

Spanish Presidency of the European Union

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EU Statement on Small Arms and Light Weapons

The European Union welcomes this Special FSC Meeting on Small Arms and Light Weapons. We would like to thank the Greek FSC Chairmanship for organising this timely and relevant session in order to continue and intensify our work in this area, in line with the tasking received from our Ministers during the Athens Ministerial Council.

We would also like to thank Mr. Daniel Prins, Chief of the Conventional Arms Branch of the UN Office on Disarmament Affairs, and Mr. Fabio della Piazza of the Council of the European Union Office of the High Representative's Personal Representative on Non-Proliferation of WMDs for their comprehensive and informative presentations.

The destabilising consequences of the illicit trade and excessive accumulation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) and ammunition and the threat that they pose to international peace and security have been long recognised by the EU. Since December 2005, the guidelines for the EU's action in combating illicit trade and excessive accumulation are set by the EU Small

Arms and Light Weapons Strategy. This document, adopted at the highest level by the European Council, sets out the policy lines along which concrete actions shall be taken both in the demand and supply side of SALW and promotes an integrated approach to address SALW-related security challenges.

Three key principles underpin the EU's plan of action in the field of Small Arms and Light Weapons.

Firstly, prevention. Preventive action is needed to reduce the risk of conflicts and to address a situation of deteriorating security. To this end, the EU has been implementing several activities related to increased security of stockpile, destruction of surplus, training and awareness raising and has assisted third states in developing adequate SALW legislation, regulation and administrative procedures. A recent example is the support the EU provides to the African Union in developing an AU SALW strategy.

Secondly, cooperation with partners: global security challenges can only be solved through cooperative efforts. The EU continues to streamline SALW issues in its relations with third countries, both in terms of political dialogue and concrete projects.

Thirdly, support to multilateralism. The EU is in favour of a multilateral answer to a global challenge, such as SALW. Therefore, the EU fully supports relevant international instruments in this field and coordination among UN MS.

As a part of the general support to multilateralism, the EU is also fully engaged in the negotiations on an Arms Trade Treaty (ATT).

An ATT which prescribes the highest possible standard in the trade of conventional weapons has a huge potential in preventing the diversion of conventional arms and its destabilising effects for peace and security.

The OSCE Ministerial Decision on SALW, adopted at the Athens Ministerial Council, has requested this forum to remain seized of these matters. It also tasks us to enhance our work by, among other activities, developing a Plan of Action and taking an active role in the Fourth Biennial Meeting of States Parties to consider the implementation of the UN Programme of Action.

The main political and legal framework for international action in the field of SALW remains the UN Programme of Action. The EU looks forward to a successful outcome of the Fourth Biennial Meeting of States Parties in June 2010. To this end, the EU is in the process of adopting a new Council Decision, to be implemented by UN ODA, that will foresee several activities in preparation of the 2012 Review Conference. Inter alia, this project will focus on the regional implementation of the UN Programme of Action, implementation of international guidelines on ammunition stockpiles, and regional implementation of the International Marking and Tracing Instrument.

The EU commended the choice of the Third BMS to concentrate on three cluster topics, namely, the International Tracing Instrument, illicit brokering and stockpile management and surplus destruction. We are convinced that this pragmatic and result-oriented approach could be replicated for the Fourth BMS, identifying additional cross-cutting themes for discussion. Our objective remains the

preparation of a substantive and overarching assessment of the UN PoA at the 2012 Review Conference.

The EU has also consistently reiterated the importance of reinforcing regional approaches to the UN PoA and to SALW issues in general. The EU has been cooperating closely with the OSCE in order to achieve more effective results to prevent excessive accumulation and uncontrolled spread of these weapons. We welcome the active role taken by OSCE in international efforts, including through the assistance provided to participating States in the destruction of surplus SALW and conventional ammunition stockpiles and in improving stockpile management and security practices.

In recent years the EU has successfully contributed to disarmament and stockpile management projects in Ukraine and in the Western Balkans. Our Member States are about to adopt a new ambitious integrated project, to be implemented by SEESAC, and foreseeing activities aiming at improving stockpile management and registration and collection of weapons, and destruction of surplus weapons in the Western Balkans.

As part of the OSCE contribution to find appropriate responses to the challenges posed by the illicit trade and excessive accumulation of SALW, we welcome and support the Food for Thought Paper circulated by the Greek Delegation to update the OSCE normative base and improve SALW related work. We are confident that we can build on previous work in order to achieve a substantive Plan of Action by May 2010.

The EU has on many occasions stressed its support for strengthening the implementation of existing OSCE commitments; we note with satisfaction that this is also one important part of the proposed Plan of Action.

Excessive and destabilising accumulations and uncontrolled spread of SALW, as well as the illicit transfer of Weapons, are important elements in the context of transnational threats to security and stability, as was recognised by the relevant decision in the Athens Ministerial Council. The EU Strategy also states that SALW contribute to a worsening of terrorism and organised crime, and are a major factor in triggering and spreading conflicts, as well as in the collapse of State structures.

At the same time, action in the field of SALW is also an effective and indispensable tool to prevent and manage conflicts.

Our work in this area will thus be very relevant in the context of the Corfu Process. FSC has been called upon to bring its contribution to the work of this Process, in coordination with the Permanent Council and its bodies. We believe that this contribution must include substantive progress in the area of SALW.

We have an intense and challenging agenda ahead of us; May 2010, when our Plan of Action should be presented, will be an important benchmark for the work of the FSC this year, and into the future. We are looking forward to working with you and other delegations to achieve concrete results in this endeavour.

The candidate countries TURKEY, CROATIA* and FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate countries ALBANIA, BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA, MONTENEGRO and SERBIA, the European Free Trade Association countries and members of the European Economic Area ICELAND, and NORWAY, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, ARMENIA and GEORGIA align themselves with this statement.

*Croatia and Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.