



EUROPEAN UNION

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EU Statement on Measures to Prevent Uncontrolled Spread of Small Arms and Light Weapons

The European Union and its Member States warmly welcome the speakers to the Forum for Security Co-operation and thank them for their insightful presentations. We commend the Russian FSC Chairmanship for putting this timely and pertinent topic on the FSC agenda.

The diversion, illicit trade and unauthorised use of Small Arms and Light Weapons constitute serious impediments for peace, security, growth and development in many parts of the world. The European Union and its Member States are fully committed to the implementation of the OSCE Plan of Action and remain strong supporters of the UN Programme of Action which provides a valid and effective strategy to fight against the illicit trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons and a global forum to share and develop further action at national, regional and international levels. The International Tracing Instrument (ITI) is one of the most important practical achievements of the PoA. The upcoming Review Conference of the UN Programme of Action will provide a unique opportunity to make progress in the fight against the illicit trade in SALW by reinforcing UN member states' commitment and examining the possibilities for a better operationalisation of the PoA.

The EU remains committed to continuing its support to the fight against the illicit trade in SALW, in line with the EU SALW Strategy. Since its inception in 2005 important developments have had an impact on how we consider the SALW-issue, in particular the increase in terrorist attacks in Europe and the entry into force of the Arms Trade Treaty. Hence, following the EU Global Strategy published in 2016 and as part of its operationalisation, the EU SALW Strategy is now under review.

The main aim of the EU policy is to prevent the diversion and trafficking of small arms, light weapons and ammunition. In the same vein, illicit arms trafficking by sea is a matter of utmost importance within the EU, as demonstrated by the tabling of an FSC Draft Decision on the “Prevention of illicit trafficking of SALW and/or ammunitions by sea” by several EU Member States.

The EU and its Member States provide considerable assistance to third countries in pursuit of the goal to mitigate the risk that SALW get diverted and end up in wrong hands contributing to crime and terrorism. This includes arms control activities in the wider Western Balkan region in cooperation with SEESAC as well as a planned project in support of OSCE activities against the illicit trafficking and excessive accumulation of SALW and conventional ammunition. In addition, most recently, a Council Decision in support of the UN Programme of Action was adopted by the Ministers of the 28 EU Member States to support practical actions to achieve a successful and relevant outcome at the Third Review Conference in 2018. An overview of all SALW-control actions that are supported by the EU can be found in the yearly progress reports that are published on the website of the EEAS¹.

Furthermore, on 25 April 2017, the Ministers of the 28 EU Member States adopted the new Firearms Directive which provides for more rigorous controls on the acquisition and possession of weapons, in particular to prevent its abuse by criminal groups and terrorists. The revised directive strengthens the rules on the marking of firearms and improves the traceability of firearms used in criminal activities, including those which have been assembled from components acquired separately. Moreover, the rules on the deactivation of firearms have been strengthened and the new directive also includes a new category of salute and acoustic weapons to diminish risks related to their reconversion to live weapons. Furthermore, stricter rules for the acquisition and possession of the most dangerous (category A) firearms were introduced and some dangerous semi-automatic firearms were prohibited for civilian use. Finally, the new rules will improve the exchange of relevant information between

¹ https://eeas.europa.eu/topics/disarmament-non-proliferation-and-arms-export-control/14721_en

EU Member States. It should be noted that the directive sets out minimum standards and does not prevent member states from adopting and applying stricter rules.

Before concluding, let us take this opportunity to welcome the adoption of the 2016 Ministerial Council declaration on SALW and SCA assistance projects which reconfirmed the resolve of OSCE pS to jointly address the risks stemming from excessive and destabilizing accumulation and uncontrolled spread of SALW and conventional ammunition. In this context, we would like to recall that the declaration encourages holding periodic SALW and SCA conferences, as well as inviting pS to exchange views and best practices on gender aspects of SALW. We would welcome further focus on gender aspects, and specifically how they can be addressed in projects, in future relevant FSC and OSCE meetings. The organisation of an "Implementation meeting on SALW deactivation" last March highlighted the relevance of the issues of illicit reactivation and conversion of SALW with regards to the rising threat of terrorism and organised crime. We encourage the current and incoming FSC Chairs to further operationalise the tasking of the Hamburg MC declaration in their respective planning. In this respect, we commend Serbia for submitting the Proposal for Draft FSC Decision on the OSCE Meeting to Review the Implementation of OSCE Assistance projects in the field of SALW and SCA.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, SERBIA* and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA country ICELAND, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA and GEORGIA align themselves with this statement.

* The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.