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AND OTHER RELATED MATERIALS (CIFTA) Original: Spanish

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REPORT ON ACTIONS TAKEN BY THE TECHNICAL SECRETARIAT FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INTER-AMERICAN CONVENTION AGAINST THE ILLICIT MANUFACTURING OF AND TRAFFICKING IN FIREARMS, AMMUNITION,   
EXPLOSIVES, AND OTHER RELATED MATERIALS (CIFTA)

ACTIONS TAKEN BY THE TECHNICAL SECRETARIAT   
FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF CIFTA

The Technical Secretariat of the Inter-American Convention Against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials (CIFTA), comprising the Department of Public Security and the Department against Transnational Organized Crime of the Secretariat for Multidimensional Security of the Organization of American States, is pleased to present this report on the activities carried out in 2020 in connection with the current Course of Action for the operation and implementation of CIFTA.

Fully aware of the need to continue supporting the States Parties in strengthening their capacities to comply with the Course of Action and their obligations under CIFTA, the Technical Secretariat has designed and implemented strategies to: (i) improve the operational capacities of States Parties in the areas of marking, tracing, destruction, and storage of small arms and light weapons, ammunition, and related materials, (ii) assist countries in reviewing their legislative frameworks for regulating firearms, in line with CIFTA obligations and standards, and (iii) increase the countries’ capacity to investigate crimes related to the illicit trafficking and proliferation of firearms.

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic and the severe health crisis affecting the region’s countries, the Technical Secretariat faced a series of logistical and operational challenges in carrying out those activities in 2020. The containment measures adopted by the countries—including travel restrictions, border closures, and lockdowns—have made it difficult to pursue operational activities on the ground. However, through the adoption of creative strategies in our programs, we were able to avoid the complete interruption of activities and, as detailed below, make valuable progress in the following areas:

* **Project “Countering the Illicit Proliferation of and Trafficking in Small Arms and Light Weapons and their Ammunition, and their Impact on Latin America and the Caribbean”**
* **Homicide Plan**
* **Hemispheric Study on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons and their Ammunition**
* **Cooperation with other organizations**

1. **Project “Countering the Illicit Proliferation of and Trafficking in Small Arms and Light Weapons and their Ammunition, and their Impact on Latin America and the Caribbean”**

In 2019, the Department of Public Security, through financial support from the European Union, began the implementation of the project “Counteracting the Illicit Proliferation of and Trafficking in Small Arms and Light Weapons and their Ammunition, and their Impact on Latin America and the Caribbean,” which will end in 2021. This comprehensive arms control program takes into account the lessons learned from previous initiatives and builds on the successful results of the Arms and Ammunition Control Assistance Program, which concluded in 2014, to further advance the implementation of CIFTA.

The project comprises five components:

1. Stockpile Management and Physical Security
2. Marking and Tracing of Small Arms and Light Weapons
3. Destruction of Small Arms and Light Weapons and their Ammunition
4. Transfer and Cooperation Mechanisms
5. Preventing Armed Violence

The following paragraphs set out the main results achieved to date with each of those components, which provide concrete and significant support to the region’s countries in fulfilling their Convention commitments.

*Stockpile Management and Physical Security (SMPS)*

This component aims to strengthen the countries’ capacity to maintain national stockpiles in accordance with international standards in order to avoid diversions and accidents, such as the terrible explosion that struck Lebanon this year. To that end, two regional workshops on good practices for stockpile management and physical security were held: one in Guatemala in December 2019, for the Latin American countries, and a virtual workshop in November 2020, which prioritized the Caribbean countries and was implemented in conjunction with CARICOM IMPACS.

The seminars were given by experts from six organizations with a vast knowledge of the area, who addressed different topics and the applicable international standards. Officials from the participating countries were able to set out their national situations and exchange information on the challenges they face. In total, 125 officials from 18 countries received training.

In addition to the regional workshops, 55 officials from Peru, Ecuador, and El Salvador received training in specific aspects of stockpile management and physical security. During those national training exercises, technical assessments were made of the situation with each of the countries’ arms stockpiles in order to make improvements in accordance with international standards.

*Marking and Tracing of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW)*

This component seeks to improve national capacities for marking and tracing of small arms and light weapons and to promote regional cooperation in that area.

Despite the impact of the COVID-19 containment measures on this component’s activities, which are extremely hands-on and require visits and on-site work, six of the region’s countries were provided with training and technical assistance. Training on the issue was given to 84 national officials from Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Guyana, Bolivia, and Peru. Marking machines have also been identified and obtained, and they will in due course be donated to the countries needing them in 2021, when travel is again a possibility.

*Destruction of Small Arms and Light Weapons and their Ammunition*

This component, which aims to strengthen national capacities for the destruction of seized, unsafe, or surplus small arms and light weapons, was also heavily affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Since the beginning of the project, however, 77 officials in Peru and Costa Rica have received training in the destruction of arms and ammunition. The project supported the destruction and certification of 13,363 small arms and light weapons and 341,186 rounds of ammunition, in accordance with international good practices.

Additionally, within the framework of the agreement signed with the Ministry of Defense of Spain, 30 participants–including military personnel, police, and civilians–from 12 Latin American and Caribbean countries (Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Peru, the Dominican Republic, Mexico, Costa Rica, Uruguay, and Panama) were certified to level EOD-3 at the Hoyo de Manzanares International Humanitarian Demining Center.

*Transfer and Cooperation Mechanisms*

This component seeks to promote regional cooperation and information exchanges through improved transfer mechanisms and legislative assistance for countries aiming to harmonize their domestic laws with international standards.

The Virtual Community was established to provide a support tool for accessing and exchanging information on various issues related to arms and ammunition control. Eleven countries and 16 national contact points have registered.

Guidelines for a crossborder and regional communication mechanism for exchanging information on licit firearms import and export transactions were also developed. This mechanism will allow the CIFTA States Parties to exchange streamlined information on the export, import, and transit of small arms and light weapons and their components and ammunition, and to quickly identify the possible vulnerabilities of those processes and risks of diversion to the illicit market. The proposed mechanism will be presented to the CIFTA States Parties for review and validation in the first half of 2021.

In the area of legal assistance, technical assistance for strengthening and improving firearms regulatory frameworks was given to three countries: Peru, Ecuador, and Jamaica. Peru was assisted in drafting its directive regulating conditions and safety measures for storage facilities for explosives and related materials. Ecuador was offered contributions and comments to bring its Firearms Law into line with the mandates of CIFTA. We also reviewed Jamaica’s draft Firearms (Amendment) Act Bill in light of CIFTA obligations with a view to the Convention’s possible ratification by Jamaica.

*Preventing Armed Violence*

This innovative component was incorporated into the project in recognition of the fact that actions to repress and control the firearms cycle are inefficient if not accompanied by undertakings to prevent the use of firearms for conflict resolution and the involvement of vulnerable groups in armed violence. To that end, this pilot component aims to build capacities at the community level, to promote socially responsible behavior by training local actors, and to develop the life skills of children in vulnerable situations through daily extracurricular activities under the “OASIS: Music for the Prevention of Violence” program. The component is being implemented in communities in two countries: Honduras and El Salvador.

During 2020, the OASIS teaching methodology was developed for virtual orchestra and choir classes, given the impossibility of organizing face-to-face classes. In addition, training modules on issues related to the prevention of youth and domestic violence are being developed with the NGO *Alianza para la Paz* and the OAS Educational Portal, to be taught virtually to OASIS teachers, students’ families, community leaders, and local public sector representatives starting in February 2021.

In Honduras, a situational diagnosis of youth and domestic violence patterns and existing assistance services in the municipality of Tela was produced. Eighty young people were selected, 50 musical instruments were renovated, 80 tablets were distributed to the beneficiary families, and participation agreements were signed with them. The online classes started in October 2020. In El Salvador, local partnerships to implement OASIS were forged, and a cooperation agreement for that purpose was signed with the Ministry of Justice and Public Security. Classes will start in 2021.

1. **Homicide Plan**

Recognizing the impact of armed violence in the region, which, as is well known, mostly involves the use of firearms, the First Hemispheric Plan of Action to Guide the Design of Public Policies to Prevent and Reduce Intentional Homicide in the Americas was developed; it was formally adopted by the General Assembly in 2019.

One of the plan’s central planks is, of course, preventing and combating arms trafficking, and it contains 28 recommendations structured around three axes:

* Axis 1: Production, dissemination, and use of information and scientific evidence (8 recommendations)
* Axis 2: Recommendations for the design and implementation of prevention policies and measures (13 recommendations)
* Axis 3: Recommendations for the enforcement or operations of criminal justice (7 recommendations)

Three projects were implemented under the plan. In addition, a publicly accessible Homicide Awareness Platform was created as part of the website of the Inter-American Network for the Prevention of Violence.

1. **Hemispheric Study on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons and their Ammunition**

In compliance with the mandate set forth in AG/RES. 2945 (XLIX-O/19), which calls for a hemispheric study into the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and ammunition in order to identify threats and challenges, in 2020 the Technical Secretariat designed a proposal for the development of a methodology for the study that will allow it to be conducted periodically to monitor trends in the Hemisphere. This proposal is being validated with Mexico, in its capacity as the CIFTA Pro Tempore Secretariat and it is hoped that the financial resources needed to carry out the study will be identified in 2021.

1. **Cooperation with other organizations**

The CIFTA Technical Secretariat actively seeks synergies with other organizations to strengthen cooperation and enhance actions to prevent arms trafficking. Thus, during 2020 the Technical Secretariat of CIFTA cooperated with and participated in a series of events and meetings to review progress on the subject and identify possible areas of cooperation through presentations made by our specialists. Particularly notable was our contribution of inputs for the Caribbean Firearms Roadmap, developed by UNLIREC; our presentation on the role of regional bodies in combating the illicit trade in small arms at the virtual forum organized by the Small Arms Survey; our participation at the seventh session of the Working Group on Firearms of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime; and our presentation on destruction processes in the region at the Inter-American Defense Board’s Conference on Weapons, Munitions, and Explosives Management and Destruction Processes.

In addition, we have also incorporated those firearms-related organizations into our activities, seeking to make the best use of the capacities and experience that each one has to offer. As noted above, at the regional seminars on stockpile management and physical security, we received support from CARICOM IMPACS, the Ammunition Management Advisory Team of the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD-AMAT), the Golden West Foundation, the Humanitarian Demining Training Center (HDTC), and the United States Southern Command.

That concludes the report of the Technical Secretariat on the progress made to implement the 2018–2022 CIFTA Course of Action. Thank you very much.