



## EUROPEAN UNION

### **OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°862 Vienna, 20 September 2017**

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#### **EU Statement on the Regional efforts in combatting the illicit trade of Small Arms and Light Weapons in Southeast Europe**

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1. The European Union and its Member States warmly welcome today's speakers, Mr Radomirović, from the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Serbia, Mr Bošković from SEESAC and Mr van der Meij from EUROPOL, to the Forum for Security Co-operation and thank them for their interesting presentations. We are grateful to the Serbian FSC Chairmanship for putting this important topic on the FSC agenda.
2. Madame Chairperson the diversion, illicit trade and unauthorised use of Small Arms and Light Weapons constitute serious impediments for peace, security, growth and development in many parts of the world; Southeast Europe has been an area of particular EU activity for a number of years. The European Union and its Member States are fully committed to the implementation of the OSCE Plan of Action. We also remain strong supporters of the UN Programme of Action and recall the EU Council Decision adopted in support of a successful outcome at the Third Review Conference in 2018. We believe that these global and regional instruments provide valid and effective tools in the fight against the illicit trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons, of which we wish to highlight the International Tracing Instrument as one important practical achievement.
3. Although currently under review, the 2005 EU Strategy to combat the illicit accumulation and trafficking of SALW and their ammunition remains the bedrock of our policy. Since its adoption, it has guided collective and coordinated European action to prevent and curb the illicit acquisition of SALW and their ammunition. Accordingly, 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. The EU closely cooperates with countries in Southeast Europe, with a focus on the Western Balkans, to curb the flows of illicit SALW and has adopted an Action Plan on illicit trafficking in Southeast Europe for the years 2015-2019; progress achieved against this Action Plan is monitored and periodically reviewed at both technical and political levels. Furthermore, on 25

April 2017, Ministers of the 28 EU Member States adopted the new Firearms Directive, focusing on closing the legal loopholes that were being exploited by terrorists and criminals.

4. We have strengthened the rules by prohibiting civilian use of the most dangerous semi-automatic firearms (which can easily be turned back into fully automatic firearms), and by establishing more rigid rules for registration and marking, including firearms owned by collectors or museums. Special provisions have been considered for deactivated firearms and blank-firing weapons. Stricter conditions for the online acquisition of firearms and the establishment of a system to improve the exchange of information between Member States are also covered by the new provisions.
5. In addition an in-depth evaluation of the Regulation governing the import and export of firearms, which implements article 10 of the UN Firearms Protocol, is on-going. Moreover the EU has recently enhanced the fight against firearms trafficking within the priorities of the new Policy cycle 2018-2021, allowing EU national law enforcement authorities and Europol to take coordinated action against firearms trafficking, notably addressing online trading. Special considerations will ensure cooperation with Third countries, namely in the Western Balkans.
6. Madame Chairperson we welcome the OSCE's and SEESAC's prominent role in providing assistance to participating States with regard to SALW destruction and providing stockpile management and security practices. Preventing access to SALW by criminals and terrorists remains a priority of the European Union and its Member States. To this end, the EU and its Member States provide generous support to the various projects in the field of SALW/SCA across the OSCE region, be it bilaterally or through cooperation with partners, such as the OSCE or SEESAC. We wish to highlight the EU support for SEESAC activities for the period 2017-2019, following an EU contribution of EUR 6.5 million, also covering the Republic of Moldova and recall our announcement at last week's FSC for a further contribution of EUR1.35 million for OSCE projects in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Georgia. An overview of all SALW-control actions that are supported by the EU can be found in the yearly progress reports that are published on the website of the EEAS.<sup>1</sup>
7. We wish to take this opportunity to welcome the adoption of the 2016 Ministerial Council declaration on SALW and SCA assistance projects, reconfirming the resolve of OSCE participating States to jointly address the risks stemming from the uncontrolled spread of SALW and conventional ammunition. To that end we express the importance of preventing illicit arms

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<sup>1</sup> <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2017:115:0001:0019:EN:PDF>

trafficking by sea and inland waterways, as shown by the current proposal by a number of Member States under reference FSC.DEL/110/17/Rev.2. We are also looking forward to the OSCE Meeting to Review the Implementation of OSCE Assistance projects in the field of SALW and SCA, next month.

8. Finally Madame Chairperson, we recall the very present threat of terrorist attacks in Europe and the need to ensure we adjust our work to combat the illicit trade in SALW accordingly. The issues discussed today are helpful in that regard and we call upon all participating States to continue to energetically support, among others, the OSCE's and SEESAC's work. We also emphasise the importance of the Arms Trade Treaty and hope we will have the opportunity to discuss relevant outcomes of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Conference of States Parties, in this Forum, in the future.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA\*, MONTENEGRO\*, and ALBANIA\*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA 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.