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**Statement by Mr. Vasily Pavlov, Chairman of the Informal Group of Friends on Small Arms and Light Weapons, on behalf of the OSCE at the Third Biennial Meeting of States to consider the implementation of the UN Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects**

New York, 14-18 July 2008

Mr. Chairman,  
Distinguished delegates,

In addressing the problem of illicit trade in SALW the United Nations Programme of Action appeals to regional and intergovernmental organizations to contribute to preventing, combating and eradicating this phenomenon in all its aspects.

The OSCE, as a regional arrangement under Chapter VIII of the UN Charter, plays an important facilitating role in early warning, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation in the OSCE region. Significant achievements in this area result from a broad and continuous application of politico-military instruments dealing with arms control and disarmament, including in the field of small arms and light weapons.

The issue of illicit trade in small arms stays on top of the OSCE agenda. Some OSCE participating States are major producers and exporters of SALW. Many of our States face the need to deal with surplus weapons, strengthening both legislation and operational capabilities to eradicate illicit trade in small arms. The need to dispose huge arsenals of outdated conventional ammunition, including SALW ammunition also represents a major problem.

To illustrate the importance the OSCE attaches to the practical deeds in this area I would just like to share some statistics on SALW destruction rate within the OSCE region. From 2001 – 2006, approximately 6.4 million weapons were destroyed in the OSCE region. This figure speaks for itself, and it is also important to mention that the destruction process obtained its steady dynamic and continues throughout the area from Vancouver to Vladivostok.

Mr. Chairman,

Let me now give more details on the most important regulatory framework in the area of SALW the OSCE participating States developed and committed themselves to.

The OSCE Document on Small Arms and Light Weapons, adopted in 2000, is landmark document of our Organization in the field of small arms control. The Document makes a substantial contribution to the respective efforts emanating from the PoA by largely similar and complementary provisions. Furthermore, it commits the OSCE participating States to a set of standards, which, if fully implemented, would help them to abide by the PoA at the national, regional and global levels.

At the same time, the OSCE Document on SALW is a living document: its provisions can and have been further developed and reinforced. For example, to strengthen controls over the export of SALW with a view to preventing illicit arms transfers, the SALW Document was in 2004 complemented by three export control decisions: “Standard Elements for End-User Certificates and Verification Procedures for SALW Exports”, “OSCE Principles for

Export Controls of Man-Portable Air Defence Systems (MANPADS)”, and “OSCE Principles on the Control of Brokering in Small Arms and Light Weapons.

During 2007-2008, OSCE participating States have taken steps to revisit these decisions and/or their implementation. First, in October 2007 we adopted a decision, whereby OSCE States undertook to exchange information with regard to their brokering activities related to SALW. The replies were analyzed to assess how current SALW brokering controls are functioning and how OSCE commitments are being implemented. We hope that this report, available to delegations also at this meeting, will be helpful to Members-States in identifying existing gaps and determining possible further action.

Furthermore, in May 2008, following the Wassenaar Arrangement, the FSC adopted a revised decision on man-portable air defense systems (MANPADS), which established more stringent control over their export.

The OSCE participating States are also working on a draft decision on information exchange with regard to the sample format of end-user certificates (EUCs) with a view to assessing the implementation of a respective decision adopted in 2004 and identifying strengths, loopholes and areas for further improvements.

Last but not the least, there is another important initiative put forward within the OSCE – fight against illicit air transportation of small arms and light weapons. Following a special FSC meeting on this subject in 2007, the OSCE is currently considering the development of best practices to prevent illicit transfers of SALW by air.

Mr. Chairman,

Coming to the project side of the Organization’s activities, needless to say, the standards set out in the SALW Document are very high, and thus place a heavy burden on many OSCE participating States in implementing their commitments. Indeed, while some OSCE States possess sufficient resources to tackle all these issues on their own, others require international assistance to address specific SALW-related problems. Therefore in most cases assistance is required to destroy SALW surpluses and/or improve stockpile management system.

In this context, as part of our efforts, we continue to operate under an assistance mechanism on SALW and conventional ammunition problems developed by the OSCE in 2002-2003.

The OSCE assistance projects in Belarus and Tajikistan provide a good example of the effectiveness of this mechanism. The first phase of Belarus’ project on improving SALW stockpiles management and security is implemented jointly with UNDP and should be completed by January 2009. The “Comprehensive Programme on SALW and Conventional Ammunition in Tajikistan”, which covers both stockpiles management and destruction components throughout the territory of Tajikistan, including Tajik-Afghan border, will be completed this fall.

While addressing the practical assistance programmes, I can not but mention the OSCE Document on Stockpiles of Conventional Ammunition of 2003, which addresses security, environmental, and humanitarian risks arising from surplus stockpiles of conventional ammunition and explosives. Since 2003, the OSCE has received almost 30 requests for assistance from 13 countries to improve stockpile security and management of conventional ammunition and small arms or to destroy their surpluses. A number of those projects are being implemented in parallel with SALW assistance programmes. In addition, the OSCE has finalized the Handbook of Best Practices on Stockpiles of Conventional Ammunition the publication of which is planned for late 2008.

Mr. Chairman,

Before concluding I would also like to stress the importance our Organization attaches to both internal and external coordination and cooperation among participating States, regional and international players involved in this business.

Here, we continue the good practice of organizing regular national, regional and international trainings, seminars and conferences for national authorities dealing with small arms issues as well as for international audiences. These meetings cover SALW stockpile management and security, destruction, brokering, cross-border trafficking, etc. Most recently, in May 2008, the OSCE, together with the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC), organized a conference for regional organizations on the implementation of the UN Programme of Action. The Conference, which was also supported by the United Nations, brought together over a hundred representatives from thirty regional and international organizations, together with civil society organizations from all over the world to discuss the implementation of the UN Programme of Action at regional level. We hope that this event will help facilitate co-operation and promote best practices between regional organizations, as many of them still face problems especially with insufficient implementation of already existing commitments.

On the assistance side since June 2006, we closely cooperate and implement joint SALW projects, including in Belarus and Montenegro, with UNDP.

Finally, I would reiterate that over the last seven years, the OSCE has made a substantial contribution to the UN PoA. However, we regard our achievements from a critical perspective as well. Much remains to be done in this domain, particularly with a view to closing loopholes in existing norms and regulations as well as further increasing the effectiveness of implementation of the assistance programmes and projects. Without prejudging the results of future deliberations in the OSCE I can not exclude that in the near future we might consider a possibility of a comprehensive assessment of the OSCE Document on SALW to see whether it still meets its objectives in the current security situation and if changes or supplements would be needed.

I believe that such steps will reinforce the OSCE's ability to tackle the problem of illicit trade in SALW and demonstrate the OSCE's potential to further contribute to the UN Programme of Action.

Thank you for your attention.