

**Annual Security Review Conference, 2003**

ENGLISH only

**Working Group C**

**Joint Dutch-French intervention on the initiative on surplus ammunition stocks awaiting destruction within the OSCE area**

Thank you Mr co-ordinator,

The subject of this working group is perhaps at the core of what this Annual Security Review Conference is all about. To guarantee its relevance, the OSCE needs to adjust to new emerging threats and developments relevant to the security situation in Europe. For this reason France and The Netherlands have asked the FSC to include in its work program the issue of security risks arising from stockpiles of ammunition stocks and explosives for use in conventional armaments in surplus or awaiting destruction in the OSCE area. The Porto Ministerial welcomed the FSC decision of November 2002 to include this issue in its work program.

Our countries felt that the problem of surplus ammunition stocks is a very serious one. The improvement of the security situation in the OSCE over the last decade has enabled significant disarmament achievements. On the one hand this disarmament was a legal obligation, for example under the CFE Treaty, on the other hand participating states disarmed because of reforms of their armed forces which were a result of the changing security environment. Large amounts of major weapon systems were destroyed since the end of the Cold War.

In all these disarmament efforts little –if any- attention was paid to the ammunition that is used in these destroyed weapon systems. No OSCE document deals with this specific aspect. However, as the years passed by, it has become more and more clear that the surplus ammunition stocks pose a serious risk to the security throughout the OSCE area. Due to their nature and often precarious condition of storage they cause health risks for the neighbouring population, environmental risks and proliferation risks. With regard to this last point it is clear that terrorist groups already use stolen ammunition in their actions, thus directly threatening the security of all OSCE participating states.

France and The Netherlands were therefore of the opinion that OSCE should play, alongside other international organisations, a role in this field.

A FSC-workshop which took place from 27-28 May underlined the magnitude of the problems we are facing. The workshop made clear that the problem is not only a matter of finance. It is also a matter of know how. This becomes even more important since the problem can not be solved in a short period of time. Making correct inventories, risk analyses, stockpile management, stockpile security etc are all issues that we need to address in order to reduce the risks that these stockpiles cause. And it is exactly in this field that the OSCE, in our view, has a valuable role to play. We can draw extensively from our experience in the field of SALW for example.

The OSCE can take action what regards :

- assistance : we could all see whether we can make available technical experts to provide assistance to those states requesting help. This kind of information could be provided on

the basis of a standard questionnaire. This information could lead to the establishment of a roster of available national experts.

- norm-setting, through the publication of a best practices handbook, similar to the SALW handbooks.
- destruction of ammunition stocks : ultimately, the surplus stocks need to be destroyed and the OSCE should play its role there as well. However we feel that the OSCE should not start executing projects on a large scale. Other organisations are better equipped to do this. Of course, in certain cases, trustfunds could be established on an ad hoc basis to deal with a very concrete problem, especially if the OSCE has a field mission present in a participating state needing assistance. Moldova and Georgia are good examples of this. But in general, the OSCE should try to play a clearing house function, bringing together potential donors and states needing assistance.

As regards the next steps of this initiative, The Netherlands and France, with the help of other interested delegations, will produce a new food for thought paper in the coming days. This document will take into account the elements I just mentioned as well as other results of the workshop. It will be tabled in the FSC for further discussion as soon as possible. It is our goal to come to an agreed mechanism before the end of the year. We hope that all OSCE PS will support this initiative, so we can achieve this goal.