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MEASURING ILLICIT ARMS FLOWS: KEY CHALLENGES FOR SDG GOAL 16.4 AND INDICATOR 16.4.2

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OVERVIEW

Arms, and small arms and light weapons (SALW) in particular, are the cause of the majority of conflict-related deaths. Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target 16.4 calls on states to, among other things, significantly reduce illicit arms flows by 2030. However, establishing an indicator to enable meaningful assessment of achievement of this target and collecting the relevant data have proved challenging. Moreover, these efforts are disconnected from attempts to measure the achievement of other aspects of target 16.4, which focus on reducing illicit financial flows, increasing the recovery of stolen assets and tackling organized crime. In advance of the High-level Political Forum in New York in July 2019, where the indicators and data-collection efforts associated with SDG 16 will be discussed, this session reviewed the work being done to measure illicit arms flows and achieve target 16.4. This included a discussion of the challenges associated with data collection in these areas and an attempt to identify where lessons can be learned from and progress made on developing meaningful indicators and generating reliable data.

FOCUS

The session focused on SDG target 16.4 and the indicators and data-collection efforts that have been established, specifically elements dealing with illicit arms and financial flows: indicator 16.4.1 on 'Total value of inward and outward illicit financial flows (in current United States dollars)' and indicator 16.4.2 on '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'.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

There are three key challenges related to data collection. First, there are no agreed common definitions of key terms (e.g. for indicator 16.4.1, 'illicit', 'financial' and 'flow' have no agreed definition while for indicator 16.4.2 'illicit' and 'flow' are also contested). Second is the general difficulty in collecting data on activities that are intentionally hidden. The third challenge is that many of the states most affected by these phenomena lack the capacity to collect data effectively.

There is considerable value in developing additional national, regional and international indicators that can supplement 16.4.1 and 16.4.2 and that take account of the particular modalities and challenges associated with illicit arms and financial flows. There is no need to develop additional global reporting instruments; instead, it is better to apply existing ones (e.g. those attached to the UN Programme of Acton on SALW, the UN Firearms Protocol, the International Tracing Instrument and the Arms Trade Treaty). Indicator 16.4.2 should not just been seen a data-collection activity but also as a means to facilitate state capacity building in areas such as marking, tracing and destruction.

National contexts (e.g. European countries, Brazil, El Salvador, Namibia, Nigeria) are important. There could be benefits from sharing success stories and other type of information sharing.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Implement existing instrument effectively, rather than creating new instruments.
- Improve the cooperation between national authorities and more generally between involved actors and levels of action.
- Focus more on capacity building and not only on the collection of data (e.g. improve national measures for controlling illicit flows).



small arms survey
@SmallArmsSurvey

Honoured to speak about measuring illicit arms flows and #SDG Target 16.4 at #SthlmForum this morning. It's crucial to note the challenges of data collection as well as the lessons learned if we are to achieve the #GlobalGoals.

Thanks for having us, @SIPRIorg!

♡ 13 10:48 AM - May 16, 2019

See small arms survey's other Tweets

Screen capture taken by screenshot.guru on Tue, 21 May 2019 13:08:42 GMT.

Permalink: twitter.com/SmallArmsSurvey/status/1128975399495655425

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