



AMMAN ACADEMY MODEL UNITED NATIONS 2026

United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC)



Addressing the Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons in
the Sahel Region Following the Collapse of the Libyan Arsenal



Dear Delegates,

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Introduction

Following the downfall of the Libyan government in 2011, massive amounts of weaponry from military stockpiles were spread throughout the Sahel region. These firearms entered illicit trafficking networks, helping to boost armed groups in Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, and Chad. More than a decade later, the continuous circulation of these weapons poses a significant threat to regional peace and security.

The United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC) provides an ideal setting for tackling the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. The issue is intimately related to the Commission's mandate of promoting disarmament and reducing threats to world peace and security. Through international cooperation and coordinated disarmament initiatives, the UNDC can help to limit the availability of illicit weapons and prevent them from contributing to violence and instability in the Sahel region.

Delegates are tasked with drafting resolutions aimed at combating illicit arms trafficking securing stockpiles strengthening border controls and inducing the proliferation of small arms and light weapons throughout the Sahel.



Timeline

2011: The fall of the Libyan government led to the loss of control over large military stockpiles, allowing weapons to move into neighboring countries. The UN became concerned about weapons spreading beyond Libya, particularly into the Sahel.

2012: Weapons flows became strongly connected to the Mali crisis. Former fighters and trafficking networks moved weapons southward, while AQIM and other extremist groups expanded their activities. The Mali crisis became an international security concern.

2013: The UN recognized that weapons management needed to be part of stabilization efforts in Mali and Libya, while Libya continued to struggle with securing its military stockpiles.

2014–2016: The immediate post-Libya weapons surge developed into an established regional trafficking problem, with armed groups and criminal networks operating across porous borders.

2016–2018: Instability in the Sahel became connected to terrorism, organized crime, and weak state control over remote border areas.

2019: The UN continued to report significant illicit arms flows throughout the Sahel. Chad announced border closures with Libya, CAR, and Sudan partly in response to trafficking concerns.

2020–2023: Conflict and instability continued across Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, and neighboring states. Although the original Libyan weapons flow was no longer the only source, weapons trafficking had become an entrenched regional problem. UNODC assessments showed that the initial post-2011 Libyan influx had diminished after roughly 2014, but Libya remained relevant as a source of illicit firearms.



Major Parties Involved.

Libya: Following the collapse of the Muammar Gaddafi regime in 2011, Libya became a primary source and logistical hub for illicit weapons trafficking south into Sahel region and neighboring African nations. As a result of state weapons stockpiles becoming insecure. Although Libya is no longer considered the main source of illicit weapons in the Sahel today, the 2011 collapse significantly accelerated regional arms proliferation.

Mali: Is considered the primary destination, battlefield, and consuming market for illicit weapons smuggled south from Libya. The inflow of Libyan weaponry has directly resulted in the collapse of state authority in northern Mali, fueling brutal multi-decade conflict involving jihadist, separatist rebels, and state forces.

Niger: Geographically crucial because it acts as a central and critical role as the primary transit highway and logistical hub connecting Libyan arms supplies to active conflict zones across west Africa.

Burkina Faso: Burkina Faso became increasingly affected by armed violence during the mid-to-late 2010s, especially as extremist groups spread southwards from Mali. Illicit firearms have strengthened armed groups operating within the country and across the Mali Niger Burkina Faso border.

Chad: A key affected state due to its border with Libya and its position within the Sahel. Chad has faced the circulation of illicit weapons from regional conflicts and trafficking networks. Today Chad remains affected by cross-border trafficking and the diversion of weapons.



JNIM: Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin is an Al-Qaeda-aligned coalition formed in 2 March 2017 through the Union of multiple armed groups operating in the Sahel. It has become one of the most significant non-state armed actors in Mali that has expanded activities in Burkina Faso and Niger. JNIM benefits from continued availability of small arms and light weapons obtained through illicit markets and attacks on security.

Islamic State-linked Groups: Those historically known as Islamic State in the Greater Sahara became an essential security actor in the Sahel as the group appeared in 2015. Like other armed groups in the region, they acquire weapons through illicit markets, raids on military positions and battlefield capture.

Arms Trafficking Networks: They are crucial because they enable the movement of weapons between countries, criminal groups, and armed organizations. These networks exploit the Sahel's vast territory, porous borders, established smuggling routes and limited state presence in remote areas.



Previous Efforts.

2011. UN Security Council Resolution 1970: After the Libyan conflict began, the Security Council imposed an arms embargo on Libya. The embargo was intended to prevent weapons from entering the conflict and contributing to further instability. The UN later became increasingly concerned that weapons from Libyan stockpiles were moving outside the country.

2011. UN Security Council Resolution 2017: The Security Council specifically raised concerns about the proliferation of weapons from Libya into neighboring countries. It highlighted the particular danger posed by weapons spreading into the Sahel and the potential connection to terrorism.

December 2011. UN assessment mission to the Sahel: The UN conducted an assessment mission to the Sahel in cooperation with the African Union. Authorities reported that weapons from Libya were being moved through the region and that some weapons might be hidden in desert areas for later use or trafficking. This helped the UN establish the scale of the emerging problem.

2012. UN investigation and monitoring: UN expert panels investigated the movement of weapons from Libya into the Sahel. Reports documented weapons and fighters moving toward Mali through routes involving southern Algeria and northern Niger. The UN also received information about weapons seizures and trafficking attempts in the region.

2012. UN General Assembly Resolution 66/47: The General Assembly adopted a resolution addressing the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. It strengthened the broader UN framework for preventing illicit



arms trafficking and encouraged international cooperation against the problem.

2014–2015. UN assistance with stockpile management: The UN Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa began projects aimed at improving small-arms control, physical security, and stockpile management in the Sahel. It worked with countries including Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso. The UN also began an assessment of the small-arms situation in the Sahel and neighboring countries.

2018. UNOWAS given a stronger role: The Security Council encouraged the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) to work on countering the threat posed by small arms and light weapons. It also called for greater cooperation between UN regional offices.



Glossary

SALW (Small Arms and Light Weapons): Weapons that can be easily carried and used by individuals or small groups, such as rifles, pistols, and machine guns.

Illicit Arms Trafficking: The illegal movement, sale, or transfer of weapons.

Arms Proliferation: The spread or increasing availability of weapons among states or armed groups.

Stockpile Management: The safe storage, monitoring, and protection of weapons and ammunition.

Weapons Diversion: The transfer of legally obtained weapons into unauthorized or illegal hands.

Porous Borders: Borders that are difficult to effectively monitor or control, allowing illegal movement across them.

Non-State Armed Actor: An armed group that operates independently of a government or official military.

Arms Trafficking Network: A network that facilitates the illegal movement and distribution of weapons.

Capacity Building: Providing training, resources, or expertise to strengthen a state's ability to address an issue.

JNIM: An Al-Qaeda-aligned coalition of armed groups operating mainly in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger.

UNOWAS: The United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel, which works to promote peace and security in the region.



Helpful Links / Works Cited.

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