

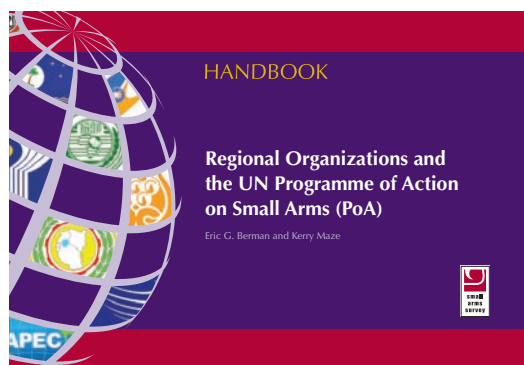
# Regional Organizations and the PoA

Countering the illicit trade in small arms lends itself to regional action. In many countries, small arms circulate widely beyond state control. That they are easy to conceal and light in weight facilitates their being transported across international borders. The cross-border demand for these weapons, attractive anticipated profits, and non-existent or ineffective national laws regulating brokering and trafficking of small arms across porous state lines, all call for regional approaches.

Having recognized the regional dimension of small arms trafficking, United Nations (UN) members have called on regional organizations (ROs) to be part of the solution. The UN Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (PoA), adopted in July 2001, called for states to take action at the national, regional, and global levels. The PoA highlights the positive role that ROs can play in implementing—and in providing support to their members to implement—the agreement.

Indeed, ROs have been addressing the problem of the illicit trade in small arms since the 1990s. The scope and scale of their activities has grown since the PoA was established, as has international interest in them.

ROs have much to offer in countering the illicit trade in small arms. They usually possess important expertise and a sound understanding of cultural and political contexts, priorities, and sensitivities. This knowledge, along with regional preferences for local solutions, positions them to detect early warning signs of burgeoning and escalating conflict, help build confidence,



The Regional Organizations and the PoA handbook provides more in-depth discussion, as well as detailed profiles of 52 regional organizations.

Table 1  
The Handbook's 52 profiled regional organizations\*

Africa (19)	AU	African Union
	CCPAC	Central African Police Chiefs Committee
	CEEAC	Economic Community of Central African States
	CEMAC	Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa
	CEN-SAD	Community of Sahel-Saharan States
	CEPGL	Economic Community of Great Lakes Countries
	COI	Indian Ocean Commission
	COMESA	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
	EAC	East African Community
	EAPCCO	Eastern Africa Police Chiefs Cooperation Organization
	ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
	ICGLR	International Conference on the Great Lakes Region
	IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
	MRU	Mano River Union
RECSA	Regional Centre on Small Arms in the Great Lakes Region, the Horn of Africa and Bordering States	
SADC	Southern African Development Community	
SARPPCO	Southern African Regional Police Chiefs Cooperation Organisation	
UMA	Arab Maghreb Union	
WAPCCO	West African Police Chiefs Committee	
The Americas (7)	AMERIPOL	Police Community of the Americas
	CAN	Andean Community
	CARICOM	Caribbean Community
	MERCOSUR	Southern Common Market
	OAS	Organization of American States
	SICA	Central American Integration System
	UNASUR	Union of South American Nations
Asia (13)	APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
	ASEAN	Association of South-east Asian Nations
	ASEANAPOL	ASEAN Chiefs of Police
	BIMSTEC	Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation
	CICA	Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia
	CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
	CSTO	Collective Security Treaty Organization
	EurAsEC	Eurasian Economic Community
	GCC	Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf
	GUAM	Organization for Democracy and Economic Development—GUAM
LAS	League of Arab States	
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation	
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organization	
Europe (10)	BSEC	Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation
	CU	Customs Union of Belarus, Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation
	EU	European Union
	EUROCONTROL	European Organization for the Safety of Air Navigation
	Europol	European Law Enforcement Agency
	NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
	OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
	RACVIAC	RACVIAC - Centre for Security Cooperation
RCC	Regional Cooperation Council	
SELEC	Southeast European Law Enforcement Centre	
Oceania (3)	OCO	Oceania Customs Organization
	PICP	Pacific Islands Chiefs of Police
	PIF	Pacific Islands Forum

Note: \* The table places some organizations with multi-regional memberships within a single geographic region so as to make other reference tools in the Handbook more user-friendly.

Source: Berman and Maze, 2012, p. 6

and serve as credible and effective mediators to reduce or resolve tensions. Certain ROs enable external donors to assist many states through a single project. Governments may also choose to work with an RO to provide assistance to a recipient, when it might otherwise be difficult to do so on a bilateral basis.

This *Research Note* summarizes the recent Small Arms Survey *Handbook*, titled *Regional Organizations and the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms (PoA)* (Berman and Maze, 2012). The *Handbook* identifies 52 ROs undertaking work relevant to the PoA (see Table 1) and provides two-page profiles on each of them (see Figure 1).

## Regional organizations: beyond 'the usual suspects'

The Survey adopted an inclusive approach to ROs. For the purposes of the study, an RO is comprised of

governments that join together formally to support common economic, political, or security concerns in a geographically defined area and whose members are expected to contribute regularly towards the body's operating costs and towards implementing its mandates.<sup>1</sup>

The 52 ROs include dozens of actors not previously on the 'PoA radar'.<sup>2</sup> Fewer than half have been routinely invited to participate in meetings under the PoA framework, have attended regional meetings convened by the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) since 2008, or are profiled on UNODA's PoA Implementation Support Service (PoA-ISS) website.<sup>3</sup> The Small Arms Survey does *not* suggest that *only* those ROs included in this study are 'PoA relevant'.


The ROs profiled have diverse mandates and memberships. Some are primarily concerned with facilitating trade and raising revenues. Others promote law and order or con-

centrate on regional security. Most have multiple mandates and agendas. The number of members among the 52 ROs profiled ranges from 3 to 56. ('Members' refers to 'full members' and not other categories, such as associates or observers.) Every UN member state except North Korea is a member of at least one of the profiled organizations. Many UN member states participate in six or more of those ROs identified.<sup>4</sup>

Financial resources among ROs also differ dramatically. Some have large offices and bureaucracies and can rely on regular member contributions to carry out their work and implement their mandates. Others rely on in-kind contributions from members (such as seconded staff) or rotating chairmanships without permanent secretariats and must continually seek support from external providers. When that support is not forthcoming or is delayed, projects can stall or be derailed.

Figure 1 Example of a regional organization's profile\*

Regional Organizations and the PoA



**Name**  
Regional Centre on Small Arms in the Great Lakes Region, the Horn of Africa and Bordering States (RECSA)

**Headquarters**  
Nairobi, Kenya

**Web site**  
www.recsasec.org

**Short description**  
RECSA's principle objective is to ensure the efficient and effective implementation of the Nairobi Declaration and Nairobi Protocol, which relate to the prevention, control, and reduction of illicit small arms.

**Membership**  
15 members (all UN member states)

**Notes**  
RECSA, created in 2005, has its origins with the Nairobi Declaration of March 2000, and the Nairobi Secretariat was created to assist its ten signatories to attain their objectives. Five countries have since joined: Seychelles (2004), Somalia (2005), Congo (2009), CAR (2011), and South Sudan (2011).

**Funding**  
Most of RECSA's funding comes from external donors, in particular (but not limited to) the EU, Japan, and the United States. For the year ending June 2010 RECSA members contributed less than 3 per cent of the organization's operating funds, with most dues-paying members being in arrears.

**Overlapping memberships with other ROs**  
RECSA members represent:

- 10 of 19 COMESA members (CAR, Congo, Somalia, South Sudan, and Tanzania are not COMESA members)
- 5 of 5 EAC members
- 12 of 12 EAPCCO members
- 9 of 11 ICGLR members (Angola and Zambia are not RECSA members)
- 8 of 8 IGAD members

**PoA POC**  
**Name:** Barbara Munube  
**Title:** Head of Legal Affairs

☎ +254-20-387-6203    ✉ bmunube@recsasec.org  
☎ +254-20-387-7397    🌐 A C D E F G P R S \*

**PoA-related activities**  
In March 2000 ten RECSA founding members signed the Nairobi Declaration to address the problems associated with the illicit trade in small arms in their region. In April 2004 these countries, together with the Seychelles, supplemented this political document with a legally binding document known as the Nairobi Protocol (which entered into force in May 2006). The Nairobi Declaration and Nairobi Protocol cover many of the same objectives covered within the PoA and several RECSA members' NFPs also serve as NFPs for the PoA. Although the Nairobi Protocol does not specifically call for national action plans, RECSA has assisted numerous members to develop them (as part of its wide-ranging Best Practice Guidelines) to help meet their commitments under both the Nairobi Protocol and the PoA. It has also convened a series of regional meetings (2005–09) to help its members harmonize their national small arms legislation with the objectives laid out under the Nairobi Protocol. RECSA has convened regional meetings to help counter the threat from MANPADS

Note: \* This profile, along with the 51 others in the *Handbook*, does not serve as an official position or document of the organization.

Source: Berman and Maze, 2012, pp. 50–51


## PoA commitments selected for review

The PoA does not limit the actions ROs may carry out to meet UN member states' commitments. The PoA speaks of actions its members might or should undertake at the national, regional, and global levels. The Survey recognizes that ROs may support all activities, but an effort to document every activity was deemed neither reasonable nor useful.

The *Handbook* examines 19 PoA activities that refer to ROs specifically or to regional-level action. Nine undertakings are outlined in Part II of the Programme. ROs have, at a minimum, an important role to play in helping member states meet their regional-level commitments (covered in UN, 2001, sec. II, paras. 24–31). These commitments do not specifically refer to ROs, except in the requirement for a point of contact (POC) (para. 24). One

global-level commitment (sec. II, para. 40)—cooperation with civil society—is also included, because the PoA explicitly refers to ROs in this regard. As part of the PoA's calls for international cooperation and assistance in Part III, the *Handbook* includes any activity in which ROs are specifically mentioned (UN, 2001, paras. 3–6, 8, 11, 14–16, and 18). Some of this cooperation and assistance covers regional-level commitments also covered in Part II activities.

Selecting which elements of the PoA to examine was easier than determining which activities are worth mentioning.

The *Handbook* aims to strike a balance between actively supporting implementation and providing a useful reference for ongoing use. For example, if the consultations in compiling the book impelled an RO to provide a POC, that RO is considered to have fulfilled its commitment and it was allocated a .<sup>5</sup> The *Handbook* does not differenti-

ate whether this person was *officially* 'designated' or 'appointed' (UN, 2001, II, para. 24).

In contrast, it is unhelpful to set the bar too low when reviewing most other commitments. In general, the acknowledgement of meeting commitments required habitual and sustained action.

## Some policy-relevant questions

The *Handbook* on which this *Note* is based is meant as a guide to provide useful information in a user-friendly format and to encourage discussion. Indeed, this study is more interested in moving the agenda forward and helping to implement the PoA than in highlighting its shortcomings. This report does not seek to evaluate the activities or effectiveness of ROs.

An RO 'awarded' more activity icons is not necessarily more effective

proliferation (in 2008) and to develop members' capacity to control small-arms-brokering activities (in 2009). Moreover, RECSA has raised funds to procure machines to mark members' small arms and trained members in how to use them. RECSA has routinely created space for civil society organizations to share their expertise with government officials.

### PoA-relevant cooperation with other ROs

RECSA's cooperation with other ROs is far ranging and long-standing. For example, it has provided marking machines and training on their use to the three ICGLR members that at the time were not RECSA members (although two have now joined RECSA). It has also shared lessons learned in this area with ECOWAS, the OAS, and SADC, and has provided machines to four ECOWAS members.

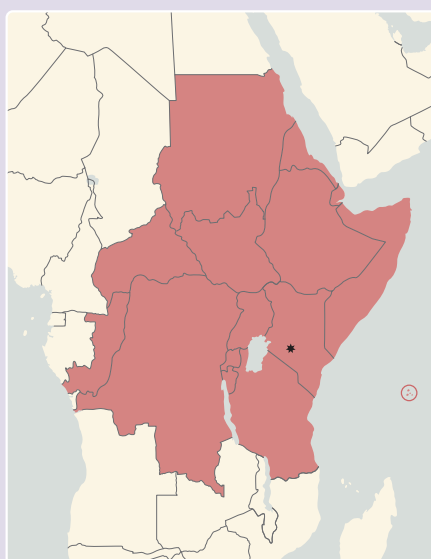
### Legally binding regional instruments

- Nairobi Protocol for the Prevention, Control and Reduction of Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa and Bordering States (2004)

### Other official documents of interest

- Nairobi Declaration on the Problem of the Proliferation of Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa (2000)
- *Best Practice Guidelines on the Implementation of the Nairobi Declaration and Nairobi Protocol* (2005); *Regional Harmonization of Legislation on Firearms and Ammunition* (2005); and *Practical Disarmament* (2011)

### PoA-related programmes and initiatives



- **Current members\***  
Burundi, CAR, Congo, DRC, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Seychelles, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda

**Bold:** founding member

- **Former members:** None

- **Membership pending:** None

\* Information accurate as of 16 May 2012

than another with fewer. Nor does an icon mean that the RO in question is necessarily credited with having successfully implemented that particular commitment. PoA wording such as 'encourage', 'cooperate', and 'strengthen' make determining which activities qualify for inclusion a challenge. Similarly, constructions such as 'where applicable' and 'should consider' create additional challenges when ROs have very different mandates, membership, and resources. The lack of an activity may reflect an organization's adherence to its mandate and objectives. Moreover, it may represent a clear-sighted unilateral decision or agreement to have a peer institution take the lead in certain areas, due to overlapping memberships, burden-sharing, or comparative advantages. Consequently, non-action can sometimes be viewed positively as cost-effective, avoidance of duplication of effort or battles over 'turf'. Certainly there are concrete examples of such cooperation and engagement, which have grown and strengthened in the past few years.<sup>6</sup>

Despite progress towards greater transparency and rationality in seeking and utilizing scarce resources, more can be done—and done better. As UN member states, ROs, and members of civil society move forward to implement the PoA, take stock of accomplishments and challenges over the past decade, and plan for the future, it would be useful to keep the following questions<sup>7</sup> in mind:

- Do the activities of the RO sometimes inadvertently replace or diminish a state's national-level action?
- Does donor support, whether proposed or requested, correspond to or follow up on established action plans?
- How can PoA meetings better engage ROs, including those focusing on counter-terrorism, customs, and narcotics?
- How can ROs that do not yet benefit from civil society participation be encouraged to do so? ■

## Sourcing

This *Research Note* is based on the new Small Arms Survey *Handbook* series volume *Regional Organizations and the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms (PoA)*, written by Eric G. Berman and Kerry Maze.

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## Notes

- 1 This definition, while inclusive, excludes some institutions and initiatives that undertake relevant work at the regional level (such as regional bodies in the UN system or international organizations, such as INTERPOL).
- 2 A few of the 52 have engaged in only a limited way on small arms issues, but are included because they have PoA-relevant instruments and structures or have stated their intention to work towards countering the illicit trafficking of small arms.
- 3 See <http://www.poa-iss.org/RegionalOrganizations/RegionalOrganizations.aspx>
- 4 Moreover, ten of these ROs include non-UN member states among their full members (Berman and Maze, 2012, p. 8).
- 5 Space constraints do not allow this *Note* to introduce and identify all the icons used in the *Handbook*. The icons are not meant to portray every possible activity covered in the corresponding text, but rather to identify visually, in a helpful manner, the main activity covered.
- 6 One such example is the 2008 informal agreement of NATO/NAMSA, OSCE, UNDP, and RCC/SEESAC to meet at least once a year to brief one another on their PoA-related projects.
- 7 The *Handbook* raises many more policy-relevant questions (see Berman and Maze, 2012, pp. 15–16).

## About the Small Arms Survey

The Small Arms Survey serves as the principal international source of public information on all aspects of small arms and armed violence, and as a resource centre for governments, policy-makers, researchers, and activists. In addition to Research Notes, the Survey distributes its findings through Occasional Papers, Special Reports, Working Papers, Issue Briefs, a Book Series, and its annual flagship publication, the *Small Arms Survey*.

The project has an international staff with expertise in security studies, political science, international public policy, law, economics, development studies, conflict resolution, sociology, and criminology, and works closely with a worldwide network of researchers and partners.

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Authors: Eric G. Berman and Kerry Maze

Copy-editing: Estelle Jobson

Design and layout: Richard Jones (rick@studioexile.com)

## Contact details

Small Arms Survey  
 Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies  
 47 Avenue Blanc  
 1202 Geneva  
 Switzerland

**t** +41 22 908 5777

**f** +41 22 732 2738

