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United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report provides an overview of the activities of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean from July 2020 to June 2021.

During the reporting period, the Centre undertook over 70 technical, legal and policy-related activities to support Latin American and Caribbean States, at their request, in the implementation of international instruments relating to conventional arms and weapons of mass destruction.

With a view to supporting the implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons, and the Arms Trade Treaty, the Centre provided technical training and assistance to some 4,500 national officials (2,559 women) of Member States. The support focused on the interdiction of weapons at entry and exit points, small arms tracing, crime scene investigative procedures, ammunition controls and conventional arms transfers, and on addressing the escalating incidence of small arms use and possession in school settings. In addition, the Centre supported Caribbean States in drawing up and adopting a Caribbean firearms road map to aid in preventing and combating illicit trafficking in small arms and ammunition in the subregion.

In line with General Assembly resolution [65/69](#) on women, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control, the Centre provided expertise to some 220 officials of national authorities from across the region on the incorporation of gender-responsive public policies and programming into small arms control initiatives.

* [A/76/50](#).



During the reporting period, legislative and capacity-building support was provided to 180 officials (70 women) to enhance their implementation of Security Council resolution [1540 \(2004\)](#) on preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery to non-State actors.

The Secretary-General expresses his gratitude to the Member States, in particular the host country, Peru, and other partners that supported the Centre's operation and programmes with financial and in-kind contributions, and calls upon those in a position to do so to make voluntary contributions to the Centre in order to sustain and further develop its activities in response to the increasing requests for assistance and cooperation by Member States in the region.

I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 75/77, the General Assembly reiterated its strong support for the role of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean in the promotion of peace, disarmament and development among its Member States, recognized that the Centre had an important role in the promotion and development of regional and subregional initiatives and encouraged the Centre to further develop activities in all countries of the region in the important areas of peace, disarmament and development, and to provide, upon request and in accordance with its mandate, support to Member States.

2. The General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit a report on the implementation of the resolution at its seventy-sixth session. In the present report, submitted pursuant to that request, the main activities carried out by the Centre from July 2020 to June 2021 are highlighted. A financial statement on the status of the trust fund for the Centre in 2020 is contained in the annex to the present report.

II. Function and mandate

3. The Centre, located in Lima, was established in 1987, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 41/60 J. It is mandated to provide, upon request, substantive support for the initiatives and other activities of the Member States in the region for the implementation of measures for peace and disarmament and for the promotion of economic and social development.

III. Main areas of activity

4. During the reporting period, the Centre undertook over 70 technical, legal and policy assistance and capacity-building activities, reaching some 4,500 authorities and partners in the region in support of their efforts to implement disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation instruments. The following paragraphs provide an overview of the Centre's main areas of activity. Further details are provided in subsequent sections.

5. As in past reporting periods and in keeping with requests for assistance from States, the majority of the Centre's support was focused on bolstering State implementation of international conventional arms instruments, such as the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons (International Tracing Instrument) and the Arms Trade Treaty.

6. To optimize and reinvigorate the implementation of these instruments, the Centre promoted the development and consolidation of subregional frameworks, which set regional goals to be implemented at the national level through comprehensive national action plans fully aligned with the obligations found in international instruments. The Caribbean Firearms Roadmap is comprised of holistic approaches applicable to the entire life cycle of small arms, and policies that address the scourge of illicit trafficking in small arms and ammunition.

7. The Centre continued to work with law enforcement agencies throughout the region on combating illicit trafficking and bolstering interdiction capacities through the delivery of specialized courses for X-ray scanner operators, control authorities working at official ports of entry and exit, and investigative units responsible for tracing and evidence management of arms used in criminal activities. Moreover,

specialized courses on the integration of gender perspectives in firearms investigations were imparted to several States of the region.

8. The Centre also engaged with national authorities responsible for the development of new laws and policies on small arms and light weapons to ensure that national legal frameworks were aligned with international obligations. Similarly, the Centre worked with national authorities to incorporate arms control measures into public policies in order to reduce the risk of armed violence against women and to keep arms out of educational centres across the region.

9. Throughout these activities, the Centre continued its efforts to promote the participation of women and youth in disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control initiatives, while commemorating the tenth anniversary of the adoption of General Assembly resolution 65/69 on women, disarmament, non-proliferation, and arms control and the first anniversary of Assembly resolution 74/64 on youth, disarmament and non-proliferation. The empowerment of women and youth is key to bolstering effective responses in the Latin American and Caribbean region.

10. In further efforts to reduce the risk of small arms and ammunition being diverted for illicit use, the Centre worked on enhancing the security of judicial facilities that store firearms evidence awaiting judicial processing.

11. Last, the Centre also assisted States with the implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction (Biological Weapons Convention) and worked with national authorities to develop a set of complementary legal regulations required to implement laws on weapons of mass destruction.

A. Disarmament that saves lives: supporting the implementation of firearms-related instruments

1. Bolstering implementation of the Caribbean Firearms Roadmap

12. The Centre is supporting the efforts of member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the Dominican Republic to prevent and combat the illicit proliferation of firearms and ammunition in the region through the accelerated implementation of the Roadmap for Implementing the Caribbean Priority Actions on the Illicit Proliferation of Firearms and Ammunition across the Caribbean in a Sustainable Manner by 2030. The Roadmap provides practical guidance to the 16 participating Caribbean States on implementing the main provisions of relevant regional and international instruments for a safer Caribbean.

13. During the reporting period, the Centre and the Implementation Agency for Crime and Security of CARICOM, as the main implementing partners for the Roadmap, held over 40 national encounters with States to support them in drafting their national action plans and to help secure technical support for their domestic implementation. The national action plans will aid States in mapping out their priorities and timelines for implementing the goals and actions stipulated in the Roadmap. The four goals are: (a) to reinforce regulatory frameworks governing firearms and ammunition; (b) to reduce the illicit flow of firearms and ammunition into, within and beyond the region; (c) to bolster law enforcement capacity to combat illicit firearms and ammunition trafficking and their illicit possession and misuse; and (d) to systematically decrease the risk of diversion of firearms and ammunition from government- and non-government-owned arsenals.

14. The Roadmap will also contribute to measuring progress in realizing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular target 16.4 of the Goals, which is aimed at significantly reducing illicit financial and arms flows by 2030.

15. The Roadmap has involved partnerships with key stakeholders and partners, including the Organization of American States, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the World Customs Organization and the Small Arms Survey. Furthermore, it has inspired the MERCOSUR Firearms Working Group to consider a similar initiative for its member States in the southern hemisphere.

2. Strengthening the legal framework of Haiti on firearms and ammunition control

16. The Centre responded to a request from Haiti to support the modernization of its national legal framework relating to firearms, parts, components, ammunitions and explosives. This issue, which is considered a priority by the current Government, addresses the first goal in the Roadmap (reinforce regulatory frameworks governing firearms and ammunition).

17. In partnership with UNDP, the Department of Peace Operations and the United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti, the Centre provided legal assistance through the preparation of a legal comparative study on weapons, ammunition and explosives. It also prepared a legal dictum containing recommendations on improving a bill on the manufacture, commercialization, possession, control and carrying of firearms, which was approved by the Senate in 2019. The timeline for this project runs from August 2020 to June 2021.

18. The assistance provided included the creation of a multisectoral legal task force, made up of representatives of the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Trade, the Armed Forces, the National Police, the General Customs Administration and the National Commission for Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration, which was tasked with drafting a decree on the issue. To assist the task force in fulfilling its mandate, the Centre lent additional technical-legal assistance in the form of a series of expert workshops. The process proved to be efficient, as the task force finalized the technical-legal drafting process in less than six months and delivered a presidential decree of over 50 pages in June 2021.

19. All project initiatives succeeded in supporting the efforts of the national authorities to align the country's legal framework with the provisions found in relevant international instruments on firearms and ammunition control in the best way possible, with the ultimate aim of reducing the risk of the illegal proliferation and diversion of weapons.

20. The new comprehensive draft decree is pending approval by the President.

3. Improving ammunition control and regulation

21. Legal frameworks on firearms and ammunition controls and regulations represent a key theme covered by the Centre in several countries throughout the Latin American and Caribbean region. During the reporting period, the Centre worked with both Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago on strengthening their efforts to prevent and combat illicit trafficking and diversion of firearms and ammunition, in line with the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and target 16.4 of the Goals, by enhancing their tracing techniques.

22. In coordination with the Jamaican authorities, the Centre spearheaded the creation of a new Firearms Tracing and Investigation Unit. Several consultative meetings on the establishment of this new unit were held with the national authorities from March to June 2021. The intended purpose of the unit is to coordinate and carry out investigations and tracing of illicit firearms recovered in the country. Bringing together all national firearms agencies working independently on these issues, such as the ballistics laboratory, the police, intelligence units, special investigations and the firearms licensing authority, will greatly facilitate linkages between and among firearms-related crimes and the interception and interdiction of firearms, parts and components.

23. A workshop was held in Jamaica in April 2021 to support such assistance and increase the knowledge of more than 20 ballistics experts, firearm technicians, police officers, laboratory directors and customs officials regarding existing national practices. Participants endeavoured to translate regional and global dialogues on the issue into practical action at the country level. Special presentations, delivered by the National Ballistics Intelligence Service of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives of the United States of America, were focused on best practices for tracing illicit firearms in order to boost the capacity of Jamaica to trace illicit firearms recovered from crime scenes to their last known legal owners. The Centre also invited INTERPOL to share its expertise on tracing its global firearms database of lost, stolen, trafficked or smuggled firearms and on the INTERPOL Illicit Arms Records and Tracing Management System (iARMS). Future members of the new unit are now better equipped to utilize a range of databases to trace recovered illicit firearms and initiate successful trafficking investigations.

24. A similar tracing workshop was held in Trinidad and Tobago for over 50 officials from the Police Service, the Forensic Science Centre, the Ministry of National Security and the Strategic Services Agency. Participants learned about the various strategies and platforms available for tracing illicit firearms and identifying illicit trafficking networks. The Centre subsequently showcased its newly developed serial number restoration course for 12 police laboratory technicians in March 2021. Despite its virtual nature, the course succeeded in making use of new easy-to-access technology concerning techniques for restoring and recovering serial numbers that have been obliterated from firearms submitted to the forensic laboratory for analysis.

25. The importance of increasing State capacity in restorative techniques cannot be stressed highly enough, given that the presence of serial numbers on firearms allows them to be effectively traced and is therefore a key element of successful trafficking investigations. Moreover, tracing and serial number restoration contributes to strengthening national efforts to prevent and combat illicit trafficking and the diversion of firearms and ammunition in line with the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, the International Tracing Instrument and target 16.4 of the Goals, and consequently prevent and reduce levels of armed violence in the country.

26. The Centre also carried out a pilot study on the way in which forensic ballistics can contribute to the timely generation of ballistics intelligence and greatly enhance investigations in the country. The study was based on ballistics fieldwork in the Caribbean from 2016 to 2020. During that period, the Centre documented the status of ballistics intelligence and firearms examination in Trinidad and Tobago specifically. As a result of the study, an efficient process was identified through which timely and actionable ballistics intelligence could be provided to police investigators within 24 hours of a shooting incident, as opposed to the four-year wait currently experienced by investigators.

27. While greater attention has been paid in recent years to the importance of tracing the ammunition identified as evidence at crime scenes, less attention has been paid to the way ammunition is regulated and the preventive measures needed to facilitate tracing processes. With a view to contributing to an informed dialogue on the matter, the Centre launched a study on how ammunition is currently traced in South America. The study provided a comparison of current ammunition control practices throughout the region with various instruments, standards, guidelines and practices adopted by the international community.

4. Building State capacity to detect illicitly trafficked weapons at entry and exit points

28. As part of efforts to build State capacity to better detect and identify weapons and ammunition being illicitly shipped through entry and exit points, including at ports and airports, as well as through courier and postal services and penitentiary services, the Centre provided eight training courses to 12 States in the region.

29. In Colombia (August 2020) and El Salvador (November 2020), over 68 screening officials were trained on state-of-the-art interdiction techniques, while in the Bahamas (March and May 2021), in collaboration with the Centre's partner, the World Customs Organization, an additional 39 screening operators honed their X-ray identification and detection techniques. The same course was provided in Chile (October 2020 and April 2021) for over 80 customs officials and was carried out in cooperation with the National Customs Service, within the specific context of supporting implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty.

30. Since the course could be delivered in a virtual format, in February 2021 the Centre was able to expand the training for the first time to a region-wide audience composed of officials from Argentina, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador and Peru who perform control and inspection functions at entry, exit and transit points in those countries. A second subregional edition of the interdiction course was delivered to officials in Barbados, Jamaica, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago (March 2021). The courses were provided in collaboration with UNODC, specifically the Airport Communication Project and the Container Control Programme.

31. The course's main training tool is an X-ray identification guide developed in collaboration with the Swiss-based Center for Adaptive Security Research and Applications. The guide contains descriptions and technical specifications of weapons and highlights innovative concealment methods being used by traffickers.

32. The theoretical segment of the course is complemented by virtual simulations of package interdictions, during which participants must identify parts and components of disassembled firearms and ammunition using online X-ray images. Information is also imparted on the proper sequencing of procedures when handling suspicious or illicit goods.

33. The images in the interdiction guide are used to populate an image library used by front-line operators, national agents and customs officials across the region to improve in-house visual threat detection at points of entry and exit.

34. The impact of the course was immediately apparent in the successful efforts of officials trained by the Centre to carry out seizures of weapons. For instance, in Medellín, Colombia, a trained customs official participated in the seizure of firearms and their parts being trafficked through the postal service on two different occasions in November 2020. In Paraguay, in July 2020, customs officials who had participated in the course confiscated a total of 644 firearm parts being trafficked and hidden in luggage and heaters at the country's largest airport.

5. Combating illicit trafficking in weapons, ammunition, parts and components

35. The transnational nature of illicit trafficking in weapons requires interventions at the country level, as well as bilateral and multilateral coordination efforts. An important step that must be taken by all States in the region is to improve coordination and cooperation among national small arms commissions, which should work together to address cross-border trafficking. To that end, as well as to devise a means of translating the provisions of relevant international instruments into practical activities, the Centre is developing a new and updated training course on preventing diversion and combating illicit trafficking in arms, ammunition, parts and components, to be provided at both the national and binational levels.

36. Components of this modular course were piloted in November 2020, within the framework of a binational firearms working group composed of Bolivian and Peruvian authorities. During the pilot, the authorities focused on how national arms control measures such as marking and tracing and ballistics intelligence could prevent cross-border trafficking of small arms and light weapons and how best to promote information management and sharing among the authorities of both States.

37. The course included content on the following: the modalities, routes and methods of concealing and detecting illicit firearms trafficking, as well as the recent trends in different subregions (Central America, the Andean region and the Southern Cone); illicit manufacturing; illicit brokering; control and documentation systems; border control and international cooperation; and intelligence and investigation tools. In parallel, the Centre is looking at ways of identifying reliable and updated information on the status of adoption and monitoring of indicator 16.4.2 of the Goals in Latin America and the Caribbean, and of detecting regulatory gaps and institutional challenges in its measurement.

6. A specialized approach to reducing diversion of arms and ammunition

38. The Centre has been supporting States in avoiding the diversion of weapons from stockpiles by providing training, practical tools and equipment to improve stockpile facilities for over a decade, with the long-term aim of combating illicit trafficking and reducing armed violence. However, it was not until the reporting period that the Centre delivered targeted assistance on reducing the risk of diversion through enhanced control of arms and ammunition held as evidence in judicial storage facilities.

39. Worldwide, it is recognized that State-owned storage facilities, including facilities where seized firearms or ammunition are safeguarded and serve as evidence in judicial processes, may be prone to loss, theft and robbery. This situation not only compromises the integrity of the evidence, affecting investigations and criminal justice processes, but also presents an imminent risk that the weapons will be diverted to criminal groups seeking to arm themselves illegally.

40. Within this context, a round table on the management of firearms and ammunition in judicial storage facilities was held in El Salvador in March 2021 to highlight the challenges, experiences and lessons learned regarding evidence management. The 30 specialists and technical staff participating in the event, from 11 States in the region (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico and Peru) increased their capacity to safeguard the storage of such evidence and duly register and control it in line with international standards such as the Modular Small-arms-control Implementation Compendium and the International Ammunition Technical Guidelines. These guidelines were heavily drawn upon in all presentations delivered by experts and technical staff from other States in the region, including Argentina and Costa Rica.

41. The Centre used the opportunity provided by the round table to stress the importance of putting in place specific regulatory frameworks, standardized processes, improved physical security and stockpile management infrastructure and better coordination between and among the institutions involved in the chain of custody, as well as better control and monitoring mechanisms to protect and preserve the stored evidence. Furthermore, the Centre called for ongoing training to be made available to law enforcement officials, mainly in the area of firearms identification.

42. Prior to the round table, El Salvador benefited from two training sessions in October 2020. The first, an introductory seminar, addressed the main types of firearms and ammunition, including their characteristics and technical specifications. The second, a virtual technical workshop, delved into the details of physical security and effective firearms and ammunition management applicable to judicial storage facilities, along with risk assessment and management and the importance of incorporating internationally accepted standards and guidelines into national standard operating procedures.

43. The overall objective of the training sessions was to prevent the risk of diversion of arms and ammunition stored in judicial facilities, but also to strengthen judicial investigation processes in relation to crimes involving firearms and ammunition. Storage is a fundamental piece in the chain of custody that ensures the preservation of evidence and improves the effectiveness of the criminal justice system in relation to firearms-related crimes. The sessions were complemented by a practical exercise in which participants applied the knowledge acquired during the workshop to simulations involving risk assessment and management.

44. As part of this assistance and in response to a request by the Ministry of National Defence of El Salvador for access to international standards to be incorporated into procedures and manuals currently under development in the country, the Centre drafted technical guidelines on the physical security and management of firearms and ammunition in judicial storage facilities. These guidelines were prepared in strict alignment with the international standards contained in the Modular Small-arms-control Implementation Compendium and the SaferGuard programme's International Ammunition Technical Guidelines, as well as good practices on the topic, and adapted to the specificities of these types of facilities. The development of guidance notes on firearms and ammunition management during the storage and custody stages of the chain of custody in judicial storage facilities was also completed during the reporting period.

45. With a view to promoting sustained national ownership over evidence management processes, the Centre procured and delivered various inventory management tools to national authorities (such as barcode readers, computers and safes for transport of evidence).

46. To culminate this fruitful project, a series of voluntary technical assessments of three judicial storage facilities will be carried out in El Salvador, taking into consideration matters relating to physical safety and security and the management and storage of future evidence in line with the Modular Small-arms-control Implementation Compendium and the International Ammunition Technical Guidelines, with the aim of reducing the risk of diversion of evidence stored in judicial facilities.

47. Thanks to recognition of the impact of these initiatives, the Centre received additional requests from Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago to hold similar round tables on physical security and stockpile management and weapons destruction during the second half of 2021.

7. Ending armed violence against women

48. It is well established that the theft and diversion of weapons contributes to a culture of violence and impunity. Cases of violence against women in the Latin American and Caribbean region are similarly faced with impunity and are often underreported.

49. During the reporting period, the Centre received numerous requests from States for assistance in building legal and technical capacity to combat firearms-related violence against women and in formulating public policies aimed at mitigating the risk. In response, the Centre devised a new online training programme on conducting firearms investigations from a gender perspective. The pilot course was delivered in Argentina in August 2020 and in Costa Rica in September 2020 to over 80 officials from the justice system (prosecutors, and judges and magistrates from national and provincial courts), as well as forensic experts and specialized police personnel in order to ensure a coordinated inter-institutional response to the scourge.

50. The course addressed aspects of criminal investigations and the way in which the gender perspective, as a method of analysis, contributes to formulating conclusions free from stereotypes and based on objective scientific or technical studies that are grounded in appropriate theory. Case studies highlighted the absence of a gender perspective in firearms investigations throughout the region and the violation of rights that this implies for both victims and their families.

51. The training highlighted that firearms are used not only to commit acts of violence against women (homicide weapons), but also as instruments to threaten, intimidate and coerce. Throughout the course, the need to appropriately handle the crime scene and firearms and ammunition as physical evidence in a gender-sensitive investigation of crimes against women was stressed, as well as the need to strengthen cooperation among all actors involved in the different stages of a judicial investigation. A coordinated approach contributes significantly to optimizing individual and collective efforts in tackling firearms-related crimes and to reducing impunity.

52. Given the current need to deliver all courses in a virtual format, the Centre made creative use of its e-platform to conduct the practical group exercises, in which participants applied the content covered in the classes to preservation of the crime scene, and to searching and prioritizing evidence from a gender perspective in order to formulate a preliminary criminal hypothesis.

53. Following the pilot course, officials from five countries in the region benefited from this training (Argentina and El Salvador in April 2021, Panama in May 2021 and Colombia and Honduras in June 2021). One of the greatest added values of the course is that it allows States to incorporate gender-based measures into firearms-related investigations and crime scene evidence management in a practical and field-based manner.

54. The Centre's toolkit for proactively incorporating a gender perspective into security and arms control policies includes its seminars on preventing violence against women. During the reporting period, these guided online discussions reached over 1,800 individuals in nine countries in the region (El Salvador and Peru in October 2020, Argentina in November 2020 and May 2021, Mexico in December 2020, Costa Rica and Guatemala in February 2021, Colombia and Panama in March 2021 and Honduras in April 2021).

55. The seminars presented information on topics ranging from an analysis of regional and global numbers on violence against women, with a focus on the use of firearms to kill, as well as to cause physical, sexual and psychological harm, to the findings of the Centre's normative study, in which it analyses the link between gender-

based violence regulations and small weapon regulations. At each seminar, the Centre invited experts to present a national perspective on issues relating to, inter alia, femicide, disaggregated data on gender-based violence, national awareness campaigns and the number of registered firearms and legitimate users. The presentations helped to shed light on the fact that the vast majority of owners of registered weapons are men. In some States, the rate is 98 per cent, thus revealing that firearms use is strongly associated with men.

56. The initiatives described above serve as a platform for the Centre to introduce arms control as a fundamental pillar of the public policy response to gender-based violence.

8. Raising awareness of firearms use and possession in schools

57. Violence against women is a major obstacle to the fulfilment of women's and girls' human rights and to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, as well as to the effective implementation of relevant international firearms instruments such as the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, General Assembly resolution 65/69 and arms control measures in general.

58. In line with target 16.2 of the Goals, which calls for an end to all forms of violence against children, and faced with the possibility that children would soon be returning to in-person classes at school, the Centre focused on implementing its programme to safeguard children in school settings during the reporting period.

59. The kit provided as part of the programme included campaign materials for disseminating the Centre's 2020 media monitoring study on the challenges of and responses to firearms use and possession in Latin American and Caribbean schools throughout the region in English, Portuguese and Spanish. The study analyses over 120 cases involving firearms in schools reported via digital media in countries across the region over the past decade, and represents the go-to study for authorities, experts and journalists interested in the topic.

60. An online seminar on firearms in schools held in July 2020 was attended by more than 120 people from 20 States, including representatives of the education, security, interior, defence and foreign affairs sectors, as well as United Nations entities, civil society organizations, specialists and members of the public interested in the topic. Experts probed the growing phenomenon across the region and urged States to develop specific responses and tools to ensure a comprehensive and coordinated approach. Above and beyond their most visible impacts (injuries and deaths), firearms in schools represent a serious obstacle to guaranteeing safe and violence-free learning spaces for boys, girls, adolescents and young people in the region.

61. Owing to the great interest shown by both Member States and partner organizations in the subject, the Centre joined forces with civil society organizations, such as Instituto Sou da Paz in Brazil (September 2020) and Instituto de Enseñanza para el Desarrollo Sostenible in Guatemala; national entities, including the ministries of education in Peru (October 2020) and Guatemala (November 2020); and regional organizations such as the Implementation Agency for Crime and Security of CARICOM (December 2020) to publicize the main findings of the media monitoring study and create a space for dialogue on possible solutions to the problem with representatives from different sectors. These activities reached over 560 people throughout the region. In each of the webinars, participants agreed on the importance of orientation guides and protocols to address incidents involving the presence and use of firearms in educational centres.

62. The Centre's long-term goal is to place the matter of schools as safe havens (free from armed violence) firmly on national and regional agendas in Latin America and the Caribbean. The study's recommendations can guide the educational sector in addressing and preventing the use and possession of firearms in schools and strengthening and updating strategies for violence prevention in schools in light of the gradual return to classrooms. A series of printed materials was shared region-wide with school communities to raise awareness of the problem, particularly among students, thus boosting their role as agents of change in society.

63. The Centre's work in this area is also closely aligned with the Secretary-General's disarmament agenda, *Securing Our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament*, the 2030 Agenda and Security Council resolution [2250 \(2015\)](#) on youth, peace and security.

9. Empowering youth to engage in disarmament issues

64. The #Youth4Disarmament Initiative, launched by the Office for Disarmament Affairs in 2019, connects young people with professional experts to learn about international security challenges and how to participate actively in tackling them.

65. The virtual conference organized by the Centre in December 2020 brought youth in the region closer to this initiative by introducing over 60 young people from Latin America and the Caribbean to the stories and reflections of women in the region who contribute to the global disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control agenda.

66. Young people participating in the event had the chance to listen to these women leaders discuss issues that ranged from the role of the scientific community in the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction to public policies aimed at reducing the use of conventional arms in contexts of youth violence.

67. The event formed part of a series of activities that the Centre carried out during the reporting period to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the adoption of General Assembly resolution [65/69](#) on women, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control and the first anniversary of the adoption of General Assembly resolution [74/64](#) on youth, disarmament and non-proliferation. Both resolutions recognize the valuable contributions that women and young people can make to advance the international disarmament agenda.

68. As part of these celebratory events, and in an effort to bring disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control issues closer to young people from the region and actively engage them in these issues, the Centre joined forces with the London-based student campaign Strategic Concept for Removal of Arms and Proliferation (SCRAP) to hold a webinar in May 2021 on the topic "Women implementing disarmament in Latin America and the Caribbean". Over 50 people participated in the webinar, the majority of whom were young people. The joint event was one of a series of webinars organized by SCRAP from February to May 2021 on the topic "Feminist leadership in disarmament".

69. In March 2021, the Centre took part in the Generation Equality Forum, a global meeting for gender equality convened by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and co-chaired by the Governments of France and Mexico, as part of a series of "Action Coalitions" aimed at driving investment and delivering tangible results for gender equality during the decade of action for the Sustainable Development Goals (2020–2030). The expert presentation delivered by the Centre called for strengthening links between the women and peace and security agenda and underlying agendas, such as those relating to youth, peace and security, and highlighted that the issue of arms control was central to all

development issues and would affect attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals, including those pertaining to gender equality, health and education.

70. Perhaps the most emblematic celebration of the Centre's efforts to promote regional implementation of General Assembly resolution 65/69 was the formal launch of the fourth edition of the Centre's well-known and pioneering *Forces of Change* publication.

71. The publication was officially launched within the framework of the Centre's virtual conference on the theme "Women forces of change", which was attended by over 100 representatives from the security, interior, defence and foreign relations sectors, as well as United Nations entities, civil society organizations, specialists and members of the public interested in this topic. The objective of the conference was to highlight the contributions, challenges and achievements of women in the region concerning disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control, and to provide different perspectives on strengthening women's participation in those areas.

72. The virtual conference served as a platform for women leaders to speak about their experiences on the path to eliminating nuclear weapons, the process of laying down of weapons as part of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace in Colombia, the cybersecurity challenges in the region and the work of civil society in Central America on arms control and violence prevention.

73. The stories of the 80 women featured in the publication are a contribution to the four pillars of the Secretary-General's disarmament agenda, namely: "disarmament to save humanity" (focused on weapons of mass destruction); "disarmament that saves lives" (calling for stricter control of conventional weapons); "disarmament for future generations" (examining the challenges posed by new technologies); and "strengthening partnerships for disarmament" (seeking to establish channels of cooperation between different sectors in support of disarmament).

B. Disarmament to save humanity: supporting the implementation of multilateral instruments relating to weapons of mass destruction

Strengthening national legal frameworks related to the Biological Weapons Convention

74. In the context of pillar 2 of the Secretary General's disarmament agenda, entitled "Disarmament to save humanity", the Centre is supporting States in implementing one of the pillar's subcategories, which is aimed at ensuring respect for norms against chemical and biological weapons.

75. In response to a request from the Government of Chile for assistance in bolstering its efforts to comply with its international obligations on the non-proliferation of biological weapons, the Centre lent legal and technical assistance to the Chilean authorities in charge of drafting the regulations for the law on the Biological Weapons Convention and the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction (Act No. 21.250).

76. Regular meetings were held with those national authorities on the aspects to be included, namely, establishing a licensing system for the legitimate use and international transfers of biological agents, defining best practices in biosafety and biosecurity, and developing and adopting a list of controlled biological agents and toxins.

77. In that context, the Centre organized an online biosafety and biosecurity workshop in November 2020 in collaboration with the Ministry of Defence of Chile

and with the technical support of the James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies. The workshop was aimed at 50 Chilean authorities responsible for drafting the national regulations for Act No. 21.250.

78. Collaboration with the secretariat of the Inter-American Committee against Terrorism of the Organization of American States was also undertaken to support the efforts of Chile.

79. During the reporting period, the Centre also collaborated with civil society in fostering regional discussions on the non-proliferation of delivery systems for weapons of mass destruction by participating in the virtual seminars on the role of The Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation in strengthening non-proliferation and disarmament in Latin America and the Caribbean organized by the Fondation pour la recherche stratégique in April and June 2021. The Centre presented the tools it has developed to strengthen the implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004). More than 90 representatives from 14 Latin American States attended the event to discuss needs and priorities for strengthening their legal and practical measures to prevent the proliferation of ballistic missiles in the region.

80. The Centre will continue to collaborate with its Member States and civil society in fostering dialogue on current and potential risks related to the proliferation of delivery systems for weapons of mass destruction.

IV. Staffing, financing and administration

A. Finances

81. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 41/60 J, the Centre was established on the basis of existing resources and voluntary contributions made by Member States and interested organizations for its core and programme activities. In 2020, voluntary contributions to the Centre's trust fund were received in the amount of \$2,741,500. The Secretary-General expresses his appreciation to the Government of Peru for the support it has provided in its capacity as host country to the Centre. The Secretary-General expresses his gratitude to the Centre's donors, the Governments of Germany, Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States for their financial support of activities pertaining to the Caribbean Firearms Roadmap. Likewise, the Secretary General thanks the ongoing support provided by the Governments of Canada and Sweden for activities pertaining to women, youth and disarmament. Those contributions, along with contributions from the European Union provided through the Conventional Arms, including Practical Disarmament Measures, Branch of the Office for Disarmament Affairs, enabled the Centre to continue to assist Member States in the region at their request throughout the reporting period. It is important to highlight the support received by the Centre during the reporting period from various trust funds, including the Arms Trade Treaty voluntary trust fund, the United Nations Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation and the Peacebuilding Fund, all of which enabled the Centre to engage with multiple United Nations stakeholders on the delivery of disarmament assistance.

82. The Secretary-General also expresses his appreciation to Guyana, Mexico and Panama for their financial contributions. He continues to encourage financial and in-kind contributions from Latin American and Caribbean States as a clear indication of the value that Member States place on the Centre's expertise and technical assistance.

83. The Secretary-General wishes to thank all States and partners for their generous contributions to and support for the Centre and encourages their ongoing support to ensure that the Centre can continue to provide technical and capacity-building assistance to Member States in the region, at their request, in fulfilment of its mandate. Information on the status of the Trust Fund for the Regional Centre for 2020 is contained in the annex to the present report.

B. Staffing and administration

84. The regular budget of the United Nations funds the posts of one Senior Political Affairs Officer/Director of the Centre (P-5), one Political Affairs Officer (P-3) and one General Services staff member (G-7 Local level).

85. Project personnel posts are funded exclusively through voluntary contributions. The Centre recruited additional programme managers, technical advisers for its conventional arms and non-proliferation programmes, as well as international advisers to lead the Centre's women and security programme. The Centre's gender balance stands at 67 per cent women and 33 per cent men. It is important to note that five of the seven senior positions at the Centre are occupied by women. The Centre continued to focus efforts to develop innovative virtual capacity-building tools in response to travel restrictions imposed as a result of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

86. It is important to highlight that a four-person communication team, led by the Political Affairs Officer, was created in keeping with the virtualization of assistance and outreach activities brought on by the COVID-19 crisis.

87. In addition, eight interns and one United Nations Volunteer supported the Centre with the implementation of projects and with the translation of communication and public relations material.

V. Conclusion

88. The Centre undertook more than 70 substantive activities to support States in their implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, the International Tracing Instrument, the Arms Trade Treaty, the Biological Weapons Convention, and General Assembly resolution 65/69, among others. Most of the activities were also focused on supporting the implementation of the first subregional firearms roadmap (Caribbean region).

89. The Centre continued to expand its technical assistance in areas ranging from weapons identification techniques to facilitate interdictions and seizures of illicit arms to technical assistance to enhance the physical safety and security of judicial storage facilities with a view to preventing diversion and reducing impunity. The Centre also collaborated with law enforcement authorities to facilitate investigations and intelligence-gathering by enhancing tracing and evidence management of firearms involved in illicit acts. States received support in incorporating arms control measures into public policies to reduce the risk of armed violence against women. Empowering women and youth to play an active role in disarmament and non-proliferation was also a priority throughout the reporting period. Last, the Centre continued to support States in strengthening their national frameworks to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction through the provision of legal assistance related to the Biological Weapons Convention.

90. The Secretary-General reiterates his call to Member States and other partners in a position to do so to provide the Centre with the financial and in-kind support, including direct financial contributions from Latin American and Caribbean States, necessary for it to continue to carry out its mandate effectively and serve the needs of Member States in the region. The Secretary-General also encourages States to continue to fully utilize the Centre's expertise and experience in their joint efforts to promote peace and security and implement the 2030 Agenda in the region.

Annex

Status of the trust fund for the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean for 2020

(United States dollars)

Accumulated surplus, 1 January 2020	1 749 483
Revenue	
Voluntary contributions ^a	2 741 500
Other transfers and allocations	40 000
Other revenue	14 125
Investment revenue	39 650
Total revenue	2 835 275
Less: Expenses and refunds	
Operating expenses	1 211 787
Refunds ^b	93 431
Total expenses and refunds	1 305 218
Surplus/deficit for the year 2020	1 530 057
Accumulated surplus/deficit as at 31 December 2020	3 279 540

^a Consists of voluntary monetary contributions from Germany \$1,377,504, Mexico \$5,000, Panama \$4,000, Peru \$17,614, Sweden \$164,204, United States of America \$1,173,178, and United Nations Development Programme \$40,000.

^b Consists of refunds to Canada \$5,902, Germany \$22,519, Sweden \$1,903, United States of America \$50,688, and Arms Trade Treaty voluntary trust fund \$12,419.