



The PoA: Review of National Reports

In July 2001 UN member states embarked on a wide-ranging series of commitments—at the national, regional, and global levels—to address the problem of small arms proliferation and misuse. The framework agreement is known as the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (PoA). Since the adoption of the PoA, more than 80 per cent of UN member states have submitted at least one PoA national report on their implementation of the instrument, even though this undertaking is voluntary.¹ Many of these reports provide inadequate or ambiguous information, however.

This *Research Note* reviews the state of national PoA reporting through December 2011 and discusses the need to improve on current practice as states prepare for the Second UN Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the PoA—known as the Second Review Conference—which will take place in August–September 2012.²

From the adoption of the PoA until 31 December 2011, 158 member states submitted 604 reports and 35 member states did not submit any reports (UN PoA-ISS, n.d.).³ Of the states that have reported, more than half have issued four or fewer reports (see Figure 1). The lack of reporting is especially pronounced in Oceania and parts of the Americas (see Figure 2 and Table 1). A failure to report well or at all does not necessarily imply that a state has failed to implement the PoA or pursue its objectives. Anecdotal evidence, including statements made by states during plenary sessions of biennial and other meetings, indicates that a great deal of implementation activity is taking place. However, the dearth of comprehensive, detailed reports on such efforts makes it difficult to analyse or assess overall progress.

One of the challenges regarding the analysis of reports is the timeliness of submissions. Agreement to report on PoA implementation on a biennial basis was formalized in the outcome document of the Fourth Biennial Meeting of

Figure 1 Number of reports submitted by UN member states, 2002-2011

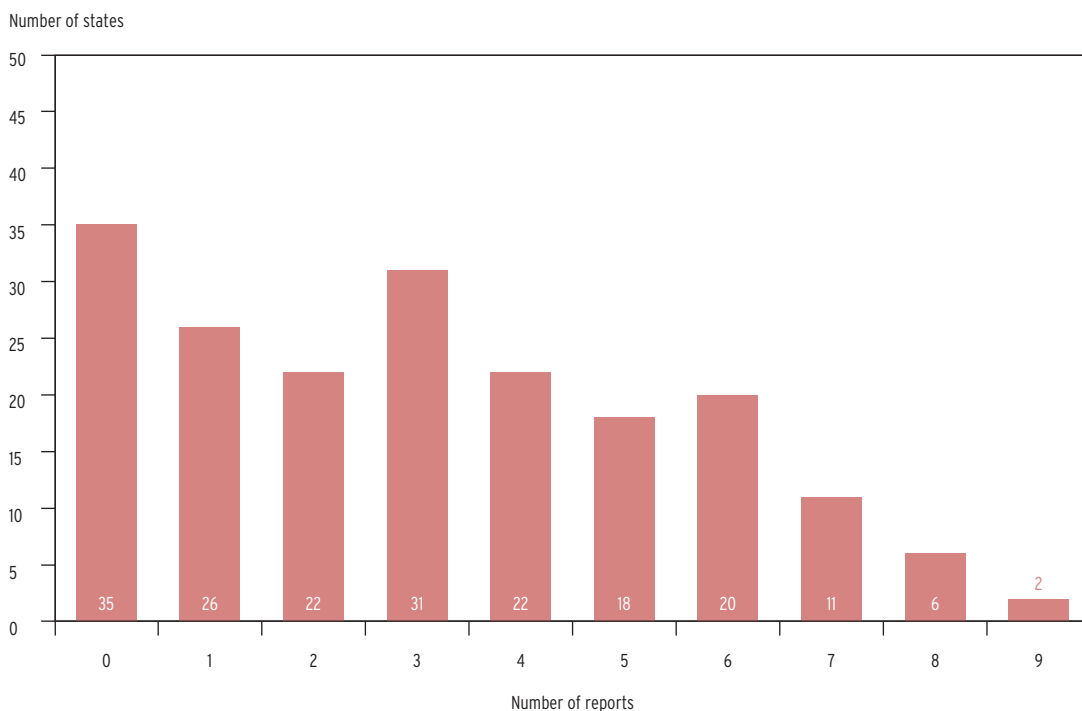
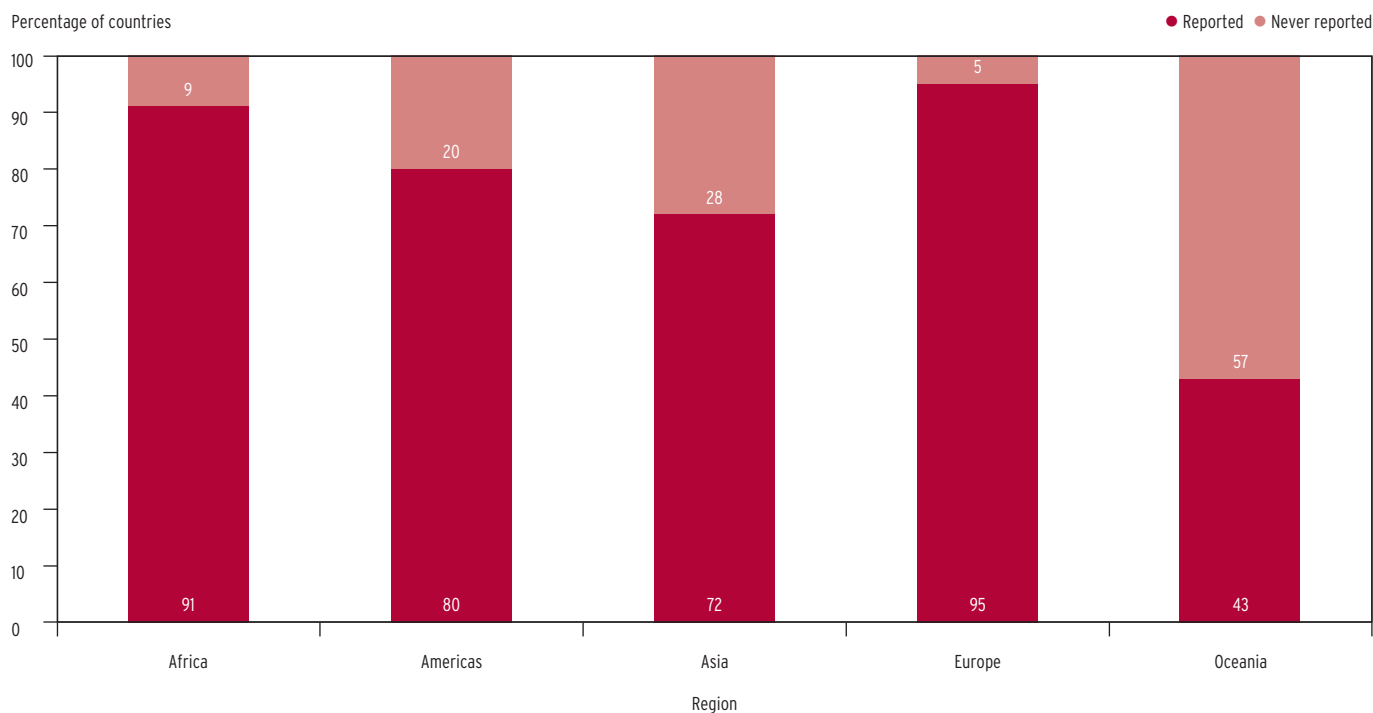


Figure 2 Overall reporting by region, 2002-2011



States (BMS₄) in 2010 (UNGA, 2010, para. 38).⁴ In recent years states have been encouraged to submit reports on implementation of the PoA and the International Tracing Instrument (ITI)⁵ well in advance of a BMS or review conference, to enable the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) to collate and circulate the information, including to the chair designate, prior to the upcoming meeting. Most recently, states were encouraged to submit national reports on PoA and ITI implementation ‘in advance of the convening of the preparatory committee but, to the extent possible, by the end of 2011’ (UNGA, 2011, para. 9). Few states heeded the request, however, with only eight states submitting their

2012 national reports to UNODA by 31 December 2011 (see Figure 2).⁶

National reports are potentially very useful and, for some states, serve as the only source of information on PoA implementation. The submission process provides states with a critical opportunity to document what they have done and plan to do to implement their commitments under the PoA. It also allows states to flag what has worked well and—just as importantly—not so well. These reports subsequently facilitate efforts to match needs with resources and help avoid duplication.⁷ It is not clear, however, how donors have used this information.

Over the years, UNODA and others have developed templates to assist

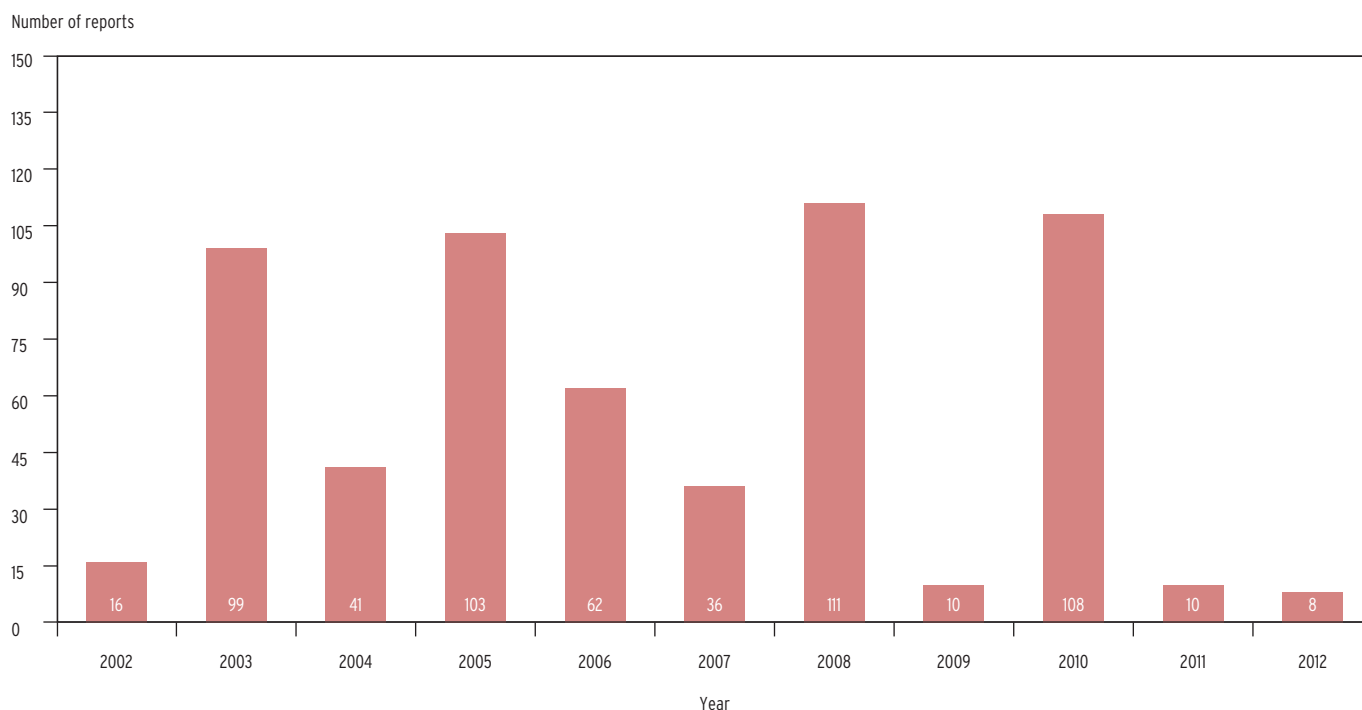
states in their PoA and ITI reporting. Mirroring PoA language, the original template relied on open-ended questions that left it to states’ discretion to include as much or as little information as they chose, making it difficult to compare reports. UNODA revised the template in 2010 to combine user-friendliness with increased analytical value, and to integrate the new International Tracing Instrument. The new template includes more closed questions—the aim being to make it easier for states to report well and for the information they provide to be compared and analysed. States may access and submit the new form online.

Assessments of these reports should be improved. Early studies conducted

Table 1 Number of states reporting per region, by number of submitted national reports

No. of reports	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Total
Africa	5	14	8	13	4	6	3	1	0	0	54
Americas	7	5	4	6	2	5	3	2	1	0	35
Asia	13	4	6	8	9	4	3	0	0	0	47
Europe	2	1	2	4	7	3	10	8	5	1	43
Oceania	8	2	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	14
	35	26	22	31	22	18	20	11	6	2	193

Figure 3 National reports submitted by 31 December 2011, by year*



Note: * This graph shows the number of reports per year as classified by the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs.

by the UN Institute for Disarmament Research, together with partners, provided useful statistics on states' reporting and broad descriptions of implementation activities.⁸ Subsequent studies have updated these statistical analyses and provided greater detail on national practices, with a focus on themes covered at BMS₃ and BMS₄.⁹ However, this research did not seek to verify the accuracy of submitted information or to assess the effectiveness of reported implementation activities.

By 2010, states were calling for a thorough evaluation of implementation efforts. Specifically, in the BMS₄ outcome document, states 'recognized the need for a comprehensive assessment of progress in the implementation of the Programme of Action, 10 years following its adoption, as an input for the 2012 Review Conference' (UNGA, 2010, para. 40). The Small Arms Survey launched the PoA Implementation Monitor (PoAIM) project in March 2011 in response to that need. The PoAIM objectives are twofold: first, to assess the implementation of

the PoA via reviews of national reports and other primary sources, such as national legislation and regional initiatives, and, second, to evaluate the PoA's effectiveness and impact. Support from states and regional organizations will facilitate this undertaking.

The Second Review Conference provides an opportunity to take stock of implementation efforts thus far and to plan the next stage of the PoA process. States could consider making improvements to reporting, such as by working to enhance the quality and comparability of provided information. The new reporting template developed by UNODA already represents one step in this direction. ■

Sourcing

This *Research Note* was written by Eric G. Berman and Sarah Parker. For additional information about PoA reporting, please visit <<http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/?international>>.

Notes

- 1 The PoA 'request[s] the Secretary-General of the United Nations, within existing resources, through the Department for

Disarmament Affairs, to collate and circulate data and information provided by States on a voluntary basis and including national reports, on implementation by those States of the Programme of Action' (UNGA, 2001, para. II.33). The Department for Disarmament Affairs subsequently became the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs.

- 2 This *Research Note* is based on Parker (2011).
- 3 The 35 countries are Afghanistan, Bahamas, Belize, Bhutan, Brunei Darussalam, Cape Verde, Comoros, Dominica, Kiribati, Kuwait, Laos, Maldives, Micronesia, Mongolia, Montenegro, Myanmar, Nauru, Nepal, North Korea, Palau, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Seychelles, Singapore, Somalia, South Sudan (which only became a UN member state in July 2011), Suriname, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu, Uzbekistan, and Vanuatu.
- 4 Prior to this, states were invited to submit annual national reports on PoA implementation, although the PoA does not specify the frequency of reporting and, in practice, most states submitted reports on a biennial basis (see Figure 2). In contrast, the International Tracing Instrument specifies that states are to report on its implementation on a biennial basis (UNGA, 2005, para. 36).
- 5 The International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons was adopted by the UN General Assembly on 8 December 2005.

- It commits states to undertake a number of measures to ensure the adequate marking and record-keeping of small arms and light weapons, and to strengthen cooperation in the tracing of firearms. States may submit one integrated report on implementation of the PoA and ITI. For more information, see Parker (2011, p. 46).
- 6 The eight states are Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, Luxembourg, the Russian Federation, South Korea, and Switzerland (UN PoA-ISS, n.d.).
 - 7 See, for example, UN PoA-ISS (2011) and Maze (2009; 2010).
 - 8 See Kytömäki and Yankey-Wayne (2004; 2006).
 - 9 See Cattaneo and Parker (2008); Parker (2011).

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