



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°830 Vienna, 28 September 2016

EU Statement on "Deactivation of Small Arms and Light Weapons"

The European Union and its Member States warmly welcome Mr. Adrian Whiting to the Forum for Security Co-operation and thank him for presenting the Study analysing the standards for the deactivation of Small Arms and Light Weapons by the OSCE participating States.

The EU is fully committed to the implementation of the OSCE Plan of Action and the UN Programme of Action on SALW on a national, regional and Global basis. Such an approach is fully in line with the 2005 EU Strategy to combat illicit accumulation and trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) and is demonstrated by ongoing donations by the EU and its Member States to the SALW/SCA projects implemented by the OSCE.

We commend the FSC Chairmanship for putting SALW on the FSC's agenda, as well as for the particular focus on the issue of SALW deactivation, which is a topic currently high also on the EU's agenda. Following the Paris terrorist attack last year involving illicit small arms the EU further stepped up its efforts to tackle the threat of powerful firearms falling into the wrong hands and their criminal abuse. The European Commission adopted last November a package of measures to tighten the control on the acquisition of firearms in the EU, better track legally held firearms, strengthen cooperation between Member States, and ensure that deactivated firearms are rendered inoperable irreversibly.

The package included a revision of the Firearms Directive to tighten controls on the acquisition and possession of firearms, as also mentioned in the Study presented today. The main elements of the proposed revision are: the prohibition of civilian ownership of military grade firearms, the scope of the Directive and the conditions of authorisation, EU common rules on the marking of firearms to improve their

traceability, better exchange of information between EU countries, common criteria concerning alarm and signal weapons in order to prevent their transformation into fully functioning firearms and stricter conditions for the circulation of deactivated firearms. The proposed amendments are currently under evaluation by the European Parliament and Council which could propose changes before its final adoption.

An Implementing Regulation on common minimum standards for deactivation of firearms represents another element of the package introduced by the European Commission last year. The Regulation sets out common and strict criteria for deactivation in order to make reactivation physically impossible.

Furthermore, on 2 December 2015, the EU Action Plan against illicit trafficking of weapons and explosives was adopted, which steps up operational cooperation at EU level among Member States and with third countries. In this regard the EU has been closely cooperating with countries in the Western Balkan to curb the flows of illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons. This cooperation led to the adoption of an Action Plan on the illicit trafficking of firearms between the EU and the South East Europe Region for the years 2015-2019. On 30 November 2016 the first joint meeting between European Firearms Experts and Western Balkans firearms experts will take place.

In the same vein, illicit arms trafficking by sea is a matter of utmost importance within the EU, as it is shown by the efforts of several EU Member States in the FSC in recent times.

We welcome in this context the OSCE's prominent role in providing assistance to participating States with regard to SALW destruction and providing stockpile management and security practices. Such activities contribute to mitigating the risk that SALW or their spare parts get diverted and end up in the wrong hands contributing to crime and terrorism and are thus fully in line with the efforts of the European Union and its Member States.

Madame Chair, we thank once again the distinguished speaker for his presentation. We appreciate that concrete recommendations for future OSCE's role were made and we stand ready to examine them. In this context, we would be interested to hear from the distinguished speaker, what would be the best way for the OSCE to take the

Study forward and which next steps he would suggest in this regard taking into account the work done in other international and regional fora.

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 as well as UKRAINE 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.