The Women, Peace and Security Agenda (WPS) agenda constitutes an essential framework for policy and implementation, achieving greater societal resilience, more peaceful societies and women and girls’ rights when implemented. It is therefore critical that current and future prevention, responses and recoveries meet the rights, needs and experiences of women and girls.

The European Union has been a staunch proponent of UNSC Resolution 1325 and its follow-up resolutions composing the Women, Peace and Security agenda. They are our compass towards gender equality with peace and security. The promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women are important crosscutting priorities for the EU. The EU is fully committed to mainstreaming gender equality into all non-proliferation, disarmament and arms control work, and reiterates this commitment at the First Committee of the UN General Assembly.

The EU believes that the active participation and leadership of women at all levels in peace and security decision making and action is crucial in achieving peace, security and sustainable development. Women and girls are positive and effective actors for change, both in leadership roles and at the grassroots and community level. While some progress has been made in recent years, research shows that significant work remains to be done to achieve gender equality in disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. In this regard, the EU in early 2020 decided to become a supporter of actions 36 and 37 of the UN Secretary-General’s Agenda for Disarmament toward the full and equal participation of women in decision-making processes.

As part of its Strategy against illicit small arms and light weapons, adopted in November 2018, the EU commits to mainstream a gender perspective in the design of new projects relating to the fight against gun violence and small arms control in general, and the sharing of good practices in this regard. Since the adoption of the new strategy, all new assistance projects systematically integrate gender equality perspectives through the provision of technical advice and expertise, the development of knowledge products, and/or training.

The EU is supporting the universalisation and implementation of non-proliferation, disarmament and arms control conventions by means of dedicated projects (Council Decisions) that systematically consider the gender equality dimension. Council Decision (CFSP) 2019/97 in support of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC) provided seminars that brought together youth from the Global South. Particular emphasis was placed on encouraging the participation of young women from the Global South. Council Decision (CFSP) 2019/538 in support of activities of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) pursued fora for women on the peaceful uses of chemistry and basic analytical skills development course for women. Under the umbrella of the Global Partnership's Signature Initiative to Mitigate Biological Threats in Africa (SIMBA) the EU CBRN Centre of excellence initiative is funding a biosecurity and outbreak management training workshop dedicated to African woman to empower their involvement during health crisis.

In addition to projects with a specific geographical focus, the EU is also supporting a global approach to increase knowledge and build capacity on the gender and small arms and light
weapons nexus. The United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) implemented Council Decision (CFSP) 2018/2011 in support of gender-mainstreamed policies, programmes and actions in the fight against small arms trafficking and misuse, in line with the Women, Peace and Security Agenda. The project funded activities such as online-based training on gender mainstreaming small arms control for UN staff and wider communities of practitioners. Under the Council Decision (CFSP) 2022/1965 adopted on 17 October 2022 and implemented by UNODA, the EU supports activities aimed at a three-fold approach to advance the effective implementation of the UN Programme of Action on SALW and its International Tracing Instrument (ITI). The Council Decision focuses on a forward-looking global policy developments in the context of the 4th Review Conference; effective national and regional implementation of the PoA and ITI, and gender-responsive small arms control policies and programmes.

The EU commends the efforts of UN agencies, in particular UNODA and the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), as well as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and civil society, for their efforts to inform discussions within the disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control machinery, on gender equality, women’s empowerment, and the impact of certain weapons on gender equality.

7. The EU promotes implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty, with particular attention paid to Article 7 requiring states to take into account the risk of arms or other items being used to commit or facilitate serious acts of gender-based violence. Effective implementation of the ATT can contribute to eliminating violence against women and girls, as set out in Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target 5.2.

8. In its Conclusions of 27 May 2024 on an EU Position on the 4th Review Conference of the UN Programme of Action (New York, 18-28 June 2024), the Council committed to support the gender sensitive approach to SALW-control and recognise the differentiated impacts of armed violence on women, men, girls and boys, and promote the role of women in implementation of the PoA and gender-based analysis in SALW control actions as a condition for their effectiveness.