



## **Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe**

### **The Secretariat**

**Conflict Prevention Centre**

**Vienna, 21 July 2003**

#### **Report on OSCE participation in the First Biennial Meeting of States of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in all its Aspects** New York, 7-11 July 2003

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Biennial Meeting of States on the Implementation of the UN Programme of Action on SALW was held at UN Headquarters in New York from 7-11 July. Although aimed primarily at reviewing implementation by states, regional organizations were also invited to provide reports of their activities in the since the 2001 Conference on small arms. The OSCE was invited to speak, as a regional organization under Chapter VIII of the UN Charter, and was represented by H.E. Chris Sanders, Permanent Representative of the Netherlands to the Conference on Disarmament, and Representative of the Chairman-in-Office. The Conflict Prevention Centre was represented at the technical level.

### **OVERVIEW OF THE MEETING**

The Biennial Meeting reviewed progress made since the July 2001 Conference on SALW at the United Nations, when the Programme of Action (PoA) was agreed. The PoA made provision for meetings of member states every two years, and a major review meeting in 2006. As explained the Meeting Chair, Ambassador Kuniko Inoguchi, explained when she briefed the FSC last month, the 2003 meeting was not intended to re-open or review the PoA.

Participating States were, of course, represented at the national level, and will no doubt share their own perceptions of the event. From the OSCE perspective, the Biennial Meeting was a useful opportunity to review progress made by states, regional organizations, members of the UN family and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). It was clear that the agreement of the Programme of Action, and a number of other documents, had moved progress forward on this issue. States had much positive work to report on, and, although few states took the opportunity to identify lack of capacity or ask for assistance, some did highlight areas for potential improvement or further work, especially during the thematic discussions. Many of the most interesting discussions took place in the side events organized in the margins of the main meetings. Several OSCE participating States hosted such meetings to discuss issues including export controls, control over brokering activities (in which the OSCE participated as a speaker), and practical assistance and training.

## **OSCE STATEMENT**

The OSCE was the first to make a statement under the session devoted to regional organizations. The statement, which can be found attached, covered OSCE SALW-related activities since the agreement of the Document in 2000, placing particular emphasis on the information exchanges and the Handbook of Best Practices. It also covered the activities of the OSCE in combating trafficking in the economic and environmental dimension. The Statement was accompanied by the OSCE's report of activities, distributed within the FSC last week, and can be found on the website of the Biennial Meeting at <http://disarmament.un.org/cab/salw-orgs.html>.

Because the session was not interactive, there were no formal reactions or discussion from the floor. Nevertheless, in their own statements, a number of OSCE participating States, other regional organizations, UN bodies and NGOs commended the OSCE for its work in combating the illicit SALW trade. OSCE contributions to the UN process, especially the Best Practice Handbook, were welcomed by member states and other organizations alike. In general, responses to the OSCE were very positive, although it is often a challenge to demonstrate the relevance of the OSCE's work for less developed regions of the world.

Other organizations that gave statements in this session included NATO, the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN).

## **OSCE Handbook of Best Practices Presentation**

On the first day of the meeting, Monday 7 July, the OSCE organized a side event to present the Handbook of Best Practices. The event, which was attended by some 80-90 participants, was chaired by the CPC and opened by Amb. Sanders on behalf of the CiO. Mr. Berthold Johannes, head of the German delegation to the Biennial, spoke on behalf of the FSC Chair, and representatives from Norway, Finland, the Russian Federation and the UK gave brief overviews of the individual Guides they had prepared.

Speakers stressed that the challenge now lay in ensuring that the Handbook could become a useful tool for governments, organizations and NGOs, and encouraged the development of assistance programmes and training on the basis of the Handbook. A number of advance copies of those guides already available were shared with participants, and many requests were received for further copies, both after the side event and later during the week. Overall, through the presentation and the leaflet, which was widely distributed, the OSCE Handbook of Best Practices achieved very high visibility at the Biennial and is certain to play a major role in efforts to combat SALW trafficking at the global as well as the regional level.

## **Conclusion**

In her briefing to the FSC in June, Amb. Inoguchi stressed the important role that regional organizations can play on SALW issues. This role was much in evidence at the Biennial Meeting. It is clear that some regional organizations, especially the OSCE, have made considerable strides, and could help create building blocks for global agreement in key areas, such as brokering controls. At the same time, the UN system is increasingly looking to regional organizations in order to operationalize many of the commitments contained in the Programme of Action. Regional organizations could play a central role in building capacity

within their member states to implement these commitments, and can also provide useful channels for assistance at the bilateral level. Since the OSCE is arguably the most advanced regional organization in efforts to combat SALW proliferation, it could not only take on these tasks but also share its own experiences and concepts (e.g. information exchange processes, the Handbook of Best Practices, the Section V assistance mechanism) with other regions through their own regional organizations, possibly under a UN umbrella.

***UN Biennial Meeting on the implementation of the UN Program of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons, Regional implementation OSCE.***

*By His Excellency the Ambassador to the Conference on Disarmament of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in his capacity as a representative of the Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE Mr Chris Sanders*

Madam Chair, distinguished participants,

As a representative of the Chairman-in-Office I am honored to take the floor on behalf of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and share information on activities undertaken by the OSCE on the implementation of the UN program of Action.

The OSCE has long recognized the need to combat the uncontrolled spread of small arms and light weapons in the region. On 24 November 2000 OSCE participating states agreed upon a document on SALW in the Forum for Security Cooperation, which is the arguably most comprehensive multilateral agreement on this issue so far. This document, for example, sets out common criteria for export control of SALW, for weapons marking as well as for management of stockpiles and reduction of surpluses.

Section V of the document contains measures for small arms control as part of OSCE activities on early warning, conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation. These measures, which can be applied in response to a request from a participating State, could for example consist of assistance for the disposal of small arms, assistance for the reinforcement of border control and arms collection programs. Recently the FSC decided on a mechanism to operationalize Section V by the establishment of a 'voluntary fund' and by the creation of a database of experts that can provide technical assistance in activities undertaken within the framework of Section V.

In order to enhance transparency States have committed themselves to share information on their national legislation, procedures and current practice on marking systems, control of manufacture, export policy and on controls on brokering activities, destruction techniques and on stockpile management. In addition to that States agreed to exchange annually, data on exports to and imports from other OSCE participating States, as well as on small arms identified as surplus and on small arms destroyed or seized on their territory.

The first information exchange in 2001 on national legislation, procedures and current practices produced a wealth of information on policies and practices that could help States in their own policy making on small arms issues. Furthermore, templates or formats were created to improve the quality of information sharing in the following years. These templates were used in the second information round in 2002 in which States shared information on stockpile management as well as on export, import and transfer of small arms and light weapons.

This exercise is not only an important confidence building measure, it also contributes to enhancing capacity building and setting higher common standards. This practice in the OSCE could also be useful to the UN process. In the UN framework member states have started a similar process by providing UNDDA with reports on their national implementation of the UNPoA. I would recommend sharing this information on a regular basis.

One of OSCE's capacity building activities was the organization of training workshops in the five Central Asian republics on the implementation of the OSCE document. The training by experts from various other OSCE countries focussed on the control and licensing of manufacture, export, import and transit of small arms, marking, record keeping and tracing of these weapons, management of stockpiles and destruction of surplus. Apart from possible follow up in more targeted activities in these countries, participants also recognized the need for improved co-operation to counter illegal cross-border trafficking in small arms. In response, the OSCE organized a training programme for border guards in combating SALW trafficking at the Uzbek-Afghan border. This course is conducted in co-operation with a UN-led initiative run by the Office for Drugs and Crime, and is a good operational example of UN-OSCE co-operation on this issue.

Another good example of such co-operation, which was highlighted earlier this week, was the recent seminar co-sponsored by the OSCE and UN DDA on the implementation of the Programme of Action in South Eastern Europe. This event took place in Slovenia on 11-12 March 2003, and brought forward a number of recommendations for the region.

Another important contribution to capacity building on SALW issues was the decision to create the OSCE Handbook of Best Practices. A group of OSCE Member States have undertaken the effort to write the different chapters of this Best Practice Guide dealing with the issues of manufacture control, export control, brokering, marking and tracing, stockpile management, destruction techniques and DDR. Information about this guide was presented to you in a lunch meeting last Monday. I think this is a very valuable piece of work. It could help promote the implementation process in many states, not just those of the OSCE, and it can also encourage the development of common standard practices.

These efforts highlight the necessity of international cooperation to combat illicit trade in SALW. Equally high standards in procedures and practices will strengthen the chain that enables us to reduce the spread of these weapons that still cause more than half a million deaths each year.

Regional processes can feed into other regional processes or the global process to find solutions for the illicit trade in small arms. In that we respect we welcome the cooperation with the Euro-Atlantic partnership Council, the Regional Disarmament Branch of the UN Department of Disarmament Affairs and the UNDP-Stability Pact South –Eastern Europe Small Arms Clearinghouse (SEESAC) in the implementation of the OSCE document.

While one can learn from processes in other regions one can also learn from other policy areas. The 'economic impact on trafficking in human beings, drugs and small arms' was discussed at the OSCE Economic Forum that took place in Prague from 20-23 May. The lack of economic opportunities, corruption, illegal money flows to finance illegal trade in small arms and the operation of organized criminal networks were identified as common features and potential consequences or facilitating factors. States recognized that further cooperation and dialogue between OSCE, governments and the business community is important, as well as the exchange of best practices.

In the preparatory seminar for the Economic Forum on trafficking in small arms and light weapons in Sofia in November last year a lot of useful recommendations were brought forward. A number of them need to be further discussed in FSC, including the need for

controls on brokering activities. The chapter on 'Brokering' in the OSCE Handbook of Best Practices could very well contribute to reach common understanding on elements of brokering legislation.

Madam Chair,

This Biennial meeting is a valuable opportunity to learn from other regional processes. I therefore welcome other suggestions on best practices and I would like to learn from experiences gained during the implementation process of other regional documents which could feed in our own process or that of the UN.

Thank you.