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## SEESAC Convenes the 7th SEEFEN Meeting

Over 40 regional and international firearms experts, including prosecutors, police, customs and forensics experts are gathering for the 7<sup>th</sup> Regional Meeting of South East Europe Firearms Expert Network (SEEFEN) on 18-19 May 2017 in Jahorina, Bosnia and Herzegovina. Funded by the EU, SEEFEN regional meetings are organized to exchange information on combatting illicit trafficking of firearms, and to highlight good practices.

Ms. Stefana Greavu, Head of Political Department of the Regional Cooperation Council, Mr. Filip De Ceuninck, Regional Counter Terrorism/Security Advisor of the EU External Action Service, and Ms. Bojana Balon, SEESAC Coordinator, opened the meeting.

Welcoming the participants and thanking the EU for their support to SEESAC and the region, Ms. Greavu highlighted that SEEFEN is growing in numbers and deepening in expertise, noting that as of this meeting, forensics experts will be joining prosecutors, police and customs officials.

"To the dear newcomers, I would like to offer a warm welcome into a network of dedicated professionals from the entire region that constitutes SEEFEN. We look forward to your inputs and contributions to the work of this important regional platform.", Ms. Greavu said.

Mr. Ceuninck told the participants that the EU is delighted to see SEEFEN deepen and reinforce regional cooperation towards combatting firearms trafficking.

"Your professionalism and dedication to non-proliferation was recognized by the EU and its Member States, motivating them to proceed with supporting your work. That is why the EU wants to see this process continuing to strengthen the ties of the authorities of the region, identifying the bottlenecks in cooperation, and proposing the necessary changes", Mr. Ceuninck emphasised.

SEESAC Coordinator Ms. Bojana Balon highlighted that SEEFEN's commitment to nonproliferation was recognized by the EU and its Member States, leading them to continue their support by adopting a new Council Decision 2016/2356/CFSP in support of SEESAC disarmament and arms control activities in South-East Europe in the framework of the EU Strategy to combat illicit accumulation and trafficking of SALW and their ammunition.

"A key part of the new project is the continuation of regular regional SEEFEN meetings. SEEFEN will continue to meet twice per year over the course of the next two and a half years", Ms. Balon said.

Customs, prosecutors and the police officials are discussing the lessons identified since their last meeting held in December 2016 in Budva, Montenegro. Each delegation will present their own experiences as well as case studies of their efforts in fighting illicit trafficking of firearms. In addition, cooperation through the Prosecutors' Network of the Western Balkans will be discussed. International experts will give a presentation on building an analytical picture and profiles through criminal intelligence and ballistic intelligence. Specialist sessions for Police and Customs groups will be held with EMPACT and EUROPOL representatives, while the Forensic Ballistic Experts and Prosecutors groups will meet with staff from the National Ballistics Intelligence Service (NABIS).



SEEFEN was created to facilitate the exchange of information and the transfer of knowledge within the region and between the region and the EU while promoting practical cooperation in fighting the illegal possession and illicit transfer of firearms. The members of the Network are members of the Police services, Customs Administrations, and Public Prosecutors' Offices of: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Moldova, Kosovo\*, Serbia, and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. As of this meeting, they will be joined by the ballistic forensic experts. The Network held its first meeting in Durres, Albania on 23-24 September 2014. SEEFEN meetings encourage not only regional cooperation, but also stronger cooperation with the EU, its Member States, and specialized EU agencies such as EUROPOL, and key international actors such as INTERPOL and the World Customs Organization.



\* References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

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