



**EUROPEAN UNION (EU)
SEESAC**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**REGIONAL PARLIAMENTARY SEMINAR ON SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS
01 November 2006, 09:00h, HYATT REGENCY HOTEL BELGRADE**

The European Union (EU), and South Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SEESAC) have the pleasure of inviting you to the opening of the Parliamentary Seminar on Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW), to be held on Wednesday, 01 November 2006 at the Hyatt Regency Hotel from 09:00 –10:00.

The Seminar will be opened by H.E. Ms. Anna-Maija Korpi, Ambassador of Finland to Serbia, representing the EU Presidency; Mr. Francois de Donnea, Member of the Belgium Parliament; and Mr. Adrian Wilkinson, the Head of SEESAC.

The objective of the seminar is to sensitise parliamentarians within the Western Balkan on SALW issues, including the impact on security and development of illicit trade and proliferation. They will cover the requirements of international agreements and the importance of a national SALW control strategy, and their commitment will be sought for the harmonization of legislation on SALW with the existing regulatory framework of the European Union.

The seminar aims at the adoption of a Plan of Action by the participating Parliamentarians that provides for a broader framework of regional parliamentary co-operation in the field of SALW. At the national level the Governments could be urged to;

- ❑ Work to revise and update national legislation on small arms and light weapons to ensure compliance and conformity with the EU legal framework and best practices as well as with the international and regional instruments adopted by the UN, OSCE and the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe;
- ❑ Conduct advocacy aimed at governments for the adopting of National SALW Strategies and the setting up of permanent and independent national commissions with sufficient human, material and financial resources to effectively combat the proliferation of small arms and light weapons;
- ❑ Ensure that existing stocks of weapons and ammunition are secured, maintained and regularly inspected to the highest possible standards and seek the assistance of international partners to improve standards where they are in any way a threat to security or public health;
- ❑ Support the destruction of national surpluses of small arms and light weapons and ammunition while maintaining the highest safety standards, and in accordance with the appropriate environmental legislation;
- ❑ Introduce and support legislation establishing and/or improving State approved arms and munitions broker lists, enhancing tighter export controls and introducing more serious penalties for infringements of applicable laws;



- ❑ Encourage and support voluntary surrender campaigns for small arms and light weapons;
- ❑ Call for increased overall transparency with respect to national controls over small arms and light weapons, in particular through making provision for greater parliamentary oversight in this area and obliging Governments to submit annual arms exports reports to the Parliaments;
- ❑ Form parliamentary networks on issues relating to democratic transition and the fight against the proliferation and illicit trade of small arms and light weapons and post-conflict justice;
- ❑ Initiate, in close collaboration with government agencies and civil society organisations, information, awareness and education campaigns aimed at the general population on the issue of small arms and light weapons;

This seminar is part of the European Union Second Pilot Project on Small Arms and Light Weapons, launched in Belgrade earlier this year. The project is implemented by SEESAC. The overall objective of the Second Pilot Project is to provide both a framework for the consistent analysis of regional and national needs as they stand today relating to the illicit spread of Small Arms and Light Weapons, including the state of play, state of the general laws and rules in place, as well as practical responses to these needs in line with agreed ways forward.

EU Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy, Ms. Benita Ferrero-Waldner;

“The countries of the Western Balkans have made impressive progress in eliminating and controlling SALW and it is vital that they keep up the political momentum. Compliance with European small arms policies will be a prerequisite for future accession to the European Union.”

H.E. Ms. Anna-Maija Korpi, Ambassador of Finland to Serbia and Montenegro;

‘It is in all our interests that work continues to support our shared goal of a more stable, more secure future for all. For this you can rest assured of the EU’s continued support in this regard.’

Simultaneous translation will be provided during the opening address.

For more information on the event and press accreditation, please contact SEESAC Communication Officer, Ms. Ana Martinovic at: 011- 344 6353 or ana.martinovic@undp.org