Forum:	**General Assembly 1st Committee**
Question of:	**Addressing the growing violence by use of fire arms (in MEDCs)**
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Please be advised that this topic covers things like murder, mass killings, self-harm and suicide.

I. Description of the Issue

The growing amount of violence from the use of firearms in More Economically Developed Countries (MEDCs) has become a highly concerning topic for international organisations, governments and the civilian population. Firearm violence is very often associated with currently developing regions or conflict zones, however in recent years it has become increasingly clear that MEDCs are also heavily affected by firearm related crimes, including but not limited to, homicides, mass shootings, gang violence and terrorist attacks.

This issue concerns itself with the availability, regulation, ownership and misuse of firearms within MEDCs. While some countries continue having strict gun control laws and thus experience relatively low rates of firearm related crimes, other countries have much more relaxed firearm laws and face much higher levels of gun violence and gun related deaths.

This Debate focuses on balancing civil security and the reduction of firearm accessibility with the protection of national sovereignty, traditional values and legal rights to gun ownership. Delegates are expected to discuss international cooperation, prevention of firearm trafficking, responsible ownership of firearms, law enforcement measures, mental health initiatives and educational programs.

Being responsible for international peace and security, the UN plays a very important role in promoting cooperation between states and encouraging measures to reduce firearm related violence across the globe.

II. Definition of Key Terms

Firearm

A portable weapon that utilises an explosive force for the propulsion of a projectile at high speeds.

Gun Violence

The use of firearms to either threaten, injure or kill individuals, including homicide, assault, terrorism and suicide.

More Economically Developed Countries (MEDCs)

Nations characterised by high levels on industrialisation, advanced infrastructure, high standards of living and a developed economy. (e.g. UK, Germany, France)

Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW)

Weapons that are specifically designed for use by individuals or small groups, including pistols, revolvers, rifles, assault rifles and submachine guns.

Illicit Arms Trafficking

The Illegal trade and transfer of firearms often across international borders.

Mass Shooting

An incident characterised by the shooting of multiple individuals during one singular event, these incidents often occur in public spaces.

Gun Control

Government policies and laws regulating the purchase, ownership, possession, storage and use of firearms.

UN Programme of Action (PoA)
A United Nations framework adopted in 2001 aimed at preventing, combating and eradicating the illegal trade of SALW.

Intergovernmental Organisation (IGO)
An organisation composed mainly of multiple sovereign states, such as the United Nations, Interpol and the European Union

Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO)
An independent organisation operating outside any government structures, such as Amnesty International, or the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA).

INTERPOL
An international organisation that facilitates cooperation between police forces in 196 member nations to combat international crime, including illegal firearm trafficking, organised crime and terrorism. INTERPOL only supports information gathering and sharing and coordination but does not conduct arrests itself.

III. Background information

Firearm violence in MEDCs is a very large and multifaceted issue that can affect civilian safety, healthcare systems, economic development and national security. Even though MEDCs usually have more stable Governments, stronger law enforcement and higher living standards, gun violence remains a challenge. The cause of this violence varies drastically between Nations, making it very difficult to come up with a singular solution that helps universally. Different from countries in a state of conflict or war, gun violence in MEDCs usually takes place within civilian population and is often connected with criminal activity, domestic violence, ideological extremism and misuse of legally or illegally acquired firearms. Governments must focus on balancing public safety with individual rights and legal frameworks regarding ownership of firearms.

According to estimates by the Small Arms Survey, there exist more than one billion firearms in circulation worldwide with approximately 857 million being civilian owned firearms. A very significant portion are concentrated in MEDCs, particularly the United States of America, which possess roughly one third of the world's civilian owned firearms despite only accounting for around four percent of the global population. Widespread availability of firearms increases the likelihood that conflicts, criminality or personal crises can result in violent and often fatal outcomes. Studies have consistently shown that firearms drastically increase the lethality of incidents compared to other weapons mainly due to the capability of causing very severe injuries over long distances.

Gun violence is not limited to just mass shootings, which often receive much more media attention. It includes a very broad range of incidents that all contribute to the impact of the issue. In many countries, firearms are used in murders, armed robberies, gang activity and organized crime. Criminal organisations often rely on firearms to protect illicit businesses and enforcing territorial control. Gang violence has become a drastic issue in European countries such as France, Belgium and even Sweden, where criminal organisations are using firearms mainly for drug trafficking and organised crimes. These incidents mainly occur in rural areas and affect many younger people. Mass shootings are incidents in which multiple individuals are injured or killed during a singular event. These attacks often occur in schools, workplaces, places of worship, shoping centres or other public spaces. Although they are statistically rare compared to the other forms of gun violence, mass shootings often attract much more public attention due to their devastating consequences and often widespread media coverage. Due to this they also spark debates regarding firearm access, more extensive background checks and public security measures. Firearms also play a significant role in domestic violence cases. Research has shown that the presence of a firearm in a household can increase the chance that domestic abuse will lead to death. Victims of domestic abuse also face greater difficulties when trying to escape abusive relationships when the partner has access to one or multiple firearms. Due to this many governments have introduced laws that restrict firearm ownership for people who have been convicted of domestic violence cases. An often-overlooked aspect of firearm violence is suicide. In multiple developed countries suicides account for a very substantial proportion, sometimes even a majority of firearm related deaths. Firearms are especially dangerous in this context as they have a much higher fatality rate compared to other

methods of self-harm. This is why mental health professionals emphasise that reduction of access to lethal means during periods of crisis can significantly lower suicide rates. Often discussions of firearm violence include mental health services and crisis intervention programs.

Firearm violence causes high financial burdens on governments and societies. Healthcare systems must provide treatment, emergency surgeries, rehab services and long-term medical care for victims. Law enforcement agencies must use significant resources to investigations and criminal prosecutions. Businesses may face lower investment if they are in areas that are considered unsafe, while governments might have to allocate additional funding toward security infrastructure or public safety initiatives. In total firearm violence can cost billions of dollars annually.

In total Firearm violence remains one of the most significant security challenges that many MEDCs face. It results in hundreds of thousands of deaths and injuries, places heavy restrictions on healthcare systems and law enforcement and undermines the public confidence in government institutions. While Nations differ in legal traditions, cultural manners and approaches to gun ownership, the international community has a common interest in reducing easily preventable deaths, combating illegal trafficking and promoting safer public life. The challenge for the First Committee of the General Assembly is therefore to find policies that respect national sovereignty but also encourage international cooperation to reduce the problem of firearm violence.

IV. Major Countries and Organizations Involved

United States of America

The United States is a stark contrast to other MEDCs due to very high gun ownership and constitutional protections. It possesses the largest civilian owned firearm population and experiences significant firearm related violence.

United Kingdom of Great Britian and Northern Ireland

After the 1996 Dunblane school massacre, the United Kingdom enacted some of the world's strictest gun laws. They banned almost all handguns, due to this gun violence remains very low and the government heavily focuses on stopping illegal imports of guns.

Australia

Australia has implemented the National Firearms Agreement in 1996, after a mass shooting in Port Arthur, which bans rapid-fire long guns. They also bought back more than six hundred thousand weapons.

New Zealand

After the 2019 Christchurch mosque shootings, the nation immediately banned most semi-automatic firearms, assault rifles and high-capacity magazines and established a national registry to track all firearms.

United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA)

The UNODA coordinates global efforts for reducing gun violence through international laws, tracking of weapons and the financing of safety projects.

INTERPOL

Through the INTERPOL Illicit Arms Records and Tracing Management System (iARMS), the international organisation helps law enforcement in MEDCs report and track lost, stolen or trafficked firearms globally.

The European Union (EU)

The EU enforces the EU Firearms Directive, which sets strict unified standards for firearm purchase and ownership across the member states including rules for the sale of firearms online.

Amnesty International

Amnesty International Campaigns extensively for much stricter gun laws across the globe, framing gun violence as a direct threat to the fundamental human right to life.

V. Timeline of events

Year	Event	Importance
1990	UN Congress on the Prevention of Crime highlights illicit firearms trafficking.	One of the first international discussions focusing on the dangers caused by illegal firearms.
1995	Adoption of the UN Guidelines for International Arms Transfers	One of the first UN efforts to establish standards for responsible firearm transfers.
1997	Adoption of the Inter-American Convention Against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms (CIFTA)	This was the first legally binding regional agreement addressing illicit firearms trafficking.
2000	Adoption of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Crime (UNTOC)	An international framework for combating organised crime, including illegal firearm trafficking.
2001	Adoption of the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons (PoA)	The primary UN framework meant for preventing, combating and even eradicating the illegal trade of small firearms and light weapons.
2001	Adoption of the Firearms Protocol	Addition to the UNTOC by establishing new international standards for firearm marking, tracing and export control.
2005	International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons (ITI) adoped by the United Nations	Improved International cooperation for tracing illegal firearms.
2006	First Biennial Meeting of States on the Program of Action (PoA)	Member States can review progress and coordinate further action against illegal firearm trafficking.
2011	Tenth Anniversary Review	Evaluated

	Conference of the PoA	implementation efforts and highlighted remaining challenges.
2013	UN General Assembly adopts the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT)	First legally binding global treaty regulating the international transfer of weapons.
2014	Arms Trade Treaty enters into force	States became legally bound by the ATT provisions after ratification.
2015	Sustainable Development Goals adopted (SDG 16)	Included targets to reduce violence, illicit arms flows and organised crime worldwide.
2018	Third UN Conference to Review Progress on the PoA	Reaffirmed international commitments to prevent illegal arms trafficking.
2022	Eighth Biennial Meeting of States on the PoA (BMS8)	Focused on newly emerging challenges such as illegal online firearm trafficking as well as new technologies.
2024	Fourth UN Review Conference of the Programme of Action (RevCon4)	Member States assessed progress and discussed the strengthening international cooperation to combat illegal firearms and armed violence.

VI. Previous attempts to solve the issue and why they failed

United Nations Programme of Action

The Programme of Action was adopted to combat and eradicate the illegal trade of SALW through international cooperation and national legislation. But since the PoA is not legally binding not every Member State is actively doing something. Furthermore, the actual implementation varies between countries and many states lack the resources to fully enforce its recommendations

Arms Trade Treaty

The ATT regulates the international trade of conventional weapons and aims to prevent firearm trades that could help with human rights abuses, terrorism and organised crime. Many major arms producing and arms importing states have not fully committed to the treaty, the enforcement mechanisms are relatively weak and illegal arms markets operate outside legal channels anyways and therefore bypass the regulations of the treaty.

European Firearms Directive

The European Union strengthened firearm regulations and unified standards across Europe. However, the directive only applies to the EU and cannot combat global networks, differences in implementation still exist between member states and organised crime groups continue to exploit loopholes or smuggling routes.

VII. Possible solutions

Strengthening International Cooperation

You could improve intelligence sharing and cooperation between states by, for example, using INTERPOL as a preexisting framework. Furthermore, creating international databases for tracing of firearms could help.

Promoting Responsible Firearm Ownership

Licensing systems, background checks, safe storage requirements and firearm handling training can help reduce firearm violence from registered and legally acquired firearms.

Addressing Root Causes

Investing into educational and youth programs or gang prevention initiatives could curb the issues stemming from organised crime. Furthermore, increasing mental health support would help people going through personal crisis.

Technological Solutions

Researching smart gun technologies or implementing improved firearm registration databases can help as well.

VIII. How to prepare as a delegate

Delegates in this Committee should research the firearm legislation in their respective nation, national statistics regarding firearm violence, the country's position on gun ownership, preexisting policies regarding arms trafficking and relevant UN resolutions or treaties. You should also identify regional allies, for example the EU, countries that might have similar policies regarding firearms, potential nations that are against your opinion and previous voting records of your nation.

Every Delegate is obligated to write at least **one Draft Resolution** and a minimum of **two Position Papers** to cover all topics within the committee. The **deadline** for submissions is the 27th of August. Any documents submitted after the deadline will not be corrected by the Student Officers and will not be considered when deciding on awards. At the end of the conference the best delegate, the most distinguished delegate and the best first timer will receive an award which these documents count towards as well.

IX. UN resolutions

Resolution A/RES/77/71 (The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects)

Resolution A/RES/80/36 (Assistance to States for curbing the illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons and collecting them)

X. Useful links

What is the Arms Trade Treaty? (Oxford Academic, YouTube)

What is the UN Programme of Action? (UNODA)

XI. Sources

United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA)

United Nations Programme of Action (PoA)

Arms Trade Treaty Secretariat (ATT)

INTERPOL Firearms Programme

EU Firearms Directive (European Commision)

Several Publications from Countries, such as the United Kingdom, Australia and the United States of America