

## Topic#2: Establishing Universal Minimum Standards for the Deactivation of Small Arms and Light Weapons

### I. Background

Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) have been widely used in conflicts, crimes, and war zones. Their availability has caused widespread violence, prolonged conflict, loss of life, and instability. Although the deactivation of these weapons making them permanently inoperable can reduce these risks, the lack of global standards means that some weapons are reactivated and misused. Inconsistent regulations across countries make it harder to control the spread of SALW internationally.

Without clear global rules for deactivation, gaps in enforcement allow illegal arms dealers and armed groups to take advantage. In some places, deactivated weapons are poorly marked or not properly modified, making them easy to reactivate. The lack of coordination between countries weakens efforts to control and track the movement of these weapons. Creating universal standards for SALW deactivation would close these gaps, ensuring weapons are permanently disabled and reducing the risk of them being used in conflicts or crimes.

Additionally, the lack of standardized deactivation protocols makes it harder for countries to work together on peacebuilding. Countries with weak laws may struggle to fully participate in disarmament efforts, which affects global peace. Poorly deactivated weapons can be brought back into conflict zones, making already unstable areas worse. If universal standards were set, countries could better prevent illegal arms from spreading and improve security worldwide. This would help track weapons more effectively and build trust between nations working towards peace.

Furthermore, the absence of proper deactivation standards can have long-term economic effects, especially in areas recovering from conflict. In these places, deactivated weapons may be reused or sold illegally, taking money away from rebuilding efforts. When weapons reenter society, they can restart violence or fuel crime, making it harder to build lasting peace. By creating consistent deactivation methods, countries can reduce the risk of weapons resurfacing and make sure resources are used for recovery, creating a safer, more stable environment for communities affected by conflict.

### II. UN Involvement

The United Nations has long recognized the dangers of the misuse and illegal trade of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) and has taken steps to address them. In 2001, the UN

created the Programme of Action (PoA) to prevent illegal SALW trade, including better stockpile management and destruction of surplus weapons. The International Tracing Instrument (ITI) helps track and trace illegal arms, while Sustainable Development Goal 16 (SDG 16) focuses on reducing violence and illegal arms flows. The UN Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) supports countries with technical help and international cooperation to combat SALW misuse. However, the lack of global deactivation standards weakens these efforts, allowing weapons to be reactivated and misused.

Despite these efforts, progress is slowed by the lack of a common approach to deactivating SALW. While some countries have made progress in tackling weapon trafficking, the lack of consistent rules means that weapons can still be reactivated or used illegally. The problem is made worse by the global nature of arms trafficking, where weak regulations in one area can affect others. If countries agreed on universal deactivation standards, it could help fill gaps in current disarmament efforts, improving global peace and security. These standards would ensure that weapons are permanently disabled, reducing the chances they are used again in conflicts or crimes.

Having universal deactivation standards would also encourage more cooperation between countries and international organizations. By following global rules, nations could work better together to control the flow of illegal weapons. It would create a clearer system for tracking and monitoring weapons, making it easier to share information and best practices. This would lead to stronger disarmament efforts. Ultimately, better cooperation would help stop the violence caused by SALW and allow countries to focus on rebuilding and achieving lasting peace.

### **III. Questions to consider**

1. What steps can be taken to establish universal standards for the deactivation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW)?
2. How can countries ensure compliance with these standards while respecting their national sovereignty and security priorities?
3. What role should international organizations, such as the United Nations, play in monitoring and enforcing global deactivation protocols?
4. How can nations address the challenges posed by weak regulations and enforcement in regions affected by arms trafficking?
5. What measures can be introduced to track and trace deactivated weapons to ensure they are not reintroduced into illicit markets?

### **IV. Sources**

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