

## What is the OSCE?

The OSCE is an intergovernmental organization that works through 4,000 staff in 18 field missions and five institutions to form a single regional security body from Vancouver to Vladivostok.

### Handbook of best practices on small arms and light weapons



*The destruction of weapons in Georgia, 2003*

A valuable new tool to combat small arms proliferation has been developed by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe – the OSCE Handbook of Best Practices on Small Arms and Light Weapons.

Government officials, NGO representatives and international civil servants will be able to use the Handbook in their daily work, whether it involves developing small arms measures in post-conflict settings or reforming arms export legislation in line with international standards.

*Cover photo: Small arms and light weapons collected in Vlasenica, Bosnia and Herzegovina, May 2002*

## Order form

The Handbook of Best Practices is available in English from summer 2003. Other languages will become available later in the year. Copies can be ordered, subject to availability, from the OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre.

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## Handbook of best practices on small arms and light weapons



## OSCE measures on small arms control

The OSCE, an organization dedicated to conflict prevention, confidence building and arms control in Europe, has long recognized the need to combat the uncontrolled spread of small arms and light weapons in the region. The Organization includes many of the world's major producers and exporters of small arms. At the same time, there are many areas where small arms have exacerbated conflicts and facilitated violent crime.

For the OSCE, Small Arms and Light Weapons are man-portable weapons made or modified to military specifications for use as lethal instruments of war.

Our participating States recognized their special responsibility to control these weapons when they agreed the OSCE Document on SALW in November 2000. The Document is arguably the most comprehensive multilateral agreement on small arms, including:

- Standards for manufacture, marking and export control
- Measures dealing with stockpile security, collection and destruction
- Transparency on policies and transfers

“Small arms pose a threat and a challenge to peace, and undermine efforts to ensure an indivisible and comprehensive security”

[OSCE Document on Small Arms and Light Weapons, 24 November 2000](#)

## The OSCE Handbook

There is no doubt that the OSCE Document places heavy burdens on governments to live up to all their commitments. In order to help them, the OSCE's Forum for Security Co-operation has developed eight Best Practice Guides on various following aspects of control.

### Eight OSCE Best Practice Guides

- Controls over manufacture
- Marking, record-keeping and tracing
- Export controls
- Controls over brokering activities
- Stockpile management and security
- Indicators of surplus stocks
- Destruction techniques
- Small arms measures within disarmament, demobilization and reintegration.

Developed by government experts who work on these issues on every day, the guides are practical documents outlining the highest common standards in our region. Available individually or as a complete set in any of the six OSCE languages, the Guides will be sent to governments, NGOs and international organizations both within and outside the OSCE region.

OSCE participating States described the Handbook as “a guide for national policy-making” which will “encourage higher common standards of practice among all participating States” (FSC Decision 05/03, 18 June 2003).

## OSCE assistance

The OSCE is already focusing on assistance programmes for our participating States. Several OSCE missions have ongoing projects to remove weapons from illegal circulation.

The OSCE Mission in Georgia monitors the collection of weapons by the Joint Peacekeeping Forces in South Ossetia, and offers small community-based incentives in return for surrendered weapons, such as irrigation canal repairs or computers for schools. The Mission also supports the destruction of unstable ammunition and rocket fuel.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the OSCE Mission has been instrumental in assisting the government to reform its arms export control legislation.



*Border guards at the Uzbek-Afghan border study the OSCE Document on SALW, 2002*

In Uzbekistan, the OSCE provides training for border guards in combating arms trafficking at the Afghan border.

The OSCE recently developed a new mechanism to allow participating States to request assistance under Section V of the SALW Document. Assistance would be provided through OSCE missions or ad hoc expert teams.