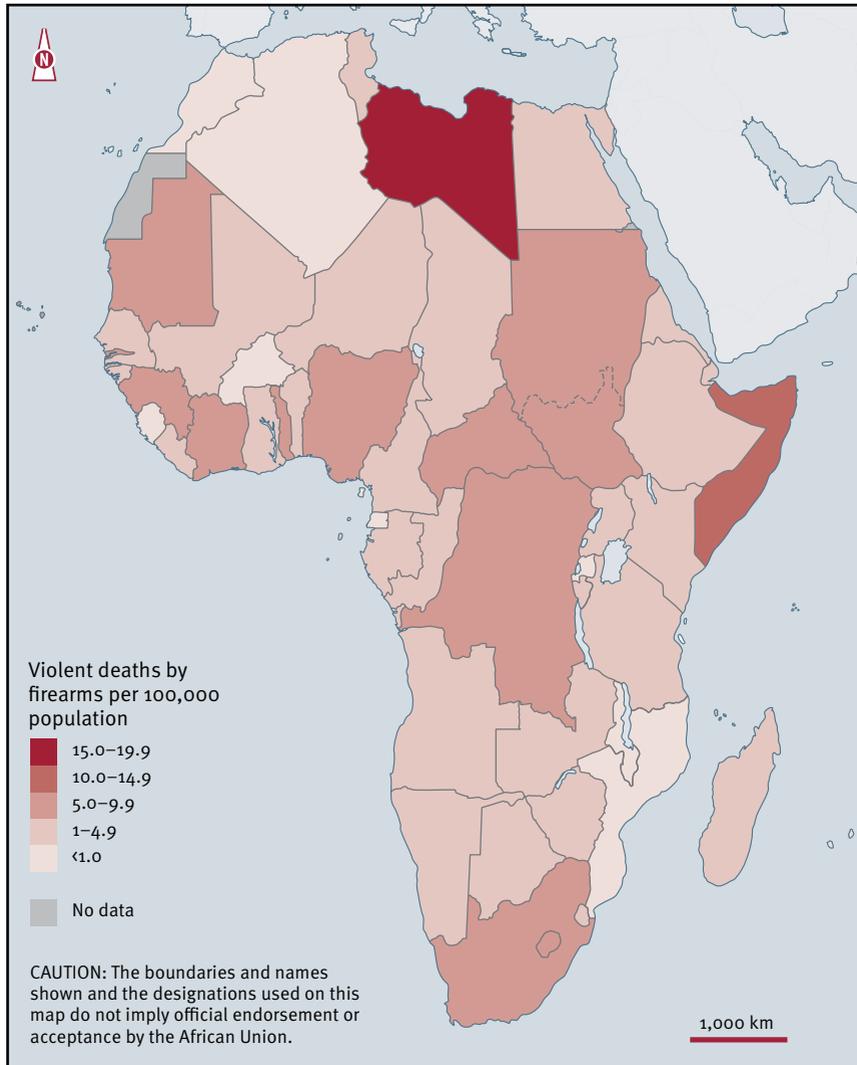
This report defines illicit small arms as ‘weapons that are produced, transferred, held, or used in violation of national or international law’ (Schroeder, 2012, p. 314).<sup>4</sup> This definition acknowledges the many different forms that illicit arms flows can take, and includes both in-country and cross-border flows of small arms and ammunition.

The UN’s agreed indicator for monitoring progress towards SDG Target 16.4 (reducing illicit arms flows)—that is, Indicator 16.4.2—is the ‘proportion of seized, found or surrendered arms whose illicit origin or context has been traced or established by a competent authority in line with international instruments’ (UNGA, 2017). Provided it is sufficiently detailed, seizure data as envisioned under Indicator 16.4.2 can offer a ‘useful window on illicit arms flows’, yet it cannot fully describe the illicit trade, most importantly because only a fraction of illicit weapons are seized. Fundamentally, the indicator is as much about creating momentum and building capacities to generate better information on illicit arms flows as it is about actually monitoring the illicit arms trade (McDonald, Alvazzi del Frate, and Ben Hamo Yeger, 2017, p. 8).

Assessments of the feasibility of monitoring illicit arms flows in African settings have highlighted various challenges associated with Indicator 16.4.2. In Niger, for instance, while various security forces seize weapons and ammunition and keep useful records, the quality of this data varies and, crucially, the relevant information is not centralized to allow for its analysis (de Tessières, 2017, p. 3). As states work to align their practices with the SDG monitoring framework and improve their record-keeping on arms seizures, a number of complementary indicators, often context specific, are helpful for monitoring

changes in the nature and intensity of illicit arms flows. They can include data on the use of small arms in acts of violence—for example, rates of violent deaths by firearm (see Map 1); fluctuations in the prices of arms and ammunition; and qualitative analysis of the evolution of security threats and trafficking networks, which can be produced by

**Map 1** Violent deaths by firearms per 100,000 population in Africa, 2016



Source: Small Arms Survey (n.d.)

a range of actors (Carlson, 2016, p. 1; de TESSIÈRES, 2017, pp. 3, 10; Florquin, 2013). While this report takes available seizure statistics into consideration, it also uses a broader approach to the study of illicit arms flows on the continent by relying on data collected by various governmental and non-governmental actors.

## 1.2 Transparency and reporting

Despite increased global international attention to small arms-related issues since the beginning of the century, there has been only limited progress in states' reporting and transparency on the core issues relevant to arms control. One example is transparency with regard to the authorized trade: the Small Arms Survey's 2018 edition of the Transparency Barometer found that the world's 49 major small arms exporters scored on average only 12.35 points out of a possible 25, and showed little improvement overall compared with previous years. Although more AU member states may qualify as major small arms exporters as defined in the Transparency Barometer,<sup>5</sup> only South Africa featured in the 2018 edition, receiving a score of 11.50 (Holtom and Pavesi, 2018a, pp. 7–8).

Similarly, a review of data on global small arms holdings found that, while more detailed official information is available on civilian holdings in 2018 than in 2007, there is still little transparency on the stocks of armed forces and law enforcement agencies. Indeed, while civilian firearms registration data is available for 133 countries and territories worldwide, only 28 countries have released information on their military stockpiles, while the same number did so regarding their law enforcement firearms holdings (Karp, 2018a; 2018b; 2018c). Finally, information on the authorized industrial production and transfers of small arms and ammunition remains patchy both globally and in Africa (see Box 1). Limited information sharing by governments on the legal small arms trade underscores the challenges faced by attempts to paint a reliable picture of illicit flows, which are even more secretive and challenging to document.

African states' record of reporting on small arms issues is mixed. An assessment of national reports on the implementation of the UN PoA and ITI reveals that, on average for the period 2012–17, 44 per cent of African UN member states have submitted national reports during the years when a biennial meeting of states or a review conference was held. This places the continent behind the reporting rates of Europe (75 per cent) and the Americas (45 per cent), but above Asia (36 per cent) and Oceania (21 per cent) (Holtom and Ben Hamo Yeger, 2018, p. 27). During the same period 93 per cent of reporting states in Africa indicated that they have a national coordination agency in their country—a rate much higher than other regions (Oceania comes second with 71 per cent)—and all African states reported the existence of a national point of contact (Holtom and Ben Hamo Yeger, 2018, pp. 32–33). Nevertheless, the depth of the available reporting by African states is inconsistent, especially with regard to issues of manufacturing

## Box 1 Authorized arms production and transfers in Africa

While the development of Africa's arms industry has been relatively stagnant, several countries maintain capacities to produce or maintain small arms or ammunition (Wezeman and Béraud-Sudreau, 2011, p. 8; Holtom and Pavesi, 2018b). Nineteen African states recently reported small arms or ammunition production capacities (Table 1).<sup>6</sup> Historically, at least seven states have produced AK-pattern rifles, while 11 produced 7.62 × 39 mm ammunition (the main calibre associated with AK-pattern rifles) (Chivers, 2016).

The authorized trade in small arms to Africa is relatively poorly documented. Available statistics as recorded in the UN Commodity Trade Statistics Database (UN Comtrade) are

**Table 1** Recently reported small arms and ammunition manufacturing capacities in Africa, by UN subregion

UN subregion*	AU member states with reported ongoing or recent production of small arms or ammunition	
	Small arms	Ammunition
Northern Africa	Algeria Egypt Sudan	Algeria Egypt Sudan
Western Africa	Nigeria	Cameroon Mali Nigeria
Middle Africa	Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)**	Angola Chad** DRC Republic of Congo
Eastern Africa	Ethiopia** Kenya** Tanzania Uganda** Zimbabwe	Ethiopia Kenya Madagascar Tanzania Uganda Zimbabwe
Southern Africa	South Africa	Namibia South Africa

\* This report refers to UN Statistics Division (UNSD)-designated African subregions, as reproduced in Annexe 1. This classification refers to Middle Africa as a subregion, although generally the more familiar term Central Africa is used. \*\* Unconfirmed/uncertain.

Sources: Holtom and Pavesi (2018b); Small Arms Survey and AU (2018); Globalsecurity.org (n.d.); HSBA (2014); IPIS (n.d.); Stork (n.d.); Wezeman and Béraud-Sudreau (2011, pp. 8–11)

based on states' voluntary reporting and therefore may represent only part of the picture. Indeed, less than half of African states report to this platform, while some major exporters do not report their transfers to Africa.

The available statistics suggest some general trends—which need to be interpreted with caution. Although Africa appears to import fewer small arms, light weapons, and ammunition than other regions, the value of its reported imports has been increasing since at least the beginning of the century. From 2001 to 2014 the annual value of African small arms imports recorded in UN Comtrade nearly tripled from USD 82 million to USD 237 million (UN Comtrade, n.d.). Small arms ammunition is the largest category of materiel being imported to the continent, representing 37 per cent (USD 87 million) of the total value for 2014 (Holtom and Pavesi, 2017, pp. 24–25). Northern Africa is the subregion that imports the most small arms, averaging USD 62 million per year for the period 2001–14, followed by Western Africa (USD 35 million per year) and Southern Africa (USD 27 million per year). Eastern Africa experienced the largest subregional increase in the value of small arms imports between 2013 and 2014 (see Table 2).

In alphabetical order, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Morocco, South Africa, and Sudan have been the continent's five largest small arms importers for the period 2001–14. Their main trading partners for 2014 were France for Côte d'Ivoire; the Czech Republic, Italy, and Serbia for Egypt; Italy, the United States, and Spain for Morocco; the United States, Italy, and the Czech Republic for South Africa; and Turkey, the Russian Federation, and Côte d'Ivoire for Sudan (Holtom and Pavesi, 2017, p. 27). Although records of authorized transfers from China, the Russian Federation, and Turkey to African countries are incomplete, the available information suggests that these three exporters are important suppliers of small arms to the continent (Holtom and Pavesi, 2018b).

**Table 2** Value of small arms supplied to African subregions, as reported by UN Comtrade, 2001–14

UN subregion*	Value of reported small arms imports (USD million)				% change in import value, 2013 vs 2014
	2001	2014	Average, 2001–14	Change, 2001–14	
Northern Africa	22	93	62	71	51%
Western Africa	20	41	35	21	7%
Southern Africa	17	58	27	41	24%
Eastern Africa	17	36	21	20	130%
Middle Africa	6	9	8	4	6%

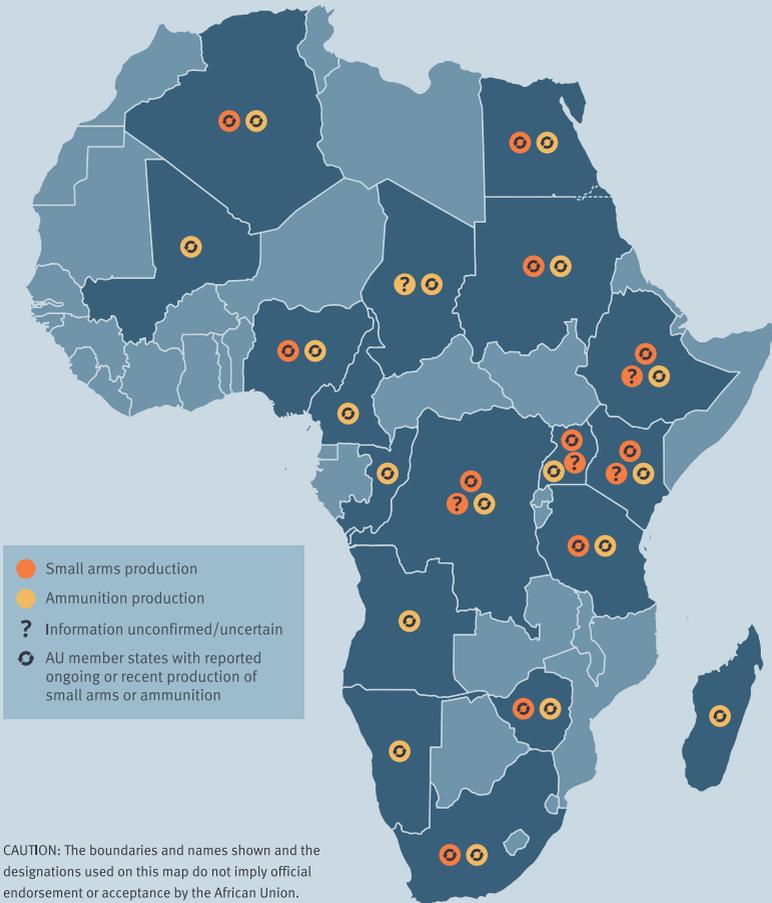
\* This report refers to UNSD-designated African subregions, as reproduced in Annexe 1.

Source: Holtom and Pavesi (2017, p. 27), based on NISAT (n.d.)



Due to the voluntary nature of reporting to UN Comtrade, these trends are mainly representative of transfers between the more transparent states. Moreover, the data does not make it possible to identify the context of particular transfers, or to distinguish, for instance, those meant to equip peacekeepers taking part in peace support operations. Until African states report more fully to the UN Register of Conventional Arms or Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) on their small arms exports and imports, one can only guess at small arms transfers between regional states—which also has implications for the overall trends in the region.

## Authorized small arms production in Africa



controls, measures to check end-user certificates, the regulation of brokering activities, and actions taken to deal with surplus and collected weapons (Holtom and Ben Hamo Yeger, 2018, pp. 31–62).

The present study attempted to supplement existing information by submitting a questionnaire to all AU member states in Arabic, English, French, and Portuguese, which the AU Commission and the various RECs/RBs disseminated to their respective members. The 22 responses received from 21 countries<sup>7</sup> between November 2017 and June 2018 suggest that member states are increasingly committed to engage with the international community in addressing the issue of illicit arms flows. In comparison, eight African countries had contributed data to the 2015 UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Global Firearms Study (UNODC, 2015, p. 4). Yet it should be noted that the depth of the responses received in the framework of this mapping study also varied, and that some subregions were under-represented (for instance, only one response was received from Northern African states and none from lusophone countries).

With these limitations in mind, current reporting by AU member states represents a useful basis for understanding the challenges faced by countries regarding illicit arms flows and their views on priorities to address them. Individual country profiles that aggregate the information reported by states in the country questionnaire and to international frameworks such as the PoA will be made available on the AU's website. Specific information and overarching trends from these profiles are included and cited in the relevant sections of this report.

### 1.3 Estimating subregional distribution

Participants in the June 2017 inception workshop stressed the importance of shedding light on the scale of illicit firearms holdings on the continent (Small Arms Survey and AU, 2017). Indeed, establishing reliable baseline data on illicit weapons is considered critical for monitoring and assessing the success of initiatives such as voluntary weapons collection programmes (Faltas, 2018, p. 20). Yet data on both licit and illicitly held weapons is hard to come by both globally and—notably so—in Africa. Of the 21 states that responded to the Small Arms Survey–AU questionnaire, only 9 provided an official count of registered firearms, while 4 offered estimates of registrations. Eight countries provided estimates of illicitly held firearms elaborated by national authorities, subregional organizations, or research institutions such as the Small Arms Survey (Small Arms Survey and AU, 2018). This means that among the responding states, fewer than half were able to provide any figures or estimates on the licit and illicit firearms held by civilian actors in their countries.

In 2018 the Small Arms Survey updated its global estimates of firearms held by civilians, law enforcement agencies, and military forces (see Karp, 2018a; 2018b; 2018c). The

update relies on countries' official submissions, such as data provided to the Small Arms Survey and AU questionnaire, and a variety of other sources, including household surveys examining civilian firearms possession and estimates put forward by experts. Among the 55 AU member states in the Small Arms Survey's Global Firearms Holdings Database, data on registered civilian-held firearms is available for 20, while 10 countries benefit from household survey data that sheds light on the proportion of individuals or households that own a weapon (Small Arms Survey, 2018). Official data on small arms held by the continent's law enforcement and military forces is even more incomplete (Karp, 2018b; 2018c). As a result, current understanding of the scale and distribution of small arms on the continent relies heavily on estimation procedures and experts' assessments.

With these data limitations in mind, existing estimates provide a sense of the scale and subregional distribution of small arms in Africa (Table 3). They suggest that African civilian actors, which include private individuals, registered businesses such as private security companies, and non-state armed groups, hold more than 40 million—or almost 80 per cent—of all small arms on the continent. In contrast, the continent's armed forces and law enforcement agencies hold less than 11 million small arms. Among the 40 million civilian-held firearms in Africa, 5,841,200 are recorded as being officially registered, while 16,043,800 are unregistered, with the status of the remainder remaining unclear (Small Arms Survey, 2018).<sup>8</sup>

In absolute numbers, Western Africa concentrates the largest number (about 11 million) of—licit and illicit—civilian-held firearms on the continent, followed by Northern Africa (10.2 million) and Eastern Africa (7.8 million) (Table 3). When applied to population

**Table 3** Estimated African subregional distribution of civilian firearms, 2017

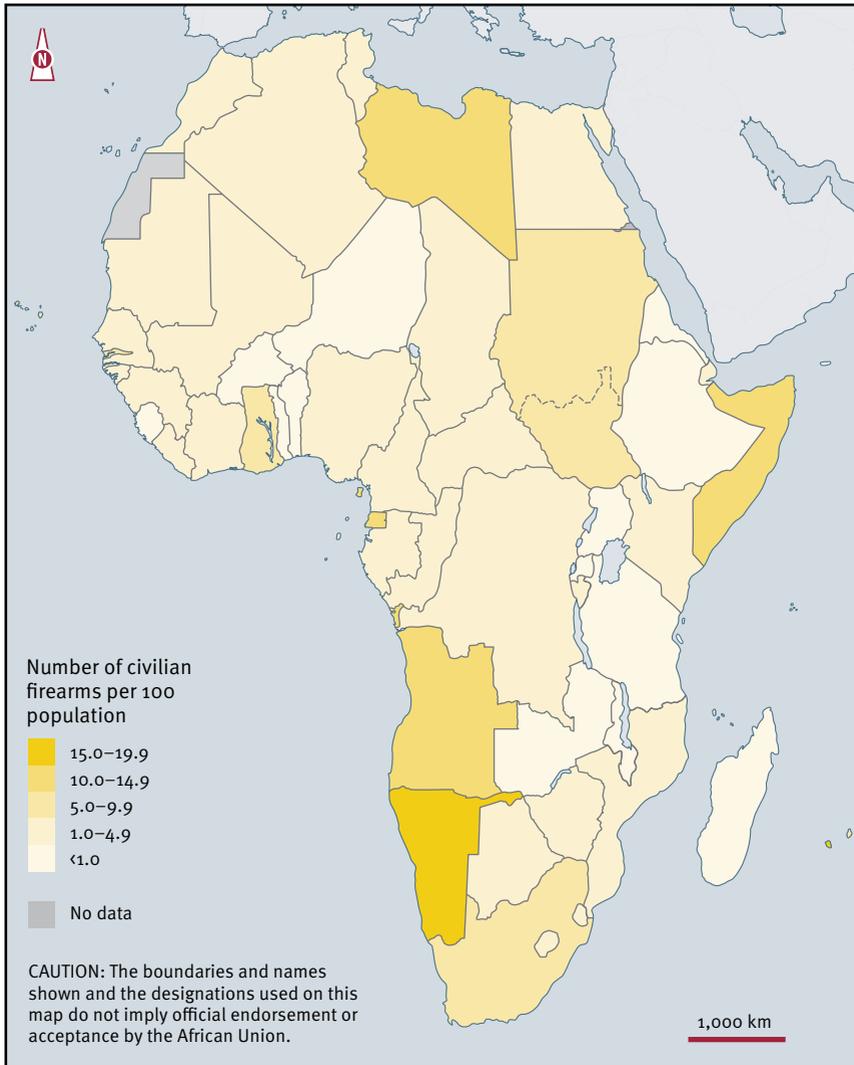
UN subregion*	Population	Number of civilian-held firearms	Civilian-held firearms per 100 population
Africa total	1,246,505,000	40,009,000	3.2
Eastern Africa	416,676,000	7,802,000	1.9
Middle Africa	161,237,000	4,981,000	3.1
Northern Africa	232,186,000	10,241,000	4.4
Southern Africa	63,854,000	6,012,000	9.4
Western Africa	372,551,000	10,972,000	2.9

\* Groupings in this table are based on UNSD-designated African subregions, as reproduced in Annexe 1.

Source: Small Arms Survey (2018)

distribution, Southern Africa is the subregion with the highest number of civilian-held firearms per 100 people (9.4), followed by Northern (4.4) and Middle (3.1) Africa. National-level estimates are available at Small Arms Survey (2018) and will be included

**Map 2** Estimated distribution of civilian-held firearms per 100 population in Africa, 2017



Source: Small Arms Survey (2018)

in the online country profiles, while Map 2 provides a visualization of the relative distribution of civilian-held firearms at the country level. Interestingly, while some states such as Libya and Somalia combine high rates of civilian firearm ownership and high rates of violent deaths by firearm (Map 1), this is not an across-the-board correlation. This is not to suggest that firearms do not contribute to violence on the continent; rather, it demonstrates the need for fine-grained information—including qualitative assessments—of the types of weapons available, the actors that hold them, and the predominant ways in which they are controlled and used.

While these estimates may appear significant at first sight, they are actually relatively moderate at the global level. Indeed, Africa's rate of 3.2 civilian-held small arms for every 100 people is lower than that of other global regions, and far below that of the Americas (46.3 per 100 people). In absolute terms, Africa may only host less than 5 per cent of the world's civilian-held firearms (Small Arms Survey, 2018). Putting these numbers in perspective illustrates the need to rely on a broader set of indicators than estimates of weapons in circulation to monitor and assess the success of firearms-related interventions (Faltas, 2018, p. 20). This includes a more detailed understanding of the types and models of small arms that circulate illicitly and have the most negative impacts. Lastly, these findings must give hope that the challenge of illicit small arms proliferation in Africa can be addressed.

## 1.4 Types of illicit weapons

The typology of illicit weapons circulating on the continent is context and actor specific. With respect to privately held illicit firearms, the preference appears to lie in concealable types of weapons. Among the 15 AU member states that provided information on this issue in their responses to the Small Arms Survey–AU questionnaire, 9 identified handguns and 3 indicated craft weapons as the most available types of small arms illicitly held by private individuals in their respective countries. In contrast, only two countries selected factory-made, military-grade long guns (Small Arms Survey and AU, 2018). These responses illustrate the demand among individuals for easy-to-conceal handguns. In this respect, the growing circulation of readily convertible imitation handguns and craft-produced weapons in Africa is of concern, because these weapons typically cost a fraction of the price of a normal handgun on the illicit market—see below and King (2015). AU member states in Southern Africa reported that the primary types of weapons being trafficked across their borders were handguns for use in robberies and rifles used in poaching. In contrast, member states in Western and Eastern Africa pointed mainly to automatic rifles such as AK-pattern rifles as the main items being trafficked across borders to fuel conflict and supply armed groups, with some countries also noting transfers of shotguns and craft-produced weapons (Small Arms Survey and AU, 2018; Small Arms Survey, 2015).

Overall, the majority of illicit weapons circulating among armed groups in conflict-affected areas are military-style rifles and light weapons systems, which were often produced decades ago (see UNODC, 2013; Florquin, 2014b). A review of illicit weapons documented by UN panels monitoring international sanctions in Africa reveals that the majority (more than 60 per cent) of these small arms are military rifles, followed by handguns (21 per cent), shotguns (11 per cent), and imitation firearms (4 per cent) (Brehm, forthcoming). Weapons recovered by the Multinational Joint Task Force against the Boko Haram Terrorist Group (MNJTF) during its operations against Boko Haram in the Lake Chad Basin area primarily include AK-, G3-, and FAL-pattern rifles and M80 grenade launchers, and the associated ammunition. Anti-aircraft cannons, 60 and 82 mm mortars, and RPG7 launchers also circulate on the continent. This materiel was for the most part manufactured in the 1980s in countries that included Belgium, the then-West Germany, and the then-Soviet Union. The weapons were smuggled primarily from Libya, but also following attacks in Cameroon, Niger, and Nigeria that aimed to capture equipment from these countries' state forces.<sup>9</sup>

The UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) similarly identifies AK-pattern rifles as the main type of illicit weapon circulating in its area of operation, followed to a lesser extent by PKM-type sub-machine guns, both of which tend to have been produced in former Soviet Union countries and China from the 1960s onwards. Armed groups in Mali also use 122 mm rockets and 120 mm mortar rounds of Soviet production in the 1970s and 1980s to carry out indirect-fire attacks. These munitions were looted from Malian army stockpiles in the north of the country in 2012. Since 2014 insurgents have also been using French 81 mm mortar rounds from the 1970s and 1980s, and improvised explosive devices built from Belgian-manufactured anti-vehicle mines that were procured in Libya.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, most of the weapons offered for sale on social media groups in Libya from late 2014 to late 2015 pre-dated the 2011 UN arms embargo and included significant quantities of ageing 'legacy firearms' (Jenzen-Jones and McCollum, 2017, p. 15).

Yet there is also evidence of the circulation of comparatively newly manufactured illicit weapons and ammunition. The iTrace database of illicit weapons developed by Conflict Armament Research (CAR) is instructive in this respect. While the majority of the illicit weapons and ammunition documented by CAR on the continent were produced between the 1970s and the 1990s (although they may have been exported more recently), weapons of comparatively new manufacture are in circulation in every zone of armed conflict or armed violence where CAR documented illicit materiel. Between 1 per cent of illicit small arms and light weapons documented in Somalia and 3 per cent of those examined in Burkina Faso have definitely been manufactured since 2010, and between 9 per cent of ammunition seen in Burkina Faso and 17 per cent of ammunition investigated in Somalia was manufactured since 2010 (see Box 2).<sup>11</sup> These figures are comparable to those in Middle Eastern conflicts such as those in Iraq and Syria (CAR, 2017). Newly produced (since 2010) small arms ammunition recovered in the Sahel and South Sudan

## Box 2 General profile of weapons and ammunition documented in the iTrace database

Since 2014 CAR has worked in partnership with African security forces and AU/UN peace-keeping missions to document illicit weapons and ammunition in nine countries in North-ern, Eastern, Middle, and Western Africa affected by armed conflict or armed terrorist violence. This work has formed part of the iTrace Global Weapon Reporting System, an initiative established in November 2013 to map illicit weapons flows.<sup>12</sup> In Africa as of late 2017 CAR had physically documented more than 1,900 individual small arms and light weapons, and more than 326,000 rounds of associated ammunition. The materiel ranges from weapons and ammunition seized from armed civilians and in the possession of non-state rebel groups to weapons used in terrorist attacks. Table 4 provides an overview of weapons and ammunition documented in the nine countries for the period 2014–17, as well as the years of manufacture of the most recent items, illustrating the circulation of illicit weapons of recent manufacture throughout the continent.

**Table 4** Small arms, light weapons, and ammunition documented by CAR in African countries, 2014–17

	Small arms and light weapons (individual weapons)	Ammunition (quantity)	Latest year of manufacture (weapons)	Latest year of manufacture (ammunition)
Burkina Faso	158	960	2015	2011
Central African Republic	365	8,475	2011	2015
DRC	153	1,557	2000	2007
Libya	39	7,555	2005	2013
Mali	53	1,319	2011	2013
Niger	307	9,389	2016	2013
Nigeria	56	604	2007	2014
Somalia	579	5,655	2012	2016
South Sudan	215	291,191	2014	2015
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,925</b>	<b>326,705</b>		

Note: Some of the Niger sample has been gathered in joint fieldwork with consultants working with both CAR and the Small Arms Survey. Latest years of manufacture may be incomplete, since in many cases the year of manufacture of arms and ammunition cannot be determined from their markings.

Source: CAR (2017)

was produced in countries from various regions, including Bulgaria, China, the Russian Federation, and Sudan.<sup>13</sup> The chain of custody and exact point of diversion of this materiel are often difficult to establish. MINUSMA reports that it is likely that 7.62 × 39 mm ammunition with 2015 production markings produced in a Northern African state and cartridges with 2013 markings manufactured in a South-east European state were captured from state stockpiles or on the battlefield in Mali.<sup>14</sup> ●



The weapons trafficked in the continent vary in types and origins, comprising both equipment sourced in the region and arms sourced illicitly from other parts of the world.”

## **Section 2. Main characteristics, supply patterns, and actors**

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This section reviews the main types of illicit arms flows affecting the African continent and the actors involved. It begins with an overview of trafficking across land borders, which participating AU member states identified as the main type of illicit flow facing them. The section then examines the origins of the illicit weapons circulating on the continent, which can be divided into two broad categories: the diversion of licit small arms to unauthorized users or uses, and continental sources of already illicit weapons.

## 2.1 Cross-border trafficking and the ant trade

Weapons trafficking across borders in Africa is possibly the most important source of illicit arms on the continent. Indeed, in their responses to the country questionnaire, a vast majority of member states (15 out of 19 who responded to this question) ranked cross-border trafficking by land as the most prominent type of illicit arms flow affecting their respective countries (Small Arms Survey and AU, 2018). Such trafficking can range from dedicated convoys carrying exclusively weapons and ammunition in significant numbers to, at the other end of the range, the so-called ‘ant trade’. Although the ant trade generally refers to the small-scale movement of weapons smuggled across borders in small numbers—usually less than a dozen at a time—the cumulative effect of multiple transfers of this type can be significant and can also fuel crime and conflict.

The weapons trafficked in the continent vary in types and origins, comprising both equipment sourced in the region and arms sourced illicitly from other parts of the world. They include legacy weapons being recycled from earlier conflicts (UNREC, 2016, p. 37), but also weapons that were very recently diverted from national stockpiles, such as the post-2011 outflows of looted Libyan national stockpiles. Shotgun ammunition smuggled from Cameroon to the Central African Republic in 2014, some of which had been imported from Europe only weeks before, shows how authorized transfers can be quickly diverted and reach conflict actors through the ant trade (UNSC, 2014b, Annexe 18). Weapons trafficked by land in small numbers also include craft-produced firearms, as Guinea and Liberia have reported, as well as easily convertible and converted imitation firearms.<sup>15</sup> Lastly, several states noted an emerging trend in the trafficking of firearms parts and components, which are easy to conceal in vehicles or among other commodities (Small Arms Survey and AU, 2018).

The actors who specialize in moving weapons across borders to supply areas affected by ongoing armed conflict tend to be sophisticated organizations and networks. In Western Africa they have included armed groups, criminal gangs, local manufacturers, corrupt security officials, and returning peacekeepers (see Box 5) (UNODC, 2012, p. 36; UNREC, 2014, p. 22; Small Arms Survey and AU, 2018). In the Lake Chad area drug traffickers, illegal traders, and terrorist groups have been involved in weapons trafficking (see

# Main types of illicit arms flows in Africa

## Diversion of licit weapons

Diversion refers to the unauthorized change in possession or use of originally legal weapons.

- Transfer diversions
- Diversions from national stockpiles (including peace operations)
- Diversions of civilian holdings

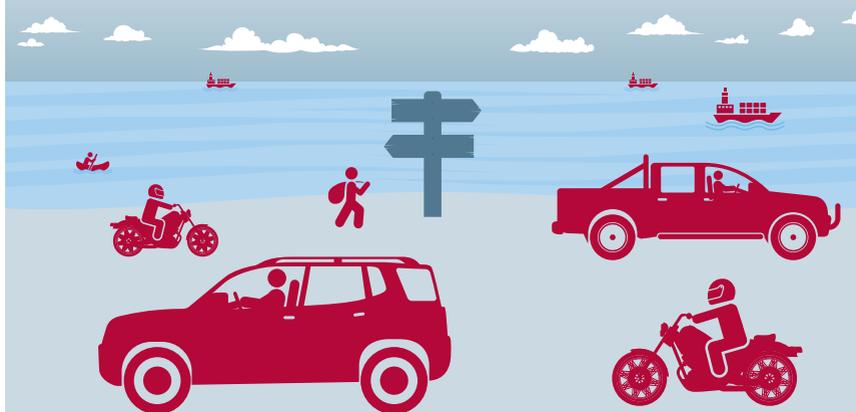
## Sources of already illicit arms

There are at least two sources of already illicit weapons (weapons that have never been legal):

- Unlicensed craft or artisanal production of firearms
- Illicit conversion of imitation firearms into lethal-purpose weapons



## Cross-border trafficking and ant trade



Member states ranked cross-border trafficking by land as the most prominent type of illicit arms flow affecting their respective countries—from dedicated convoys carrying exclusively weapons and ammunition in significant numbers to, at the other end of the range, the so-called 'ant trade'.

### What?

- Legacy weapons being recycled from earlier conflicts
- Weapons that were very recently diverted from national stockpiles
- Craft-produced firearms
- Converted imitation firearms
- Firearms parts and components, which are easy to conceal in vehicles or among other commodities
- Ammunition

### Who?

- Armed groups
- Corrupt security officials
- Criminal gangs
- Drug traffickers
- Illegal traders
- Local manufacturers
- Poaching organizations
- Returning peacekeepers
- Sophisticated organizations and networks
- Terrorist groups



A border crossing between Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire. Source: Matthias Nowak/Small Arms Survey

also Box 3).<sup>46</sup> In Eastern Africa Zimbabwe reports the involvement of poaching organizations in the trafficking of weapons (Small Arms Survey and AU, 2018).

In contrast, smaller-scale ant trafficking can involve a wider variety of actors, often including members of local border communities. Ethnic connections between pastoralist groups across borders facilitate cross-border trafficking: the Turkana of Kenya, Dodoth of Uganda, and Toposa of South Sudan, for instance, have traded arms across the three countries' borders, including AK-pattern and HK G3 rifles, in order to arm themselves to protect their cattle (*The Guardian*, 2014; Small Arms Survey and AU, 2018). Research carried out in pastoralist areas of northern Kenya, Somaliland (Somalia), Eastern Equatoria (South Sudan), and the Karamoja region of north-eastern Uganda

### **Box 3** Terrorist acquisition of small arms: the case of al-Qaeda-linked groups in Western Africa

Terrorist organizations' weapons acquisition patterns are relatively poorly understood, both on the African continent and elsewhere. Indeed, the analysis of terrorist weapons often takes a back seat to investigations of the attackers' personal networks, sources of financing, and movements. Yet weapons investigations can provide vital information for counter-terrorism efforts on the attackers' sources of support and their ties to broader terrorist and organized crime networks. Information on the procurement of specific firearms models and types of ammunition, including sources of supply, can help identify control gaps, allowing governments to take targeted legislative and enforcement action in response.

An illustration of the value of investigating weapons used in specific terrorist attacks is that of the Al Murabitun brigade, a Malian armed group affiliated with al-Qaeda. In 2015 the organization claimed responsibility for the 7 August attack on a UN guesthouse in Sévaré, Mali, during which eight people were killed. MINUSMA investigators examined equipment used by the assailant, including a 7.62 × 39 mm AKMS-pattern rifle that did not originate from the Malian national stockpile. Significantly, assault rifles of the same model, producer, and year of manufacture were used in subsequent attacks by armed groups aligned with al-Qaeda in Bamako, Mali, Ouagadougou in Burkina Faso, Grand Bassam in Côte d'Ivoire, and Gao in Mali (Anders, 2018, p. 5). In fact, most of the Type 56-1 rifles that were used in these attacks, which were manufactured in Chinese State Factory 26 in 2011, had sequential serial numbers, and their markings were partially erased in similar mechanical fashion, suggesting they originated from the same illicit transfer (CAR, 2016a; 2017).

While tracing efforts to determine the point of diversion of these weapons are ongoing, the available evidence strongly demonstrates these groups' ability to move equipment across borders to carry out attacks in different locations across Western Africa. This is a noteworthy capability that intelligence-based information sharing on the weapons used by terrorist actors helped to reveal.

indicated how many people in these communities acquire firearms for protection. Pastoralists lead nomadic lives in search of water and pastures for their herds, which can cause disputes when they trespass on the land of rival tribes. The increasing availability of modern small arms in these areas means that such disputes frequently escalate into armed violence. Some community members also engage more easily in armed thefts and cattle rustling, exacerbating local perceptions of insecurity and, by extension, local demand for and trafficking in small arms (Wepundi et al., 2014, pp. 1–2). Tackling such ant trafficking is therefore particularly challenging, and interventions will necessarily require engaging with local communities to ensure that their security needs are met and legal livelihoods sustained (Faltas, 2018).

While local actors who are involved in ant trafficking in firearms tend to do so as a side-line to their main activity of smuggling legal commodities, in some cases, in order to maintain a low profile, criminal syndicates outsource the transport of weapons and drugs to local actors (Mangan and Nowak, 2018). In the Sahara–Sahel, conflict in Mali and Libya and the subsequent proliferation of armed groups in border areas led to the militarization and increased criminalization of traditional trading routes, which fell under the control of powerful armed actors (Kartas and Arbia, 2015, p. 5). Participants in the present study noted that the general population, including migrants and refugees, are sometimes used as ‘mules’ to transport weapons (Small Arms Survey and AU, 2018). For instance, Uganda noted the involvement of women in such trafficking, while in the Central African Republic in 2014 a woman accompanied by her child attempted to smuggle shotgun ammunition from Cameroon in a bag of onions; the ammunition was intended for anti-Balaka militia (Small Arms Survey and AU, 2018; UNSC, 2014b, Annexe 18).

The means of transport used by traffickers vary widely. Research has revealed the use of taxi motorbikes (known as ‘*boda-bodas*’ in Uganda), personal vehicles, transport trucks, and small boats (Small Arms Survey and AU, 2018). Weapons and ammunition have been transported between Burundi and the DRC in both vehicles and boats, for instance, along the Ruzizi River or across Lake Tanganyika (Opongo, 2017, p. 14; UNSC, 2017c, para. 49; 2017d, para. 92; 2018, para. 198). The weapons, sometimes disassembled into parts, are concealed in hidden compartments in vehicles or among other goods such as washing machines or wrecked cars (Small Arms Survey and AU, 2018).

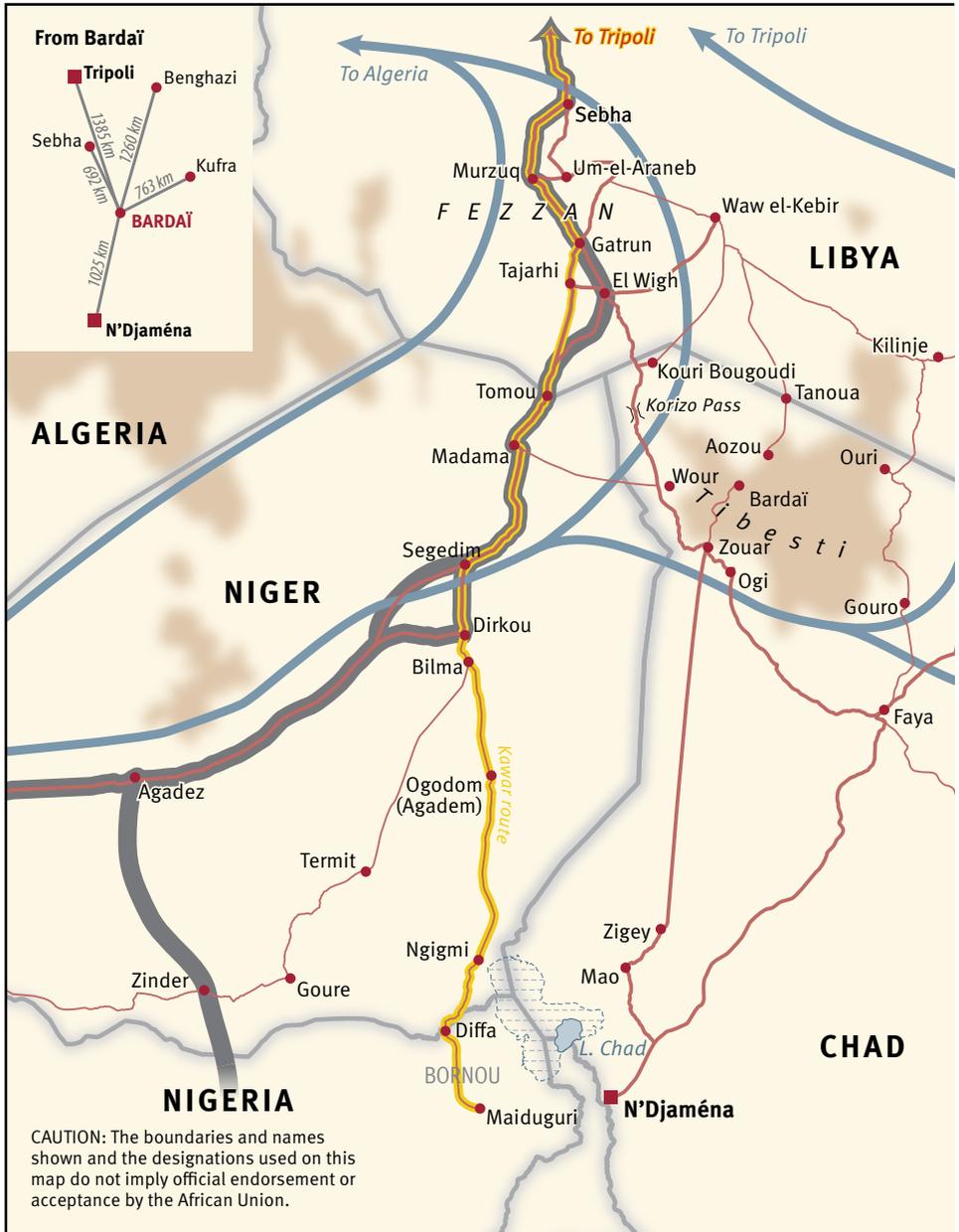
The routes used for such trafficking are often traditional trading routes that are used to move a variety of commodities across borders (Kartas, 2013; Tubiana and Gramizzi, 2017, Map 3). In some cases the trafficked weapons are sold in open-air markets close to high-demand areas, for instance near artisanal gold-mining sites in northern Niger, where miners feel they need guns for self-protection (Pellerin, 2017, p. 8).<sup>17</sup> States’ lack of capacity to monitor movements across long borders makes it particularly challenging to counter trafficking activities (Alusala, 2015, p. 5; Hennop, Jefferson, and

McLean, 2011; Opongo, 2017, p. 14). When authorities or international actors seek to tackle illicit activities on the main routes, traffickers and traders turn to less frequented—and often more insecure—trails and border crossings instead, leading to the increased militarization and arming of trafficking actors (Kartas, 2013; Tubiana and Gramizzi, 2017).

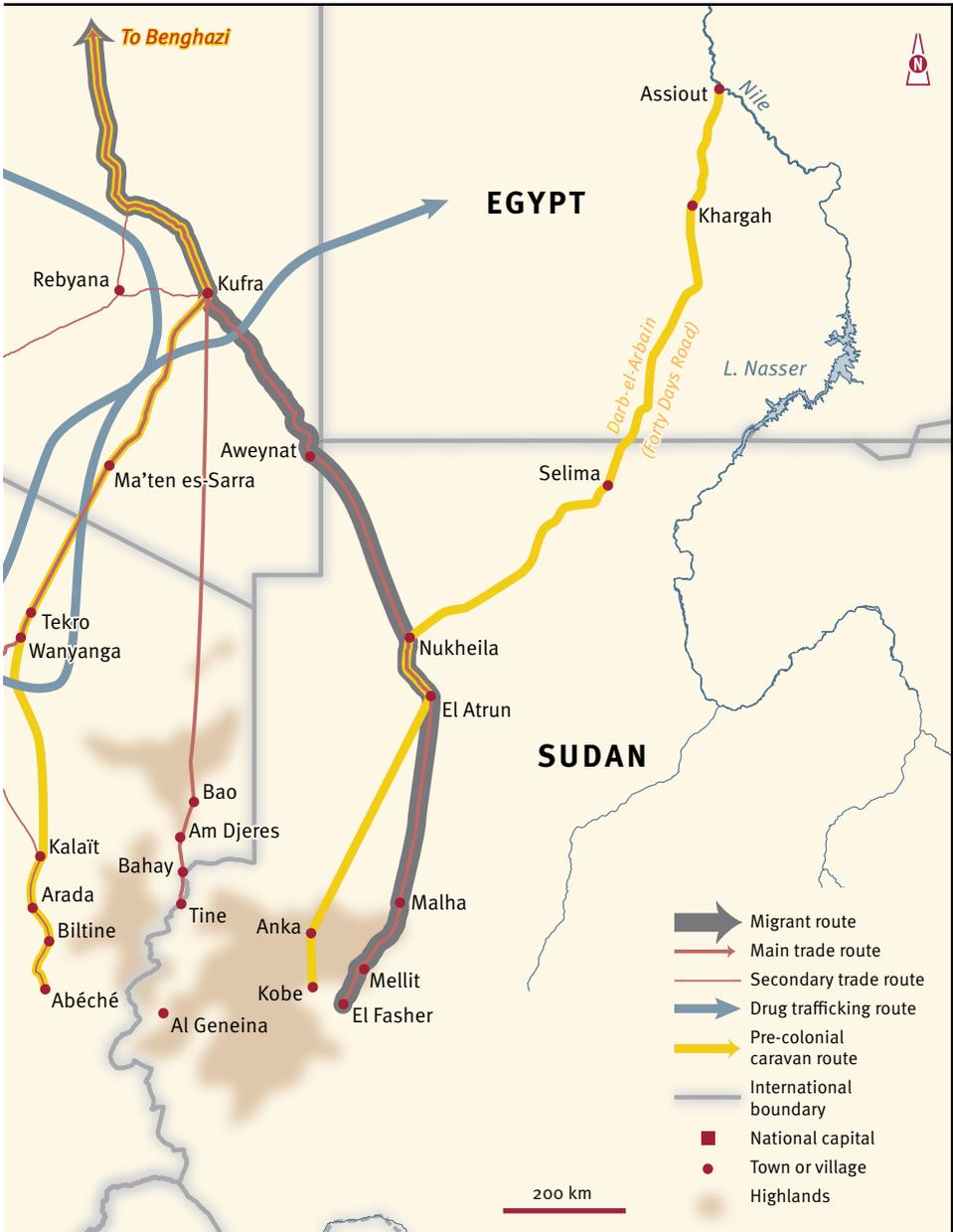


Ammunition handed over by armed groups to MINUSCA under the pre-DDR framework in Bouar, Central African Republic. Source: Matthias Nowak/Small Arms Survey

**Map 3** Trade and trafficking routes in the Chad–Libya–Sudan border area, 2017



Source: Tubiana and Gramizzi (2017, pp. 126–27)



## 2.2 Diversion of licit weapons

Many of the illicit small arms circulating in Africa were initially legally produced or owned and only subsequently diverted to armed groups, criminals, or other unauthorized users at some point during their life cycle. Diversion therefore refers to the unauthorized change in possession or use of originally legal weapons (Parker, 2016, p. 118). Three main patterns of diversion are discussed below in the African context: transfer diversions, diversions from national stockpiles (including from peacekeeping operations), and diversions of civilian holdings.

### 2.2.1 Transfer diversions

'Arms transfer diversions' generally refer to 'the transfer of controlled items authorized for export to one end user, but delivered to an unauthorized end user or used by the authorized end user in unauthorized ways' (Schroeder, Close, and Stevenson, 2008, p. 114). Transfer diversions can occur at different stages of the transfer chain, including in the country of origin (point of embarkation), during transport or in transit, and at the time of delivery to the intended recipient or shortly thereafter. They can be the result of loss, theft, or deliberate but unauthorized retransfers (Schroeder, Close, and Stevenson, 2008, p. 115).

Arms transfer diversions were a regular occurrence in Africa in the 1990s and the early years of the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, a period during which poorly secured armaments from the former Soviet Union were diverted to the continent, often to circumvent UN arms embargoes (Florquin, 2014a, pp. 103–4; UNSC, 2001). From the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century conflict actors appeared to rely on more diverse, sophisticated, and entrenched ways of procuring small arms already available on the continent, including through the cross-border trafficking of weapons recycled from other conflicts and diversions from national stockpiles (Khakee, 2005, p. 159). As this report demonstrates, in recent years weapons supply patterns in conflict zones have remained diverse and to some extent reliant on materiel available locally. Yet arms transfer diversions remain an important concern.

Recent cases of arms transfer diversions are best understood and documented in the context of arms embargoes. As of August 2018 mandatory UN arms embargoes were active with respect to the Central African Republic (since December 2013), Eritrea (since December 2009), Libya (since February 2011), Somalia (since January 1992), South Sudan (since July 2018), and Sudan (Darfur region, since July 2004) (SIPRI, n.d.). In the framework of these sanctions the relevant UN sanctions committees appoint panels of experts, groups of experts, or monitoring groups to monitor compliance and investigate possible violations. The public reports of these monitoring bodies provide a rich source of information on illicit arms flows to and from countries under UN sanctions.

These bodies collect first-hand information on arms seizures and can also request manufacturing or purchasing states to trace seized materiel in order to document the chain of transfers and identify the points of diversion into illicit markets (de Tessières, 2017, pp. 8–9).

The Small Arms Survey extracted information from these reports relating to the Central African Republic, Libyan, Somalian/Eritrean, South Sudanese,<sup>18</sup> and Sudanese sanctions regimes in order to carry out trend analysis on the reported small arms flows that have occurred since 2011.<sup>19</sup> Preliminary analysis of the data indicates that the largest cases of transfer diversions have been directed to Libya, and notably before the strengthening of the arms embargo on that country in mid-2014. For example, the UN Panel of Experts on Libya revealed that an Albanian broker and a Ukrainian company organized the transfer of 800,000 cartridges of 12.7 × 108 mm calibre from Albania to Libya in 2011. The United Arab Emirates had signed the end-user certificate specifying that the ammunition would not be retransferred and issued a statement that the materiel had indeed been delivered there (see also Box 4 on gaps in end-user controls). The Panel of Experts, however, was able to establish that an Armenian transporter had shipped the ammunition by air directly from Albania to Benghazi in Libya between 10 and 12 September 2011 in violation of the arms embargo. It further turned out that the transferred ammunition had been produced between the early 1960s and the late 1970s, illustrating how recent cases of transfer diversions can involve decades-old equipment (UNSC, 2013, pp. 20–21, 75–76).

There have also been cases of African nationals facilitating embargo violations. According to the UN Monitoring Group on Eritrea, a Sudanese national organized the shipment by boat of 25,000 readily convertible blank-firing pistols from Turkey to Eritrea in January 2017. According to shipping documentation, the intended final consignee was an Eritrean state-owned import and export company based in Asmara. While the ship transporting the consignment initially docked at the port of Massawa, Eritrea, it was seized two weeks later at the port of Kismayo in Somalia. The Sudanese owner stated that he had wanted to offload the weapons in Eritrea to transfer them by land for sale to retailers in Sudan. While a large market for such firearms appears to exist in Sudan, the Sudanese government imposes restrictions on the number of items that can be imported and applies strict licensing laws to importers, which the broker in this case may have sought to evade by attempting to smuggle the guns by land through Eritrea. Yet the Monitoring Group was unable to confirm that the weapons were destined for Sudan and not Eritrea or Somalia, and did not report on the reasons why the shipment continued on to Somalia after docking in Eritrea (UNSC, 2017e, paras. 14–17).

Overall, the repeated involvement of Middle Eastern states in illicit arms transfers to Africa emerges as a robust trend. UN panels of experts reports identify Middle Eastern states as points of origin for several cases of illicit transfers of small arms, light weapons, and ammunition to embargoed countries (Brehm, forthcoming). CAR reported the

## Box 4 Gaps in end-use and end-user controls<sup>20</sup>

On the African continent, ineffective and weakly enforced end-use(r) control systems first gained international attention in the 1990s in the context of UN sanctions. At that time they contributed to enabling the supply of arms and ammunition to non-state and state entities subject to UN arms embargoes in Angola (UNSC, 2000b), Liberia (UNSC, 2002), Sierra Leone (UNSC, 2000a), and Somalia (UNSC, 2003b). The conflict in Libya has more recently represented a case where the lack of an effective end-use(r) control system has contributed to arms diversion, with significant consequences for many states on the continent.<sup>21</sup>

Ineffective end-use(r) control systems have resulted in cases of diversion where end-use(r) documentation was utilized to illegally acquire arms through document forgery, copying, or fraudulent use, or through corrupt officials. In other cases arms have been legally transferred and imported, but have then been re-exported by the importing state in contravention of assurances provided to the original exporting state not to re-export the arms without its prior notification or authorization. In yet other cases arms diversions have resulted from the importing states' lack of capacity to monitor and control end use(s) and end user(s), including their failure to securely manage stocks of imported arms (UNIDIR, 2016a).

In response, states such as Burkina Faso and South Africa and subregional organizations such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) (see Box 8) have developed national and subregional end-use(r) control systems to address gaps in the certification and verification of end uses and end users. Specifically, these experiences suggest the following measures to be particularly promising for preventing arms transfer diversions:

- establishing a national authority and inter-ministerial and/or inter-agency system for arms transfer controls, including a national end-use(r) control system;
- developing national end-use(r) documentation that uses recommended international good practice on end users, end uses, and the re-export of arms;
- limiting the number of officials with the delegated authority to sign end-use(r) documentation and providing their specimen signatures to foreign diplomatic missions, which can help the exporting state to authenticate and to verify applications for authorization;
- using cooperative measures between exporting and importing states during the pre-authorization, pre-delivery, transfer, and post-delivery phases; and
- linking the arms transfer control system with effective arms and ammunition stockpile management procedures to prevent arms diversion.

Yet these efforts continue to be undermined by certain exporting states who do not comply with or are unaware of subregional mechanisms for authorization; arms embargo notification systems established by UN sanctions committees; or importing states' national end-use(r) control systems, documentation, and procedures. There is therefore a need to strengthen cooperation and dialogue with exporting states to enhance national and subregional end-use(r) control systems and mechanisms on the African continent.

Source: Giezendanner (2018)

proliferation of Turkish-made semi-automatic shotguns and convertible blank-firing pistols manufactured between 2012 and 2016 on black markets or in the context of weapons seizures in northern Somalia, northern Niger, and northern/south-eastern Nigeria. The weapons observed in Somalia and Nigeria matched the specific types/models of weapons that were intercepted in 2017 as part of large illicit maritime shipments to each country (CAR, 2017). CAR further noted continuing maritime transfers to Somalia, with notably the interception of three shipments during February and March 2016 off the Horn of Africa that all carried illicit small arms and munitions with common characteristics. For instance, the seizures included more than 2,000 AKM-pattern rifles of unknown manufacture with sequential serial numbers, suggesting that they originated in a state's stocks; and 46 'Hoshdar-M' SVD-pattern Iranian-made sniper rifles, also with sequential serial numbers (CAR, 2016b; 2017).

Moreover, there have been cases of arms transfer diversions that occurred after shipments have been delivered. For instance, weapons legally shipped to Libya after 2011 under the UN arms embargo's exception procedures have subsequently been diverted after they reached Libyan soil. UN Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 2009 of September 2011 allowed for exceptions to the arms embargo provided that the transfers were intended for national authorities and the UN Sanctions Committee was notified in advance. Until August 2014 the committee did not reject any such notifications, which by that time totalled 60,000 handguns, 65,000 assault rifles, 15,000 sub-machine guns, 4,000 machine guns, and 60 million rounds of ammunition (UNSC, 2015a, paras. 118–19). While the exact proportion of these notified weapons that were actually delivered to Libya cannot be determined, it is clear that some have leaked to unauthorized actors after reaching the country. This is the case, for instance, of two of the 25 M93 anti-materiel rifles that Serbia delivered to the Libyan Ministry of Defence in 2014 under the notification process, and which were subsequently advertised for sale on online social media groups used to trade weapons in Libya (Jenzen-Jones and Rice, 2016, p. 7; UNSC, 2017b, p. 141). Moreover, the UN Group of Experts on Côte d'Ivoire has revealed several examples of non-lethal equipment that was initially imported under the embargo's notification regime and was subsequently converted to allow its use for lethal purposes. This was, for instance, the case for civilian vehicles that were converted into armed vehicles by the addition of heavy machine guns and their mountings, while the Group of Experts also expressed concern that some types of less-than-lethal grenade launchers that were similarly imported could be used to fire at least a few rounds of lethal ammunition (UNSC, 2014c, paras. 53–55, 63; 2015b, paras. 98–101).

Finally, UN monitoring efforts have revealed that Africa is not only a recipient of embargo-breaking arms transfers, but also at times a source of such transfers. This is the case for arms transfers out of Libya, which fall under the scope of the two-way Libyan arms embargo. By 2014 the UN Panel of Experts was investigating transfers of illicit weapons from Libya to no fewer than 14 countries in Northern, Eastern, Western, and Middle Africa, and as far as the Middle East (UNSC, 2014a, pp. 5, 26–49).

## 2.2.2 Diversions from national stockpiles

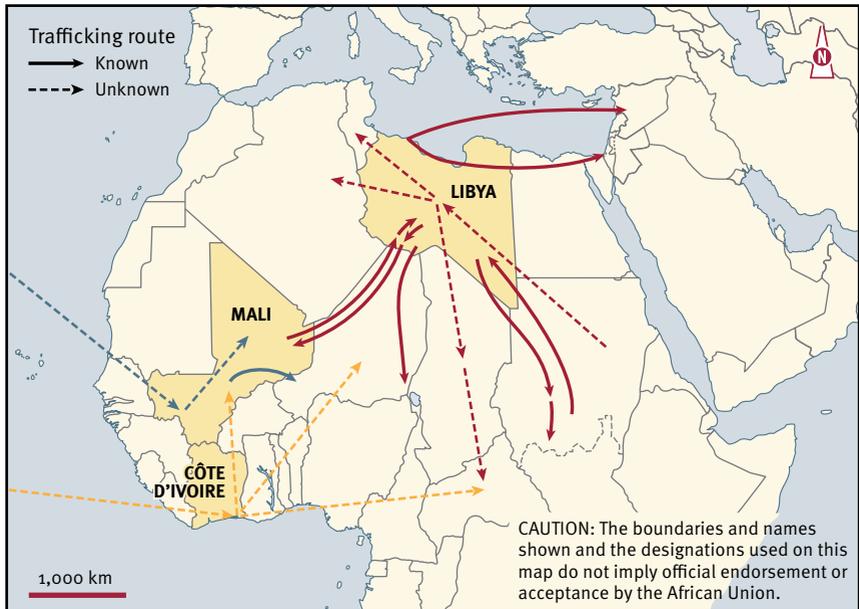
'Diversions from national stockpiles' refers to the loss of arms and ammunition that are under the control of a state's defence and security forces. They can take several forms, including theft by personnel and by external actors at storage facilities or during combat operations, and are often facilitated by weak oversight and poor physical security measures (Parker, 2016, pp. 120–21). The AU Roadmap underscores the importance of efforts to prevent diversions from national stockpiles, and notably so in conflict situations (AU, 2016, p. 10).

In Africa much attention has been paid to the effects of the 2011 armed conflict in Libya, which led to the loss of state control over and the looting of the large national weapons stockpile accumulated under the rule of Muammar Qaddafi (UNODC, 2013, pp. 33–38). During the period 2012–14 weapons of Libyan origin were reportedly trafficked to a number of neighbouring countries and possibly as far as the Central African Republic and Somalia (UNSC, 2014a, pp. 26–49). In Chad and Niger sizeable convoys of combatants and weapons were regularly intercepted between 2011 and 2013 transiting to other countries such as Mali and Sudan (de Tessières, 2018b, pp. 44–45; Tubiana and Gramizzi, 2017, p. 13) (see Map 4). Among the looted materiel, hundreds—if not thousands—of man-portable air defence systems capable of downing commercial airliners escaped from state control, with many subsequently being retrieved in Libya and several others in Mali, Tunisia, Lebanon, and possibly as far as the Central African Republic (Schroeder, 2015, pp. 3–7).

Multiple sources indicate that the trafficking of weapons originating from the national Libyan stockpile has somewhat reduced in recent years, notably due to the resumption of conflict and subsequent increased demand for weapons in Libya itself, the deployment of international and subregional forces in the Sahel, and the strengthening of the UN arms embargo on Libya in mid-2014 (de Tessières, 2018b, p. 45). More diverse trafficking dynamics are now at play to supply the demand for weapons in the subregion (see Map 4). Trafficking from Libya persists, but on a much more limited scale. In northern Chad and Niger, for instance, it has recently consisted primarily of small numbers of individual weapons being smuggled to supply local demand (Tubiana and Gramizzi, 2017, p. 13; Pellerin, 2017).

Diversions from national stockpiles remain a primary concern in other countries in the Sahel–Sahara and beyond (UNREC, 2016, p. 22). Boko Haram has carried out attacks in Cameroon, Niger, and Nigeria that aimed specifically at capturing equipment from these countries' state forces.<sup>22</sup> According to MINUSMA officials, attacks on Malian army positions and convoys now represent a significant source of materiel for terrorist armed groups in, for instance, northern Mali. This domestic procurement is complemented by continuing trafficking of stocks diverted from various states in the subregion, including Libya, but also, to a growing extent, from other countries in the southern band

**Map 4** Documented flows of weapons and non-state armed personnel in the Sahel, 2011–17



Source: CAR (2017)

of the Sahel.<sup>23</sup> For instance, weapons originating from Ivorian stockpiles have been recovered in a range of countries in the Sahel, and possibly as far as the Central African Republic, while weapons originating from Malian stockpiles have also found their way elsewhere in the Sahel (CAR, 2016a, pp. 35, 43). Ghana reported a case related to the 14 December 2015 seizure of a cache of firearms and ammunition in Kumasi, which included 21 weapons (including 11 AK-pattern rifles) and 9,450 rounds of ammunition of various calibres. Five of the AK-pattern rifles had ECOWAS markings on them that enabled the Ghanaian authorities to quickly determine that the weapons had been recently diverted from Côte d'Ivoire, which the Ivorian authorities confirmed in response to a tracing procedure (Small Arms Survey and AU, 2018).

In the Central African Republic weapons formerly belonging to government forces of the DRC and Chad have been documented (UNREC, 2016, p. 28). Armed groups in the DRC have procured weapons and ammunition from the national stockpile through targeted attacks on military depots or through the sale or direct transfer of materiel by military personnel (UNSC, 2018, para. 180). In Somalia leakage and the sale of state weapons to non-state groups, in addition to battlefield seizures of weapons belonging to the Federal Government of Somalia and the AU Mission in Somalia, have contributed

to expanding the pool of illicit weapons and ammunition (Carlson, 2016, p. 1). Diversions from national stockpiles also include weapons lost or seized from troops deployed in the context of peace operations (see Box 5).

Diversions from national stockpiles are also a concern in other African subregions less affected by armed conflict. Media reports in Madagascar, for instance, have highlighted several cases of former police officers taking arms from official arsenals without returning them, and of cases of firearms missing or stolen from police stations (*Madagascar Tribune*, 2012). In South Africa the police reported to parliament that 740 firearms were reported stolen or lost by police officials during the 2011/12 fiscal year (Bopape, 2014, p. 13). In some Eastern African countries security forces have reportedly supplied weapons and ammunition to pastoralists to secure certain border areas and defend themselves against rival groups across the border (Matthysen et al., 2010, pp. 16–17).

### **Box 5** The loss of arms and ammunition during peace operations

More than 25 organizations apart from the UN have undertaken in excess of 100 peace operations globally, most of which have taken place in Africa. Oversight of the materiel deployed during many of these missions can be inadequate. As a result, weapons and ammunition from troop-contributing countries (TCCs) can be lost or stolen, or otherwise diverted during the course of patrols and escort duties, as well as during resupply operations, troop rotations, or repatriation (Berman, Racovita, and Schroeder, 2017). In notable incidents (that is, attacks that involved the loss of more than ten weapons or more than 500 rounds of ammunition) documented in South Sudan and Sudan alone peacekeepers lost more than 500 weapons—including handguns, self-loading rifles, machine guns, grenade launchers, anti-tank weapons, and mortars—and more than 750,000 rounds of ammunition (Berman and Racovita, 2015). These numbers significantly underestimate the full extent of the problem, however.

Regional organizations that authorize peace operations have launched initiatives to improve on current practices to prevent such losses. The AU Commission, in cooperation with the Small Arms Survey, is developing an AU policy document on the management of weapons recovered during AU-mandated peace support operations (see Berman and Brehm, forthcoming). Subregional instruments also contain relevant obligations for member states: Article 11 of the ECOWAS Convention (ECOWAS, 2006) and Article 22 of the Kinshasa Convention (2010) both require troops from the member states of these two regions to document in centralized subregional databases the small arms and ammunition they bring into and take out of mission areas (including their parts and components). ECOWAS is currently consulting with TCCs from the region on the refinement of templates for reporting both on such transfers and on the weapons and ammunition that peacekeepers recover during their deployment.

## 2.2.3 Diversion of civilian holdings

Legal civilian holdings include arms and ammunition held by a range of actors, such as:

- firearm manufacturers,
- wholesalers,
- gun shops,
- private security companies,
- hunters, and
- other lawful individual private owners.

These weapons can also be stolen or leaked to unauthorized actors, thereby contributing to armed crime and violence (Bevan, 2008, p. 62). The extent of the diversion of civilian holdings in Africa is difficult to measure, because few countries publish national statistics on the topic. Moreover, existing data may under-represent the scope of the problem, because firearm owners who lose their weapons might not systematically report their losses to the police.

One source of information is INTERPOL's Illicit Arms Record and Tracing Management System (iARMS). Police agencies worldwide can record detailed information on firearms reported as lost, stolen, trafficked, or smuggled in the iARMS database. This in turn makes it possible to check if weapons seized or recovered by law enforcement officers in any country were previously entered into iARMS and, therefore, may provide leads that will help investigate a particular weapon's chain of custody. As of October 2017, 12 African countries had provided statistics on stolen and lost firearms to iARMS since it was launched at the start of 2013. This includes data on a total of 424 firearms—mainly handguns, followed by shotguns and rifles—of which 48 were stolen and 376 were lost. Most of these firearms were recorded by Southern African police services, followed by Western and Eastern African states. In contrast, no Middle or Northern African country reported to iARMS during the period (see Table 5).<sup>24</sup> Moreover, iARMS includes records of firearms lost by or stolen from both national security forces and civilian owners. While it was not possible to obtain disaggregated data for this study, INTERPOL officials report that in Western Africa firearms entered into iARMS originate for the most part from state stockpiles.<sup>25</sup> It is understood that while growing, participation in iARMS remains partial, so these numbers cannot be taken to represent the scope of firearm loss or theft on the continent.

Other available information nevertheless shows that the diversion of civilian holdings can be significant, in some cases even more so than diversions from national stockpiles. In South Africa, for instance, during the 2015/16 fiscal year, on average 20 firearms were stolen from private individuals per day (in other words, more than 7,000 weapons per year), compared to an average of 2 firearms stolen from the police per day

**Table 5** Firearms reported by African subregions as stolen or lost in the iARMS database, 2013–October 2017, by UN subregion

UN subregion*	Total firearms entered into iARMS	Stolen firearms	Lost firearms	Main calibres	Main types
Southern Africa	372	29	343	9 mm 12 gauge 9 mm PAR 7.65 mm 7.62 mm	Handguns, shotguns, rifles
Eastern Africa	10	10	0	12 bore 7.62 mm	Handguns, shotguns
Western Africa	42	9	33	7.62 mm 22 mm 9 mm	Handguns
<b>Total</b>	<b>424</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>376</b>		

\* This report refers to UNSD-designated African subregions, as reproduced in Annexe 1.

Source: Written communication with INTERPOL official, October 2017

(GFSA and ISS, 2017). Media reports suggest that the country’s criminal gangs target not only private individuals, but also private security guards for the purpose of stealing their firearms (Wicks, 2018).

There is also evidence of armed groups using diverted civilian holdings, notably shotgun ammunition. This has included hunting ammunition produced legally in factories in the Republic of Congo and Mali that has subsequently reached non-governmental forces and criminal groups elsewhere in the region (Holtom and Pavesi, 2018b).

Shotgun ammunition imported from other regions and intended for the civilian market in Africa has also been subsequently smuggled to countries subject to UN arms embargoes. For example, in February and April 2014 customs authorities in the Central African Republic, supported by the African-led International Support Mission to the Central African Republic, seized several boxes of Spanish-manufactured 12-gauge ammunition at the Cameroonian border that were apparently intended for anti-Balaka militia fighters. Investigations by the UN Panel of Experts revealed that the ammunition had been shipped from Spain as part of a lot of 528,000 cartridges to a registered firearms retailer in Yaoundé, Cameroon, on 9 January 2014. Although the retailer had signed an end-user undertaking for exclusive use in Cameroon, some of the cartridges were being seized in the Central African Republic only weeks later (UNSC, 2014b, Annexe 18). Anti-Balaka militia in the Central African Republic have used such shotgun ammunition,

sometimes modified to fire more lethal pellets or jacketed projectiles (CAR, 2015; 2017; UNSC, 2014b, Annexe 18).<sup>26</sup> Such cases illustrate how ammunition intended for the civilian market can be very quickly diverted for use in conflict areas, even shortly after its authorized import.

## 2.3 Sources of already illicit weapons

In addition to weapons that are diverted from the legal sphere, there are at least two sources of already illicit weapons (that is, weapons that have never been legal) circulating on the African continent. They include the unlicensed craft or artisanal production of firearms and the illicit conversion of imitation firearms into lethal-purpose weapons.

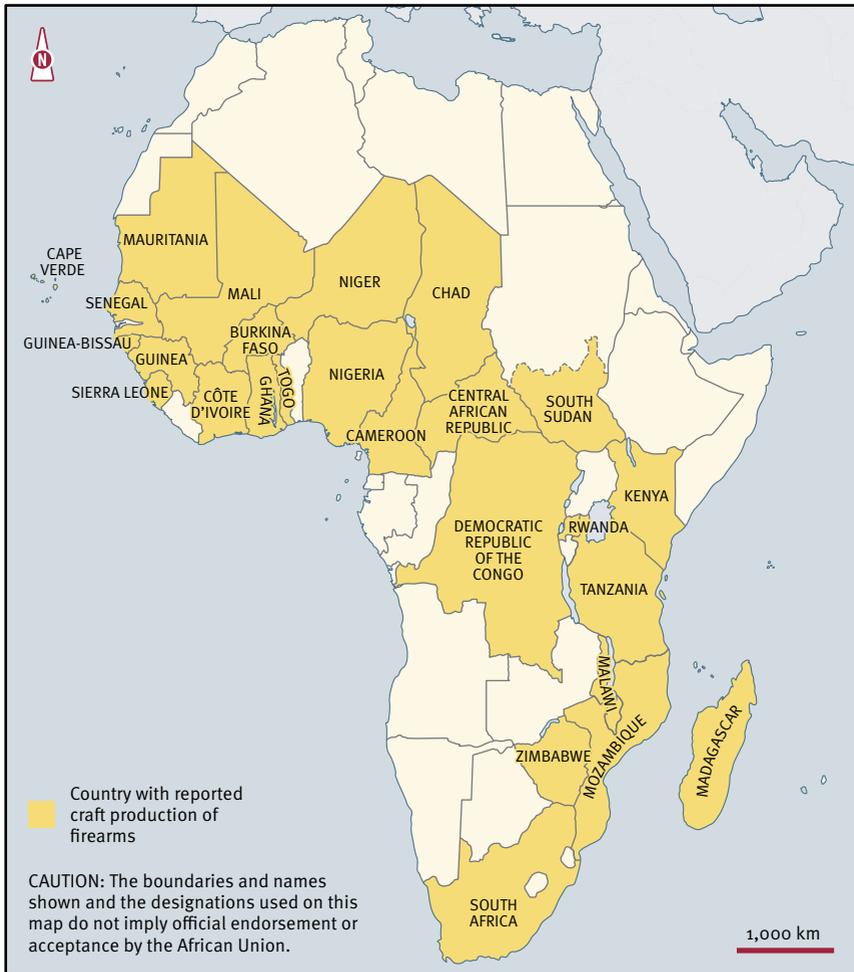
### 2.3.1 Craft production

Craft manufacture of small arms is the production of weapons outside of state control, by hand, in small quantities, and with a reduced capability (Berman, 2011, p. 1; Nowak and Gsell, 2018, p. 4). Overall, most African countries are believed to host some level of craft production (RECSA, 2013, p. 29). The present project was able to collect reports of such craft production of small arms and/or ammunition in at least 26 countries in the continent, spanning most subregions (Map 5). This is very likely an under-representation of the geographical distribution of this activity and more a reflection of countries where specific research has been undertaken to document the craft production of firearms.

Overall, craft production stands out as the second most prominent source of illicit weapons for the countries that replied to the country questionnaire, although quite far behind illicit cross-border transfers by land. Seven countries reported the presence of such production on their territory,<sup>27</sup> while five reported seizing or recovering such weapons since 2011.<sup>28</sup> Côte d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone ranked domestic craft production as the most significant source of illicit arms in their countries (for Côte d'Ivoire, craft production ranked first together with cross-border flows by land), while Guinea reported illicit cross-border transfers of craft weapons by land to be its main concern. Another six countries<sup>29</sup> ranked domestic craft production as the second most prominent source of illicit weapons (Small Arms Survey and AU, 2018).

The proliferation of craft weapons is best documented in Western Africa, with in-depth studies undertaken notably in Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, and Nigeria (ComNat-ALPC, 2017; Nowak and Gsell, 2018). In Ghana craft weapons are involved in 80 per cent of gun-related crimes, according to the Ghana Police Service (Small Arms Survey and AU, 2018). In Nigeria the possession of craft-produced weapons is common: 17 per cent of rural gun owners hold them, compared to 10 per cent of firearm owners who live in cities (Nowak and Gsell, 2018, p. 3).

**Map 5** Reported craft production of small arms, 2011–18



Sources (by UNSD-designated subregional groupings): **Western Africa:** Burkina Faso (UNREC, 2016, p. 21); Cape Verde (Mack, 2017, p. 7); Côte d'Ivoire (Small Arms Survey and AU, 2018); Ghana (Small Arms Survey and AU, 2018; Pokoo, Aning, and Jaye, 2014, p. 35); Guinea (Small Arms Survey and AU, 2018); Guinea-Bissau (Mack, 2017, p. 7); Mali (Small Arms Survey and AU, 2018; UNREC, 2016, p. 21); Mauritania (Pézar and Glatz, 2010, p. 37); Niger (Pellerin, 2017, p. 9; de Tessières, 2017); Nigeria (UNREC, 2016, p. 35; Nowak and Gsell, 2018); Senegal (Small Arms Survey and AU, 2018; UNREC, 2016, p. 37); Sierra Leone (Small Arms Survey and AU, 2018); Togo (UNREC, 2014, p. 56). **Middle Africa:** Cameroon (UNREC, 2016, pp. 21, 26); Central African Republic (UNREC, 2016, p. 28); Chad (UNREC, 2016, p. 29); DRC (RECSA, 2013, p. 23; Berghezani, 2015). **Eastern Africa:** Kenya (RECSA, 2013, p. 56); Madagascar (Small Arms Survey, 2011, p. 181); Malawi (RECSA, 2013, p. 71); Mozambique (Mack, 2017, p. 7); Rwanda (RECSA, 2013, p. 85; Munyengango, 2016); South Sudan (UNSC, 2017a, p. 41); Tanzania (Small Arms Survey and AU, 2018); Zimbabwe (RECSA, 2013, p. 156). **Southern Africa:** South Africa (South Africa Today, 2018)



Craft-produced handgun in an undisclosed location in Nigeria.  
Source: Matthias Nowak/Small Arms Survey

The weapons being produced range from rudimentary and traditional hunting weapons to more sophisticated firearms, including copies of assault rifles, as well as home-made ammunition (Assanvo, 2017; Nowak and Gsell, 2018, p. 3; UNREC, 2016, p. 35). Craft firearms are manufactured in clandestine workshops, small businesses, and private homes. Craft production appears to be particularly concentrated in Western Africa, where most countries appear to host craft producers. Capacities in Middle Africa exist, but appear to be more limited. The nature and extent of craft-production capacities is less well understood in Eastern and Southern Africa, although craft-produced weapons are reportedly used there for hunting and poaching purposes (RECSA, 2013, p. 71).

Ease of access and price (artisanal weapons sometimes cost four times less than the equivalent industrially produced weapons) make craft firearms particularly attractive among individuals and communities needing firearms for self-protection. Cultural factors also feed demand, especially in areas with a proud history of weapons production or where weapons ownership is a symbol of status. Yet craft production is also a source of weaponry for armed and criminal groups, including terrorist-designated organizations such as Boko Haram (Nowak and Gsell, 2018, p. 3).

Craft production is mostly undertaken outside of state control. Subregional organizations have noted a general deficiency in regulations regarding the record keeping and marking of craft-produced small arms: only three African countries have explicit legislative measures dealing with the marking of craft-produced small arms (RECSA, 2013, pp. 22–23). Of the seven states that reported craft production in their responses to the Small Arms Survey–AU questionnaire, four indicated that the practice was unregulated, while three states indicated that it can be registered or licensed (Small Arms Survey and AU, 2018).

Policies that focus primarily on criminalizing craft production risk driving producers further underground, while also impacting local economies. Experts have observed that dealing with the issue will require developing holistic yet context-specific strategies that combine a mix of measures to adjust the regulatory framework, address demand factors, and bring the supply under greater state control (Nowak and Gsell, 2018, pp. 14–17).

### 2.3.2 Illicit conversion of imitation firearms

Imitation firearms are objects that resemble real weapons, especially handguns, in both appearance and action, but are designed to serve non-lethal purposes. Some, such as alarm weapons, can fire blank rounds of ammunition, while others might fire small pellets made of plastic or light metals. Some models of imitation firearms have proved to be easy to convert for firing live ammunition without access to specialized skills or tools. Such models are commonly described as being ‘readily convertible’. This has been particularly true of some Turkish-made alarm handguns, which are regularly seized in converted form in Europe, but also on the African continent (Florquin and King, 2018, pp. 19, 27–30). Like craft firearms, converted firearms cost only a fraction—sometimes as low as one-tenth—of the price of their lethal-purpose equivalents, which makes illicit handguns more accessible.

There is growing evidence of the circulation of imitation firearms across the African continent. Some countries appear to have relatively large regulated markets for imitation weapons. A retailer in Sudan, for instance, declared to UN monitors that on average he sold 1,500 blank-firing weapons every year. The wholesale purchase price of each weapon is about USD 9, while the retail price in Sudan is USD 130–150. Converted weapons are sold for USD 200 on the illicit market (UNSC, 2017e, paras. 14–17).

The proliferation of readily convertible imitation firearms was initially particularly significant in Northern Africa, and notably in Libya, where both merchants and end users, including armed groups, are converting them (Jenzen-Jones and McCollum, 2017, p. 15; King, 2015, pp. 7–8; UNSC, 2017b, p. 64, Annex 46). Major shipments of readily convertible alarm weapons were intercepted from Turkey in or on their way to Djibouti, Egypt, Libya, Somalia, and Sudan (King, 2015, pp. 7–8). This included the previously

mentioned seizure of no less than 25,000 Turkish alarm pistols in 2017 at the Port of Kismayo, Somalia (UNSC, 2017e, paras. 14–17). From these locations they appear to have been smuggled by land and seized in converted form in a range of neighbouring countries, including in Kenya, Niger, and Somalia (Pellerin, 2017; King, 2015, pp. 7–8). Other Small Arms Survey inquiries have revealed the circulation of imitation handguns in Burkina Faso, the Central African Republic, Chad, Ghana, Guinea, Mauritania, and Zimbabwe (Florquin and King, 2018, p. 29; Small Arms Survey and AU, 2018).

This list is not based on a systematic assessment, which would require close consultations with firearms experts from law enforcement agencies across the continent. Indeed, imitation firearms are difficult for the untrained eye to identify, and therefore may not be systematically recorded as such in nationwide seizure statistics. This makes it especially challenging to measure the real scope of the problem. Given the challenges posed by this type of weapon in other regions, it appears critical for African states to further examine both the issue and the regulatory loopholes that may facilitate these weapons' proliferation. States whose legislation does not classify imitation weapons as real firearms (and therefore allows their sale with few restrictions), as well as regional and subregional organizations, may wish to adopt technical standards to ensure that the models being sold on the continent are not readily convertible.<sup>30</sup> ●



“In some areas critical knowledge gaps still need to be filled, in others good practice is better established, while in other domains coordination and implementation are the main priorities.”

## Section 3. Good practices and recommendations

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This section reviews good practices and presents a series of recommendations on ways to address illicit arms flows on the African continent based on the present study's research findings and inputs received during the study's validation workshop in Addis Ababa. Indeed, part of the meeting focused on obtaining participants' views on current and desirable initiatives to address the six types of illicit arms flows reviewed in the previous section. The workshop discussions are summarized in Annexe 2, which provides examples of good practices and recommendations for the AU, subregional organizations, and AU member states.

The narrative part of this section provides across-the-board guidance, breaking down the recommended actions into three broad levels of intervention:

- generating assessments to fill knowledge gaps;
- developing practical guidance and tools; and
- supporting and coordinating the implementation of these recommended actions.

These levels of action differentiate among the possible measures that need to be taken according to what is required in a particular context. In some areas critical knowledge gaps still need to be filled, in other areas good practice is better established, while in other areas coordination and implementation are the main priorities.

### **3.1 Generating assessments to address knowledge gaps**

One of the objectives of this mapping study was to identify pressing knowledge gaps that need to be filled in order to develop evidence-based responses to illicit arms flows. While the study provides a typology for understanding and categorizing illicit arms flows and reviews a number of concrete cases, it is clear that more information gathering is needed in a number of areas. The fluid and adaptive nature of these illicit flows means that they will evolve over time; that new sources of illicit weapons will continue to emerge; and that regular monitoring and analysis of these threats at the continental, subregional, and national levels will be needed to ensure effective responses.

Building on this study, the AU and subregional African organizations have an important role to play in steering the expansion of research on illicit arms flows. The gender dimensions of these flows are particularly relevant, but remain poorly understood and need to be addressed (see Box 6). Similarly, current understanding of the demand factors driving these flows remains patchy, including the sources of the insecurity that afflicts communities and motivates them to arm themselves, and the roles of border populations and armed groups in trafficking. Data collection in border regions can provide valuable insights to inform policy-making. Indeed, focus group research with pastoralist communities in the Horn of Africa showed that while border populations

# Recommendations and good practices\*

## Assessment of gaps\*

### More information gathering is needed in a number of areas

- **Regular monitoring and analysis of new sources** of illicit weapons at the continental, subregional, and national levels.
- Undertaking additional analysis of **specific issues and geographical areas, including in non-conflict areas.**
- **Communicating information** on illicit arms flows in Africa to stakeholders who can make a difference.
- Gaining a better understanding of, and address, the **gender dimensions** of illicit arms flows.
- Gaining a better understanding of the **demand factors** driving illicit arms flows, including:
  - **The sources of the insecurity** that afflicts communities and motivates them to arm themselves, and
  - The roles of **border populations and armed groups** in trafficking, with data collection being carried out in border regions.
- Gaining a better understanding of the scale and nature of **particular types of arms flows**, including:
  - The scale and geographical distribution of **illicitly converted imitation firearms** in Africa, and associated regulatory gaps,
  - The identification of practical measures to address **craft-produced firearms** and carrying out national counts of craft producers.
- Increasing the scope of **household surveys of small arms-related perceptions to set measurable targets and monitor progress** towards them.
- Utilizing **peace support operations** as a potential source of data and statistics on illicit arms flows to supplement AU member states' efforts.



## Practical guidance\*

### Developing practical tools and guidance specifically designed for the African context

- Developing guidelines that would help **stockpile management practitioners** better anticipate and address the **gendered impacts of weapons and ammunition management interventions.**
- Considering **weapons-marking programmes** and the types of marking machines that are most fit-for-purpose to maintain electronic records in the region.
- Considering **increasing joint border initiatives.**
- Considering **meritorious arms control measures**, such as:
  - **Civilian weapons collection programmes** (including amnesties, exchanging weapons for development projects, and DDR),
  - Subregional and national **end-use(r) controls**, and
  - Subregional mechanisms to track and monitor **brokering activities.**
- Developing guidance that simplifies and ensures the accessibility of procedures to register legally held weapons and producers of craft weapons in order to **increase registration rates.**
- Recording **information about recovered weapons**, including those earmarked for destruction.
- Considering the **compilation and dissemination of a list of existing regional and subregional arms control standards** and guidelines that would also identify key gaps.



\* Source: Based on participant inputs at the validation workshop held at AU headquarters, Addis Ababa, 19–20 September 2018.

## Supporting and coordinating implementation\*

International, regional, and national level



### International level

- Encouraging the main exporters of arms to Africa to report on their arms exports if they do not already do so, in order to help prevent transfer diversions.
- Engaging in a dialogue with the manufacturers of imitation firearms so as to ensure that the items they export to Africa meet technical standards that prevent their conversion into lethal firearms.
- Educating arms exporters on the existence of subregional end-use(r) control mechanisms.



### Regional level

- Strengthening cooperation and information exchange, including through:
  - Establishing subregional and national databases to monitor trends and facilitate tracing efforts—identifying the point of diversion,
  - Increasing the exchange of information through the use of existing platforms,
  - Encouraging transparency and reporting in general.
- Promoting joint law enforcement operations to disrupt illicit arms trafficking networks on a more regular—and possibly permanent—basis.



### National level

- Coordinating assistance and capacity-building efforts so that they better respond to the needs expressed by national authorities.
- Utilizing the country profiles compiled for this report in order to identify national priorities and better match needs with available resources.
- Supporting capacity-building initiatives, including:
  - Harmonizing national legislation;
  - Ensuring that national legislation addresses craft production and imitation firearms;
  - Implementing and enforcing arms embargoes;
  - Providing training to combat trafficking on both land and water;
  - Facilitating access to international assistance; and
  - Developing the capacities of national forensic institutions to trace illicit weapons.



\* Source: Based on participant inputs at the validation workshop held at AU headquarters, Addis Ababa, 19–20 September 2018.

perceived firearms as important instruments of self-protection, they also recognized the inherent dangers of weapons. The community members consulted for the present study proposed a range of measures for reducing small arms misuse, including disarmament programmes; safe storage training; and broader peacebuilding, social, and, educational initiatives (Wepundi et al., 2014, pp. 1–2).

### **Box 6** Gender dimensions of illicit arms flows

Sex-disaggregated armed violence data is particularly scarce in Africa, hindering assessments of the extent and nature of the gendered impacts of small arms on the continent. In 2016 an estimated 84 per cent of people worldwide who died violently were men and boys, and—based on available information—men and boys also appear most often in victim statistics in Africa. However, across the world women and girls remain the primary victims of homicides resulting from intimate partner violence, and the presence of firearms is considered an important risk factor for such violence (Mc Evoy and Hideg, 2017, pp. 63–65). Although reliable statistics are not available for all subregions, Southern Africa is estimated to experience the highest female violent death rate in the world, averaging 9.4 per 100,000 women during the period 2011–16 (Mc Evoy and Hideg, 2017, p. 65).

More systematic reporting and research are required to paint a detailed picture of the gender dimensions of firearms-related violence. Moreover, the negative impacts of small arms extend beyond physical security to the social and economic spheres. Participants in this study's validation workshop, for instance, highlighted a pressing need to develop guidelines to help implementers understand, anticipate, and address the gendered impacts of measures to control weapons flows and manage arms and ammunition stockpiles.

Similarly, more information is needed to understand the recruitment, role, means, and motivations of women and girls involved in small arms trafficking. While it is often assumed that men are the main actors in such trafficking, this report has noted cases where women were directly involved in smuggling weapons or ammunition across borders, as Uganda and the UN Panel of Experts on the Central African Republic have reported (Small Arms Survey and AU, 2018; UNSC, 2014b, Annexe 18).

Finally, the roles of women and girls as agents for change could be better acknowledged and supported. In Libya the UN Mine Action Service, in cooperation with the Small Arms Survey, has supported women who are raising awareness in their communities of small arms-related risks and control measures through risk education sessions, the distribution of risk awareness material, and radio programmes (UNSMIL, 2017). The need to enhance the participation of women in decision-making processes at all levels has also been a common thread of discussions aimed at strengthening the implementation of international small arms control instruments.<sup>31</sup> To this end the Small Arms Survey, in cooperation with arms control and gender experts, is developing a Gender and Arms Control Handbook intended to facilitate the full, equal, and meaningful participation of female and male policy-makers and practitioners in international arms control efforts.<sup>32</sup> In Africa, understanding and addressing the multiple gender dimensions of illicit arms flows will be essential to the successful implementation of the Silence the Guns agenda.

Specific issues and geographical areas also require additional analysis. Current knowledge on the sources and routes of trafficking is more extensive in areas affected by armed conflict or subjected to arms embargoes because of the more extensive international attention these contexts receive. Strengthening knowledge of illicit arms flows in non-conflict areas could identify problems—and applicable solutions—that are relevant to a broader range of settings. Similarly, there is a need to better understand the scale and nature of particular types of arms flows. This includes the scale and geographical distribution of illicitly converted imitation firearms in Africa, and associated regulatory gaps. In terms of craft production, workshop participants stressed the need to consider the possible development of manufacturing and safety standards for craft-produced firearms. Indeed, such standards would help states to determine whether and how to regulate the practice. Participants also noted the good practice of carrying out national counts of craft producers as a first step towards assessing the scope and nature of the phenomenon and developing options to address it.



Event at UN Headquarters on the theme 'AU-UN frameworks for enhanced partnerships on peace and security and the implementation of Africa's Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda: from policy to implementation'.  
Source: Rick Bajornas/UN Photo

At the national level, this report notes that only ten countries on the continent have carried out household surveys of small arms-related perceptions, despite such surveys' ability to improve a country's knowledge of licit and illicit firearms holdings. When they are part of national baseline assessments, these surveys have also helped to lay the foundations of comprehensive national policies and action plans designed to address small arms-related challenges. As an important tool for policy-making, they could be further promoted throughout the continent and be used more systematically to set measurable targets and monitor progress towards them.

Peace support operations are another potential source of data and statistics on illicit arms flows that would supplement AU member states' efforts. UNSC resolutions have provided a framework for embargo monitoring by UN peacekeeping missions, as well as mission-specific mandates to monitor illicit arms or support the embargo-monitoring work of UN panels or groups of experts (Anders, 2018, p. 3). Yet such missions often remain unaware of their potential contribution to the fight against illicit arms flows or do not have the technical staff needed to fully perform this role (Anders, 2018, p. 3). In some cases, for reasons of confidentiality, they may be unable to provide detailed records of recovered arms and ammunition to actors that are not part of the UN system.<sup>33</sup>

Closing important knowledge gaps also involves communicating information on illicit arms flows in Africa to stakeholders who can make a difference. This can include disseminating the results of the present study at the subregional, regional, and international levels. Workshop participants suggested, for instance, that the AU could cooperate with the AU Mechanism for Police Cooperation (AFRIPOL) to share information on illicit arms trafficking among their member states and promote common approaches to dealing with the problem.

### **3.2 Developing practical guidance and tools**

As Annexe 2 illustrates, member states have implemented a number of initiatives to tackle illicit arms flows. This is reflected by the number of subregional organizations operating on the continent that have been mandated by their member states to tackle one or several aspects of the small arms issue. In 2016, for instance, the Small Arms Survey identified 52 regional organizations worldwide working to implement the UN PoA on small arms, 22 of which were based in Africa (Berman and Maze, 2016, p. 7). Existing approaches stand at varying levels of maturity, however, in terms of identifying the lessons learned. Best practice is probably most established for measures to improve the management of state-owned weapons and ammunition according to international standards such as the Modular Small-arms-control Implementation Compendium (MOSAIC) and International Ammunition Technical Guidelines (IATG). This is largely the result of the substantial international support provided to stockpile management initiatives.

Yet even the weapons and ammunition management sector would benefit from the development of practical tools and guidance specifically designed for the African context. This is particularly true for specific situations that make state-owned stockpiles very vulnerable to diversion. For instance, workshop participants stressed the need to develop protocols for peacekeepers to allow them to assist host states to secure their stockpiles in conflict situations. They also recommended developing guidelines that would help stockpile management practitioners better anticipate and address the gendered impacts of weapons and ammunition management interventions. Moreover, while assessments have helped to identify lessons learned from weapons-marking programmes and the types of marking machines that are most fit-for-purpose, states continue to encounter problems with weapons marking throughout their territories and experience difficulties with maintaining updated electronic records (Bevan and King, 2013).

Joint border initiatives represent another emerging area of good practice that appears to need the development of subregional or regional guidance. Such initiatives include



Destruction of collected weapons at the Zambia Police Service headquarters in Lusaka organized by the Zambia Police Service. Source: Khristopher Carlson/Small Arms Survey

the establishment of joint border commissions, cross-border committees, tripartite and quadripartite commissions, and subregional cross-border security strategies. While it is often difficult to measure the impacts of these mechanisms on cross-border arms flows, anecdotal feedback from some affected border communities has been positive. The Joint Border Force of Chad and Sudan, for instance, while unable to patrol all 700 kilometres of the common border, has been able to build trust with local populations by focusing on the most populated areas of the border and delivering medical and educational assistance to these communities. These efforts have resulted in the arrest of traffickers of arms and wildlife products (Faltas, 2018, pp. 6, 15, 22). NGOs such as the Danish Demining Group (DDG) have also supported local committees working to diffuse tensions on both sides of the border between Tunisia and Libya.<sup>34</sup> Developing lessons learned and practical guidance on the basis of these and other similar initiatives on the continent would benefit subregional organizations and AU member states that are developing strategies to counter cross-border trafficking.

### **Box 7** The changing DDR landscape

Most disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) programmes implemented to date have been in Africa, and they have become an important tool for tackling illicit arms flows across the continent. Indeed, the AU Roadmap identifies effective DDR programmes as one of the key measures for achieving the Silence the Guns agenda (AU, 2016, pp. 11–12).

While national governments have conducted a small number of DDR programmes in Africa, the vast majority have been led and organized by the UN and form part of a broader series of measures aimed at addressing conflict and post-conflict security challenges. Indeed, approaches to weapons and ammunition management in the framework of DDR have evolved dramatically over the past 30 years. DDR programmes are increasingly being developed in contexts characterized by growing numbers of armed groups and acute levels of arms proliferation; where conflicts and violence, including terrorism, are ongoing; and where peace agreements are either absent or only partially applied.

These settings require innovative programmatic approaches and comprehensive arms control, linked to DDR. Recognizing this, the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs have jointly developed a handbook to assist DDR practitioners in designing and implementing weapons and ammunition activities at both the programmatic and technical levels (de Tessières, 2018a). The following good practices have been developed for certain DDR environments, and should be more broadly and intensively applied:

- the more thorough analysis of weapons ownership among armed actors and the associated security environment;
- the continuous collection and management of data, including weapons record keeping, for the purposes of designing and monitoring the implementation of context-relevant programming;

- ▶ ● the exchange of good and innovative practices employed in various African DDR programmes, particularly settings lacking peace agreements and/or affected by terrorism, and where disarmament may not be feasible;
- the use of context-relevant eligibility criteria to ensure that serviceable weapons are collected, while preventing the exclusion of specific types of combatants, including women and children;
- the creation of strong national legal and institutional DDR frameworks, and the adoption of standard operating procedures (SOPs) for weapons and ammunition management to ensure the consistent application of good practice and the reduction of risks affecting the management of DDR-related arms, ammunition, and explosives;
- where appropriate and in contexts where disarmament is not possible, the development of the capacity of armed actors, including non-state actors, to properly manage weapons and ammunition;<sup>35</sup>
- the identification and disposal of larger calibre materiel, including light and heavy weapons and related ammunition, as well as explosives. These types of weapons have become increasingly prominent in recent conflicts and require specific SOPs and logistical facilities;
- the destruction of weapons and ammunition collected during DDR, in order to reduce the risks of diversion and unplanned explosions and avoid unnecessary storage costs;
- the accurate identification, systematic marking, and registration of all DDR materiel to prevent or identify diversion; and
- the sharing of data with relevant international bodies, such as UN panels of experts that monitor arms embargoes, INTERPOL, or specialized research organizations, in order to support the detection of illicit transfers and the use of DDR materiel in criminal activity.

Source: de Tessières (2018a; 2018c)

Other meritorious arms control measures identified in this study include civilian weapons collection programmes (including amnesties, exchanging weapons for development projects, and DDR; see Box 7), subregional and national end-use(r) controls (see Box 8), and subregional mechanisms to track and monitor brokering activities. Workshop participants also pointed to the need for guidance that simplifies and ensures the accessibility of procedures to register legally held weapons and producers of craft weapons in order to increase registration rates. In addition, they recommended that national authorities should record basic information about recovered weapons earmarked for destruction so as to deter diversion and generate information on weapons that are diverted, while preserving the confidentiality typically given to weapons owners during amnesties.

When consolidating practical guidance for the African continent, a regional actor such as the AU could compile and disseminate a list of existing regional and subregional arms control standards and guidelines that would also identify key gaps in such standards and guidelines.

### 3.3 Supporting and coordinating implementation

There is no shortage of continent-wide and subregional instruments in Africa designed to reduce illicit small arms flows. Fulfilling these commitments, including through effective coordination and capacity building, should therefore provide the basis for efforts to achieve the Silence the Guns agenda.

At the international level the AU's political bodies, in particular the PSC, can play an important role in engaging with external players in order to address the challenges faced by AU member states. This could include, for instance, encouraging the main exporters of arms to Africa to report on their arms exports if they do not already do so, in order to identify—and ideally prevent—transfer diversions. This could also involve engaging in a dialogue with the manufacturers of imitation firearms so as to ensure that the items they export to Africa meet technical standards that prevent their conversion into lethal firearms. Finally, these types of outreaches could help educate arms exporters on the existence of subregional end-use(r) control mechanisms (see Box 8).

International cooperation and information exchange are essential for monitoring illicit arms flows, identifying new threats, generating actionable weapons intelligence, and coordinating responses. In fact, the main subregional conventions contain provisions for the establishment of subregional<sup>36</sup> and national databases<sup>37</sup> to facilitate such cooperation. In addition to monitoring trends, databases can be used to facilitate tracing efforts, because recovered illicit weapons can be quickly checked against such databases to determine their last legal owner as a first step in the process of identifying the point of diversion.

Yet Africa has a mixed record in terms of using existing international information-sharing platforms and putting new databases in place. Data on registered civilian firearms is publicly available for only 20 African countries, and there is very little transparency on state-held weapons (Karp, 2018a; 2018b; 2018c). African states also tend to make limited use of international tracing and law enforcement information-sharing platforms. Between 2012 and 2017 only 18 African countries reported on cooperation with INTERPOL in their national reports on UN PoA implementation (Holtom and Ben Hamo Yeger, 2018, p. 59). According to INTERPOL, from 2013 to October 2017 only 14 countries in Western and Southern Africa submitted a total of 3,482 tracing requests through the organization's iARMS database.<sup>38</sup> Response rates to iARMS tracing requests are also low. Only 683 replies (20 per cent) were received in response to tracing requests.<sup>39</sup> Limited use of the platform also means that there have been no direct 'hits' as of October 2017, meaning that none of the weapons recovered on the continent and checked against the system matched weapons previously registered as lost or stolen in iARMS. According to INTERPOL, however, there have been numerous cases where weapons recovered in Africa were matched to firearms reported as lost in national records but not yet integrated into iARMS.<sup>40</sup>

## Box 8 The ECOWAS Convention end-use(r) monitoring mechanism<sup>41</sup>

States have made significant efforts to strengthen national and subregional end-use(r) control systems on the African continent, and have developed normative frameworks, administrative processes, and policy guidance for this purpose. Notably, the ECOWAS Convention prohibits the transfer of small arms and light weapons into, from, and through the national territory of ECOWAS member states.<sup>42</sup> It further establishes an exemption procedure for arms transfers that requires member states to apply for an exemption certificate and submit end-use(r) documentation to the ECOWAS Commission in advance of any transfer. If the exemption request is approved after a technical assessment and review by the commission and the other member states,<sup>43</sup> an authorization to transfer the arms is granted to the applicant member state.

Under the terms of the Convention, the ECOWAS Secretariat is to enter the information contained in the certificates requesting exemption and the end-use(r) control documentation into a subregional database, and manage and monitor the exemption requests. The database system has yet to be computerized, however.<sup>44</sup> In theory this system constitutes a subregional end-use and end-user monitoring mechanism. In practice, the capacity of the ECOWAS Secretariat and ECOWAS member states to monitor end use and end users through the subregional mechanism depends to a large degree on exporting states' adherence to ECOWAS Convention procedures for exemptions, the exchange of relevant information among ECOWAS member states, the level of centralization of end-use(r) control systems in the importing states, and the end-use(r) documentation that accompanies exemption requests.

ECOWAS member states have yet to comply with UNSC Resolution 1467 of 2003, which calls on UN member states to introduce regionally standardized end-use(r) documentation (UNSC, 2003a). The lack of harmonization of end-use(r) documentation in the Western Africa subregion and the persistence of national-level end-use(r) control systems further weaken the operation of the subregional mechanism. Currently three ECOWAS member states have developed their own national end-use(r) documentation: Burkina Faso, Ghana, and Nigeria.<sup>45</sup> Yet most national end-use(r) control systems in West Africa are decentralized, resulting in national security and defence agencies and ministries of the same country using different end-use(r) documentation, with no mechanism or authority in place to coordinate and centrally channel ECOWAS Convention exemption requests. As of 2016 only Nigeria had a centralized system (UNIDIR, 2016b, p. 25).

The ATT's adoption by most ECOWAS member states provides an opportunity to enhance end-use(r) control systems, build confidence, and strengthen arms control at the subregional level. The ATT has also identified existing internal coordination challenges faced by certain ECOWAS member states and shown that different national entities are responsible for implementing the ATT and the ECOWAS Convention. The ECOWAS subregional end-use(r) monitoring mechanism, including exemption certificates and related procedures, currently applies to small arms and light weapons, their parts, components, and ammunition. There have reportedly been cases of member states voluntarily submitting exemption requests and end-use(r) documentation for larger calibre weapons systems covered by the ATT, but not the ECOWAS Convention.<sup>46</sup> This has led the ECOWAS Department of Political Affairs, Peace and Security to explore the complementarities and synergies between the two instruments, including a possible extension of the scope of the Convention to align it with the ATT.<sup>47</sup>

Source: Giezendanner (2018)

These statistics suggest that cooperation and information exchange on illicit firearms among African states can be significantly strengthened, which would greatly assist law enforcement agencies in their counter-trafficking efforts, and actors seeking to monitor general and emerging weapons-trafficking trends.<sup>48</sup> The AU and subregional organizations can play an important role in this process by promoting the exchange of information through the use of existing platforms, supporting the development of national and subregional databases, and encouraging transparency and reporting in general.

Workshop participants cited recent joint law enforcement operations as examples of good practice in coordinating action to disrupt illicit arms trafficking networks. They regarded cooperation on counter-trafficking between the Eastern Africa Police Chiefs Cooperation Organization (EAPCCO) and the Southern African Regional Police Chiefs Cooperation Organization (SARPCCO) as a model in this regard. Another example is Operation Trigger III, which INTERPOL coordinated in cooperation with UNODC and the World Customs Organization in November 2017. The operation involved 11 neighbouring states in Northern Africa and the Sahel and resulted in the seizure of 152 firearms and the arrest of 159 individuals on charges of illegal possession or other firearms-related offences (Desmarais, 2018, p. 14). In addition to their immediate results, these joint operations help to build trust between countries and consolidate cooperation among counter-trafficking agencies. They can also encourage countries to contribute more data to information-sharing platforms and to develop or strengthen national databases. Workshop participants felt that there was value in promoting similar coordination efforts on a more regular—and possibly permanent—basis.

At the national level, workshop participants noted the need to coordinate assistance and capacity-building efforts so that they better respond to the needs expressed by national authorities. In this regard, the country profiles compiled as part of the present research can serve as a useful basis for identifying national priorities. Further developing these profiles—and incorporating them into an online database—would help national authorities and their international partners to match needs with available resources. While national assistance needs tend to be very specific to each country, workshop participants highlighted the following as broad capacity-building priorities:

- the harmonization of national legislation with international instruments;
- ensuring that national legislation addresses the issues of craft production and imitation firearms;
- the implementation and enforcement of arms embargoes;
- the provision of training and technical assistance to combat the land- and sea-based trafficking of small arms;<sup>49</sup>
- facilitating access to international assistance and funding mechanisms; and
- developing the capacities of national forensic institutions to trace illicit weapons.<sup>50</sup> ●



“AU member states can feel confident that their political resolve and collective experience will be valuable assets for the successful implementation of the Silence the Guns agenda.”

## Conclusion

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Illicit arms flows continue to destabilize the African continent, fuelling crime, conflict, and terrorist activities. This mapping report has shown that a single type of actor or market does not dominate the illicit weapons trade on the continent, and that the issue is instead complex and context specific, and can involve a variety of actors. Available estimates indicate that the number of illicit firearms in circulation on the continent is limited compared with other regions, however, which suggests that the task at hand is certainly not insurmountable. Indeed, the data collected in this report has highlighted how illicit small arms and ammunition flows can be identified and broken down according to the weapons' life cycle, providing concrete entry points for action.

AU member states stressed in particular the threat posed by the trafficking of weapons across their land borders. Indeed, the circulation of illicit weapons within Africa is of concern across the continent. Subregions affected by recurrent armed conflict experience the most organized forms of land-based trafficking, sometimes involving large quantities of weapons and specialized armed groups. Throughout the continent an 'ant trade' in small quantities of weapons (which can accumulate over time) contributes to meeting local demand fuelled by low-level criminality, poaching, and the need for self-protection. While the routes in use may initially overlap with traditional border trading routes, they are fluid and often move to more remote border areas to evade patrols. Policing the vast national borders on the continent is both a technical and human challenge, because local communities' livelihoods often depend on cross-border trade and these communities have few options to turn to for security. Anti-trafficking operations that also disrupt the local trade in other commodities risk pushing local actors to engage in more lucrative criminal activities and threatening their already fragile resilience.

The illicit weapons in circulation originate both from within and outside Africa. They enter the illicit market at virtually every stage of the weapons' life cycle. At the manufacturing stage, AU member states have expressed particular concern at the enduring threat posed by the unlicensed craft production of firearms. The illicit conversion of imitation handguns is an emerging development that enables the circulation of lethal illicit handguns at a much reduced cost. Military-grade weapons and ammunition produced in Africa have also found their way into conflict zones. The diversion of arms transfers may not dominate the headlines to the extent it did in the late 1990s and early years of the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, but illicit transfers to the continent continue to be documented in the context of arms embargoes, including an emerging trend of such transfers involving Middle Eastern countries. The crises in the Central African Republic, Libya, and Mali have illustrated the long-term effects of the massive national stockpile diversion that can occur in the context of armed conflict. This mapping report has revealed that smaller-scale stockpile diversion also occurs in various subregions and can include the firearms held legally by civilians, which are also vulnerable to theft and loss. Lastly, there is room for improving practices for the disposal

of surplus and collected weapons, including those recovered in the context of peace operations, in order to prevent their illicit recirculation.

There is no easy fix to these multiple challenges. Improving controls at the various stages of the weapons' life cycle will be required to meaningfully counter the threat of illicit arms flows. International instruments, such as the ATT and UN PoA, and the main subregional conventions contain commitments that, if put into practice, can contribute to significantly preventing and reducing illicit arms flows on the continent. The AU Roadmap further identifies timely and relevant practical steps to this end, with particular focus on the ratification and implementation of instruments; the investigation, naming, and shaming of the suppliers of illicit weapons; and capacity building for states in the areas of stockpile management, record keeping and tracing, and the destruction of illicit firearms (AU, 2016, pp. 6–7). Ensuring that national legislation allows for the enforcement of arms embargoes and covers emerging threats such as the proliferation of easily convertible imitation firearms is also an important part of what needs to be done.

Although action is required on several fronts, competing priorities and limited resources call for investment in particular areas likely to yield the most benefits. The complex and fluid nature of illicit arms flows on the continent illustrates the need for reliable and timely strategic-level intelligence in order to detect new sources of supply and tackle them effectively. Due to uneven national capacities, a patchwork of actors currently contribute to painting this intelligence picture, including states, but also international military forces, peacekeeping interventions, and civil society organizations. The current limited participation of AU member states in international information-sharing platforms suggests that the continent could perform better in the area of illicit weapons monitoring and information exchange. Subregional organizations can play important roles in this regard, adding political weight to existing platforms and processes, and coordinating regular national-level assessments. The provision of reasonable financial and technical assistance in this area, coupled with outreach and awareness raising targeting national decision makers, would go a long way towards helping states to prioritize their responses.

Moreover, in recent years some AU member states have hosted or implemented innovative practices and interventions and thereby learned important lessons that will be relevant and timely throughout the continent and beyond. This includes experience gained by several states and subregional organizations in the area of end-use and end-user controls, which should be disseminated and turned into practical guidance for other interested states. Similarly, DDR efforts have had to cope with complex and emerging challenges that will apply in a number of other settings. This is not to say that emerging good practice on the continent is limited to these areas, but rather that there will be value in investing in learning from and raising awareness about these interventions for the benefit of the continent and other regions. Indeed, AU member states can feel confident that their political resolve and collective experience will be valuable assets for the successful implementation of the Silence the Guns agenda. ●



# Annexes

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## Annexe 1. UN statistical ('M49') subregions\*

### Eastern Africa

British Indian Ocean Territory	Burundi
Comoros	Djibouti
Eritrea	Ethiopia
French Southern Territories	Kenya
Madagascar	Malawi
Mauritius	Mayotte
Mozambique	Réunion
Rwanda	Seychelles
Somalia	South Sudan
Tanzania	Uganda
Zambia	Zimbabwe

### Middle Africa

Angola	Cameroon
Central African Republic	Chad
Democratic Republic of the Congo	Equatorial Guinea
Gabon	Republic of the Congo
São Tomé and Príncipe	

### Northern Africa

Algeria	Egypt
Libya	Morocco
Sudan	Tunisia
Western Sahara	

### Southern Africa

Botswana	Eswatini
Lesotho	Namibia
South Africa	

### Western Africa

Benin	Burkina Faso
Cape Verde	Côte d'Ivoire
Gambia	Ghana
Guinea	Guinea-Bissau
Liberia	Mali
Mauritania	Niger
Nigeria	Saint Helena
Senegal	Sierra Leone
Togo	

\* Note: The Small Arms Survey takes no position regarding the status or name of countries or territories mentioned in this publication.

Source: UNSD (n.d.)

## Annexe 2. Good practices and recommendations for addressing illicit arms flows identified at the validation workshop, Addis Ababa, 19–20 September 2018

Types of illicit arms flows	Examples of good practices	For the AU	Recommendations	
			For subregional organizations	For AU member states
Cross-border trafficking (land-, sea-, air-, river-, lake-based)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Joint border commissions (Kenya–Ethiopia) and forces (Chad–Sudan)</li> <li>• Cross-border committees</li> <li>• Tripartite (Central African Republic, Chad, Sudan) and quadripartite (Cameroon, Chad, Niger, Nigeria) commissions</li> <li>• Mano River Union strategy for cross-border security and monthly security meetings (Côte d’Ivoire, Liberia, Guinea, Sierra Leone)</li> <li>• Training to counter land-, river-, and lake-based trafficking (Chad)</li> <li>• Cross-border and inter-regional joint operations (SARPPCO–EAPCCO cooperation, Operation Trigger II)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand research on the sources and routes of all trafficking, particularly in non-crisis situations</li> <li>• Develop guidelines and SOPs for joint border initiatives</li> <li>• Work through specialized institutions (AFRIPOL and Committee of Intelligence and Security Services of Africa (CISSA)) to promote a shared understanding of trafficking issues</li> <li>• Identify entry points to streamline counter-trafficking interventions in the AU Border Programme, and in line with the AU Convention on Cross Border Cooperation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinate capacity building and training in counter-trafficking measures</li> <li>• Promote permanent law enforcement cooperation and coordination on counter-trafficking activities (focus on firearms and other commodities)</li> <li>• Promote the development of border management plans</li> <li>• Generate regional datasets for intelligence-led policing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider creating joint commissions or committees on trafficking in ‘hotspot areas’</li> <li>• Develop strategies to win the ‘hearts and minds’ of local populations and engage with border communities in counter-trafficking activities</li> <li>• Increase counter-trafficking cooperation between bordering states and confidence building in non-crisis situations</li> <li>• Increase border surveillance and community policing</li> <li>• Enhance national inter-agency cooperation on counter-trafficking</li> <li>• Strengthen the criminal justice response to arms trafficking and support the surveillance of illicit arms flows by national forensic institutions</li> </ul>

Types of illicit arms flows	Examples of good practices	Recommendations	
		For the AU	For subregional organizations
Transfer diversion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Subregional end-user controls (ECOWAS Convention)</li> <li>• Brokering initiative in the SADC region</li> <li>• Initiatives to enhance arms marking, record keeping, and tracing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support the implementation of arms embargoes and enhance cooperation with UN sanctions committees and groups of experts</li> <li>• Enhance the regional and subregional harmonization of arms brokering regulation and legislation and the sharing of information</li> <li>• Promote the ratification and domestication of the ATT</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish subregional end-user controls and mechanisms to track and monitor brokering activity</li> <li>• Strengthen the implementation of regional protocols on the marking of imported weapons</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review, strengthen, and enforce legal frameworks on brokering, end-use(r) controls, and arms embargo implementation</li> <li>• Cooperate in investigations of transfer diversions</li> <li>• Enforce regional protocols on the marking of imported weapons</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review, strengthen, and enforce legal frameworks on brokering, end-use(r) controls, and arms embargo implementation</li> <li>• Cooperate in investigations of transfer diversions</li> <li>• Enforce regional protocols on the marking of imported weapons</li> </ul>
Diversion from national stockpiles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• International standards and guidelines on small arms and ammunition (i.e. MOSAIC and IATG)</li> <li>• Coordinated weapons and ammunition management efforts that tackle cross-border dynamics (e.g. UNREC)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand arms control procedures in Peace Support Operations (PSOs) in line with the AU policy</li> <li>• Develop African guidance on weapons and ammunition management, using international standards and guidelines on small arms and ammunition as a reference point, but ensuring relevance for Africa</li> <li>• Develop protocols for PSOs to help secure national stockpiles in conflict situations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage the collection of weapons data before weapons are destroyed to facilitate illicit weapons mapping</li> <li>• Support arms marking and record keeping to facilitate tracing and criminal justice responses</li> <li>• Develop realistic SOPs for the management of weapons and ammunition (and other security materiel), including 'check in, check out' procedures and the reporting and monitoring of loss and theft</li> </ul>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make use of available tools (e.g. Physical Security and Stockpile Management (PSSM) matrix; strategic plans) to coordinate and prioritize national-level weapons and ammunition management efforts</li> <li>• Promote weapons and ammunition management standards not just for the military, but for other security and law enforcement agencies</li> </ul>

<p>Civilian holdings diversion</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weapons amnesties, collection, and destruction; DDR</li> <li>• Weapons-for-development programmes (e.g. ECOWAS-EU project)</li> <li>• Provisions in subregional conventions on civilian possession of small arms</li> <li>• National small arms baseline assessments and surveys</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undertake a study on demand for and drivers of arms trafficking, including sources of instability and insecurity for communities and countries, and the roles of communities and armed groups in arms trafficking</li> <li>• Promote the use of existing firearms databases, such as iARMS, to report and monitor stolen firearms</li> <li>• Sensitize member states to the Africa Amnesty Month<sup>a</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote the subregional harmonization of regulations on civilian small arms possession</li> <li>• Promote and support national baseline surveys in line with international good practice</li> <li>• Encourage members (and donors) to update and implement national action plans</li> <li>• Promote voluntary weapons collection initiatives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Simplify firearms registration and licensing procedures</li> <li>• Promote firearms registration in border and remote communities</li> <li>• Undertake targeted measures that address the drivers of insecurity and arms flows</li> <li>• Improve the security and record keeping of seized and recovered weapons</li> </ul>
<p>Craft production</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promotion of alternative livelihoods for craft producers</li> <li>• Unionizing and regulating producers and products</li> <li>• National censuses of producers</li> <li>• Registration and marking to facilitate tracing</li> <li>• Regular sensitization of craft producers to relevant issues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undertake a feasibility assessment for the development of manufacturing and safety standards for craft-produced firearms</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote the subregional harmonization of national regulations on craft production, including technological transfers</li> <li>• Support capacity building for craft weapons identification</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undertake national censuses of producers as a first step towards assessing the scope of craft production</li> <li>• Establish mechanisms to monitor craft production</li> <li>• When registration forms part of national regulations, simplify registration procedures for craft producers</li> <li>• Support the marking of craft-produced firearms</li> <li>• Clarify regulations and penalties for illicit craft production</li> </ul>

Types of illicit arms flows	Examples of good practices	Recommendations		
		For the AU	For subregional organizations	For AU member states
Illicit conversion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policies to ban imitation firearms or regulate them as real firearms</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage in dialogue and sensitize manufacturers of imitation firearms on the trafficking of converted items in Africa and the related risks</li> <li>• Undertake a mapping study on the proliferation of easily convertible imitation firearms on the continent, including an assessment of regulatory gaps</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raise awareness of illicit conversion among member states</li> <li>• Promote the subregional harmonization of national regulations on imitation firearms</li> <li>• Encourage member states to record cases of illicit conversions on their territories and share information via regional mechanisms</li> <li>• Support capacity building for the identification and tracing of converted firearms</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clarify the legal status of imitation firearms in national legislation</li> <li>• Record cases of illicit conversions and report them as such in weapons seizure and crime statistics</li> </ul>
Cross-cutting issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Harmonization of national legislation with the requirements of international and subregional instruments (ECOWAS; UNODC in Northem Africa)</li> <li>• Establishment of regional and national datasets (RECSA software used in Côte d'Ivoire)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compile and disseminate existing subregional arms control SOPs and practical guidelines and identify gaps that need to be filled</li> <li>• Promote the universality of and compliance with international and regional instruments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop, establish, and maintain templates and databases to facilitate centralized record keeping</li> <li>• Encourage transparency and reporting to international and regional instruments, including through capacity building</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop, establish, and maintain weapons-related databases, and make it available for regional and international information exchanges and in accordance with transparency and reporting commitments and obligations</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UNREC support to facilitate member states' access to assistance (ATT VTF (Voluntary Trust Fund), UN Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation (UNSCAR), UN Peacebuilding Fund, UN Peace and Development Trust Fund)</li> <li>• Contributions of assistance providers and partnerships with the UN, specialized NGOs, and research organizations to identify emerging challenges and build capacities to address illicit arms flows</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support member states' access to multilateral, subregional, and bilateral sources of assistance (e.g. ATT VTF with respect to ATT implementation and brokering regulations)</li> <li>• Address knowledge gaps regarding gender dimensions (the impact of arms on women, gender roles in trafficking, and gender-related aspects of response measures)</li> <li>• Develop guidelines for and increase understanding of the gender impacts of weapons and ammunition management interventions</li> <li>• Encourage transparency and reporting to international and regional instruments, including through capacity building</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support the implementation of the ATT in the continent's subregions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share information on successful prosecutions of trafficking cases and sanctions imposed on perpetrators</li> <li>• Record data on illicit weapons in existing information-sharing platforms, such as iARMS</li> </ul>
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a In 2017 the AU declared the month of September of each year until 2020 the Africa Amnesty Month for the surrender and collection of illicit arms and light weapons. During the Amnesty Month member states are expected to organize and promote initiatives for the voluntary surrender of illicit weapons. Those surrendering weapons will be assured of anonymity and immunity from prosecution. See <http://www.peaceau.org/en/article/open-session-on-africa-amnesty-month>.

Source: Based on participant inputs at the validation workshop held at AU headquarters, Addis Ababa, 19–20 September 2018

## Endnotes

- 1 These are Botswana, Burundi, the Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Mali, Namibia, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zimbabwe.
- 2 Including representatives of the AU Commission, INTERPOL, the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), the UN Security Council Affairs Division, and the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- 3 Nigeria and Sierra Leone participated in the workshop.
- 4 This definition is generally consistent with those found in various multilateral instruments, although it is more succinct and states more clearly that legal firearms that are used in illegal acts should be considered illicit. There are other, more specific definitions, including that found in the ITI, which states that 'small arms and light weapons are "illicit" if: (a) they are considered illicit under the law of the State within whose territorial jurisdiction the small arm or light weapon is found; (b) they are transferred in violation of arms embargoes decided by the Security Council in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations; (c) they are not marked in accordance with the provisions of this instrument; (d) they are manufactured or assembled without a licence or authorization from the competent authority of the State where the manufacture or assembly takes place; or (e) they are transferred without a licence or authorization by a competent national authority' (UNGA, 2005, para. 6).
- 5 Major exporters are countries that export—or are believed to export—at least USD 10 million worth of small arms, light weapons, their parts, accessories, and ammunition in a given year. The 2018 Transparency Barometer includes any state that qualified as a major exporter at least once during the 2001–15 calendar years; it assesses arms trade activities for 2015, which is the most recent year for which data is available (Holtom and Pavesi, 2018, p. 9). The listing of only one AU member state—South Africa—as having met these criteria is almost certainly an undercount, however, as other African countries may have exported USD 10 million or more worth of small arms in a single calendar year since 2001 without reporting these transactions to existing mechanisms (see Box 1).
- 6 See Table 1. Among them, nine African countries reported to the UN PoA/ITI process during the period 2012–17 that their states manufacture small arms or light weapons (Holtom and Ben Hamo Yeger, 2018, p. 36).

- 7 The Sierra Leone Armed Forces and Sierra Leone National Commission on Small Arms both submitted responses.
- 8 Indeed, some of the remaining estimated firearms may be registered, but the data was not made available. Moreover, in some countries some types of firearms might be legally held without registration, so even firearms recorded as unregistered are not necessarily illicit.
- 9 Written correspondence with AU Mission Support Team to the MNJTF official, 6 December 2017.
- 10 Written correspondence with MINUSMA official, 30 October 2017.
- 11 Figures from iTrace database. Note: These statistics will change as documentation increases, and are likely to be underestimates, since in many cases the year of manufacture of (especially Warsaw Pact-pattern) small arms and light weapons cannot be determined from markings. The figures should be taken as indicative only: as Table 4 shows, in some cases the country-specific samples from which the figures are calculated are quite small.
- 12 The iTrace Global Weapon Reporting System is mandated by two decisions of the Council of the European Union (698/CFSP/2013 of 25 November 2013 and 1908/CFSP/2015 of 22 October 2015). The nine countries are Burkina Faso, the Central African Republic, the DRC, Libya, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, South Sudan, and Somalia.
- 13 CAR (2016a, p. 10); Leff and LeBrun (2014, pp. 44–45, 69); de Tessières (2018b, Annexe); written correspondence with MINUSMA official, 30 October 2017. See also Box 3.
- 14 Written correspondence with MINUSMA official, 30 October 2017.
- 15 Small Arms Survey and AU (2018); de Tessières (2018b); Desmarais (2018); Pellerin (2017).
- 16 Written correspondence with AU Mission Support Team to the MNJTF official, 6 December 2017.
- 17 Open-air markets where weapons can be purchased have been reported in several African states and across most subregions, although they often only function for a limited time. In addition to the Niger example cited above, this has included reports of such markets in Tripoli, Libya (Jenzen-Jones and McCollum, 2017, p. 25); Rafah, Egypt (Marsh, 2017, p. 86); Awkwa, Nigeria (UNREC, 2016, p. 35); Mogadishu, Somalia (Florquin, 2013, p. 254); Bangassou and Tissi in the Central African Republic (UNSC, 2016, pp. 16, 34, 42); and various towns in Ghana where craft firearms production is a tradition (Aning, 2005).
- 18 Although they were adopted in March 2015, the targeted sanctions on South Sudan did not include an arms embargo until July 2018. Yet since its inception the South Sudan Panel of Experts was mandated to ‘examine and analyse information regarding the supply, sale or transfer of arms and related materiel and related military or other assistance, including the financing modalities of such activities as well as procurement of these items through illicit trafficking networks, to individuals and entities undermining implementation of the Agreement or participating in acts that violate international human rights law or international humanitarian law’ (UNSC, 2015c, para. 18.c).
- 19 The resulting dataset includes information about more than 76,000 small arms, 1,303 light weapons, 88 million rounds of ammunition, 148,000 grenades, and 5,800 missiles that were recorded (Brehm, forthcoming). Incident types included interdicted shipments, cache seizures and recoveries, reports of aggregated seizures, incidents of weapons being carried by traffickers moving other commodities, voluntary surrenders, weapons sold at arms markets, theft and diversion, completed shipments, and recoveries during or after firefights.
- 20 This box is largely excerpted from Giezendanner (2018) and is based in part on a UN Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) research project that examined options at the international level and common understandings at the regional level in order to strengthen end-use(r) control

systems to address arms diversion (UNIDIR, 2015–17). It is supplemented by additional desk research and interviews undertaken for the present study.

- 21 See above and UNSC (2014a).
- 22 Written correspondence with AU Mission Support Team to the MNJTF official, 6 December 2017.
- 23 Written correspondence with MINUSMA official, 30 October 2017; see also Anders (2018, pp. 174–80); CAR (2016a).
- 24 Written communication with INTERPOL official, October 2017.
- 25 In Western Africa weapons lost by or stolen from civilians are scarcely reported to iARMS because few states have centralized and computerized national registries of civilian firearms. Moreover, where such registries exist, they tend to be limited in countries where registration procedures can only be completed in the capital city and are therefore difficult for many firearm owners to access (written communication with INTERPOL official, October 2018).
- 26 See also iTrace database, in particular case reference 165E21F1F0091440C (itrace.conflictarm.com); CAR tracing correspondence with Government of Italy and Cameroonian hunting ammunition distributor, 2016–17.
- 27 Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Mali, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Tanzania.
- 28 Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, and Liberia.
- 29 Guinea, Mali, Namibia, Senegal, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe.
- 30 The European Union (EU), for instance, will issue such technical standards to address the proliferation of readily convertible firearms and inconsistent regulations among its member states (Florquin and King, 2018, pp. 50–52).
- 31 See, for instance, UNGA (2018).
- 32 This Handbook is scheduled for release at the 5<sup>th</sup> Conference of States Parties to the ATT in 2019, and is being developed as part of the Survey's Gender Lens for Arms Control Support and Sustainability (GLASS) project.
- 33 Written correspondence with MINUSMA official, 30 October 2017.
- 34 The DDG has been working in south-east Tunisia since 2014, implementing projects aimed at enhancing community security and resilience in key border towns. In early 2018 the organization expanded its community safety and violence prevention programming from Ben Guerdane and Dehiba in Tunisia across the border to the Libyan border cities of Zuwara, Nalut, and Wazin. This programming has attempted to address border management holistically, with a focus on the multiple, often complex dynamics that cause tension within and across communities and fuel insecurity and illicit trade throughout the border region. As a result, the DDG has succeeded in establishing conflict management committees in each town, and has encouraged opportunities for information exchange and joint cross-border conflict management initiatives that are contributing to the stabilization of the border area (written correspondence with DDG representative, 2 October 2018).
- 35 This may include support for storing or locking away heavy weapons, clearing remains of heavy weapons platforms, moving ammunition and explosives away from areas where they pose a safety threat to the population, and providing basic stockpile management advice. Building the capacities of non-state actors is a particularly sensitive undertaking that requires careful planning and analysis of risks. Indeed, it may to some extent contribute to armed groups' military capabilities and therefore be counterproductive for DDR. At the same time, the risks of doing nothing can be equally high in some contexts, because stockpiles of arms and ammunition held by armed groups are themselves vulnerable to further diversion or are

stored in ways that endanger the local population. Limited support may result in armed groups' stockpiles being better accounted for through increased oversight by multiple stakeholders, and help reduce the safety risks and perceptions of insecurity associated with these stockpiles. Existing good practice stresses that national authorities should approve these capacity-building activities, that such activities should be undertaken as part of the broader DDR strategy, and that they should follow SOPs specifically designed for the local context (de Tessières, 2018a, pp. 47–49).

- 36 The ECOWAS Convention calls for the establishment of a subregional database (art. 10.1) and contains provisions for a register of arms for peace operations (art. 11). Similarly, the Nairobi Protocol for the Prevention, Control and Reduction of Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa (Nairobi Protocol, 2004) calls on states to 'establish national small arms and light weapons databases so as to facilitate the exchange of information on small arms and light weapons imports, exports and transfers' (art. 16d), and to 'establish and improve national databases, communication systems and acquire equipment for monitoring and controlling small arms and light weapons movements across borders' (art. 4c). Under Article 16.b of the Protocol on the Control of Firearms, Ammunition, and Other Related Materials in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Region (SADC Protocol, 2001), states parties undertake to 'establish national firearms databases to facilitate the exchange of information on firearms imports, exports and transfers'.
- 37 Chapter IV of the ECOWAS Convention—entitled 'Transparency and Exchange of Information'—stipulates that 'Member States shall establish where they do not exist already, national computerized registers and database [*sic*] of small arms and light weapons' (ECOWAS, 2006, art. 9.1). In particular, such national registries should include a description of the product; the content of any marking; the names and addresses of the former and current owners and, when possible, successive owners; the date of registration; and information on each transaction.
- 38 Southern African states initiated the vast majority (3,452, or 99 per cent) of tracing requests, while countries in the other subregions have made little use of the system. Most requests (2,552, or 74 per cent) were sent to other African countries, with the remainder addressed to countries in Europe (497, or 14 per cent) and other regions (426, or 12 per cent) (written communication with INTERPOL official, October 2017). These figures do not include tracing requests submitted as the result of more recent operations, such as Africa Trigger III in November 2017, which has reportedly led to additional tracing through the iARMS platform (Desmarais, 2018, p. 12).
- 39 The response rate was roughly similar among countries in Africa (21 per cent) and Europe (20 per cent), but quite significantly lower in other regions (12 per cent) (written communication with INTERPOL official, October 2017).
- 40 Written communication with INTERPOL official, October 2017.
- 41 This box is largely excerpted from Giezendanner (2018) and is based in part on a UNIDIR research project that examined options at the international level and common understandings at the regional level in order to strengthen end-use(r) control systems to address arms diversion (UNIDIR, 2015–17). It is supplemented by additional desk research and interviews undertaken for the present study.
- 42 See ECOWAS (2006, art. 3).
- 43 See ECOWAS (2006, art. 5).
- 44 Author correspondence with Dr Sani Adamu, Directorate of Peacekeeping and Regional Security, ECOWAS Commission, 6 December 2017.

- 45 Author correspondence with Dr Sani Adamu, Directorate of Peacekeeping and Regional Security, ECOWAS Commission, 6 December 2017.
- 46 Author correspondence with Dr Sani Adamu, Directorate of Peacekeeping and Regional Security, ECOWAS Commission, April 2017.
- 47 Author correspondence with Dr Sani Adamu, Directorate of Peacekeeping and Regional Security, ECOWAS Commission, 4 November 2017.
- 48 The same applies to information exchange on ballistics. IBIN is INTERPOL's Ballistic Information Network used to share data on crime guns and ammunition casings recovered within 80 km of international borders. As of August 2018 Botswana, Eswatini, Namibia, and Uganda were the only African members of IBIN, with South Africa to join pending connection (INTERPOL, n.d.). Because it remains in its infancy on the continent, as of November 2017 the system had not yet generated ballistic hits with African countries, but is expected to do so, as it does in other regions, as more countries join and use the platform (interview with INTERPOL representatives, Lyon, 15 November 2017).
- 49 See, for instance, the pilot training that UNODC provided to Chadian authorities in 2018 on investigating and prosecuting illicit firearms-trafficking cases (UNODC, 2018). The 18-month Chadian government and EU FRONTCHAD project is one example of assistance provided to counter lake- and river-based trafficking. FRONTCHAD involved an increase in the number of personnel of the national water police agency deployed to patrol Lake Chad, the training of personnel to carry out river patrols, and the improvement of security infrastructure on both Lake Chad and the Chari-Logone rivers. The resulting improved security situation led to the reopening of fishing and market-gardening activities in the area despite the constant threat posed by Boko Haram (EC, 2018).
- 50 A recent assessment of the capacities of forensic institutions in the Sahel shows that judicial authorities do not systematically follow established crime scene investigation procedures and therefore do not submit all recovered weapons to scientific police or forensic units for analysis. While technical assistance and training are needed in some countries, it appears equally essential to work with the judicial sector to ensure that forensic experts are given more systematic access to recovered firearms so that they can properly examine them (Desmarais, 2018, p. 3).

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# About the Small Arms Survey

The Small Arms Survey is a global centre of excellence whose mandate is to generate impartial, evidence-based, and policy-relevant knowledge on all aspects of small arms and armed violence. It is the principal international source of expertise, information, and analysis on small arms and armed violence issues, and acts as a resource for governments, policy-makers, researchers, and civil society. It is located in Geneva, Switzerland, and is a project of the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies.

The Survey has an international staff with expertise in security studies, political science, law, economics, development studies, sociology, and criminology, and collaborates with a network of researchers, partner institutions, non-governmental organizations, and governments in more than 50 countries.

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