

Tuesday, 19 April 2016

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Joint Meeting of SEEFEN and Project EFFECT, and the Fourth SEEFEN Regional Meeting Held in Sarajevo

The South East Europe Firearms Expert Network (SEEFEN) convened its Fourth Regional Meeting, as well as a joint meeting with Project EFFECT, both funded by the European Union, from 19-21 April, 2016 in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH).

Countering illicit flow of firearms, linking registration systems in South East Europe, and research on convertible firearms are among the topics discussed in a forum of over fifty participants made up of public prosecutors, police, and customs from South East Europe, and their colleagues from various law enforcement bodies in the EU. The meeting provided progress and activity updates by each delegation, as well as presentations about the work achieved by the EFFECT Project and their research on cross-border gun enabled crime.

"The issues of illegal weapons, illegal possession and misuse, which gathered us here today, represents one of the priorities in our work. BiH law enforcement institutions and those for combating illicit trafficking and possession, view this as one of the preconditions in fighting crime and extremism", Assistant Minister of Security in BiH Mr. Ermin Pesto said in his opening remarks, adding that "the illegal arms trade, as one of the most frequent types of crime, is lately increasing and has a direct effect on security deterioration in the region and in EU countries.

Senior Advisor on Security Policy Issues of the Regional Cooperation Council Mr. Marinko Raos told the meeting that "we are facing a common criminal threat and we need common solutions".

"The UK as well as the EU at large faces a significant challenge with organized crime and firearms. There is grave concern, but a lack of understanding which is why meetings like today's are so important. ...and we look forward to the results of this meeting", Deputy Head of the British Embassy in Sarajevo Matthew Lawson told the participants.

"National capacities in the WB countries certainly need to be strengthened. Mechanisms for better regional and cooperation with MS and EU institutions, particularly with EUROPOL, are to be introduced and improved. In this regard, it is of key importance to have a regional network of inter-connected **national focal points** on firearms. These must be capable of developing expertise and improving analysis and strategic reporting on illicit trafficking of firearms", Head of Rule of Law Section and Senior Adviser to the EU Special Representative to BiH Mr. Richard Wood told the meeting.

Dr. Helen Poole of Coventry University chaired the presentation of Project EFFECT, sharing its key findings and recommendations about cross-border ballistic intelligence. The EFFECT Project, led by a team of researchers from Coventry University, aims to provide EU policy makers with a body of knowledge concerning the nature, extent and impact of gun-enabled crime (GEC). As the first European project of its kind, EFFECT also examines the effectiveness of interventions aimed at combating GEC and the cross-border sharing of ballistic intelligence.

The SEEFEN participants also discussed results of the Feasibility Study on Linking SALW Registration Systems in South East Europe with Mr. Adrian Whiting, the Head of the Small Arms and Light Weapons Control Projects at Arquebus Solutions Ltd.

Each delegation held presentations on their updates about efforts, developments and results achieved in combating illicit firearms since the last SEEFEN meeting held in Budva in November last year. The delegates shared challenges and lessons learned when it comes to multi-sectoral cooperation. Customs, prosecutors, and the police worked together in groups to thoroughly discuss the issues facing each sector and plan



ahead.

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. The Network held its first meeting in Durrës, Albania on 23-24 September 2014.

The United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 2220 on combating the "illicit transfer destabilizing accumulation and misuse" of small arms and light weapons on 22 May 2015.

EU SUPPORT OF SEESAC DISARMAMENT AND ARMS CONTROL ACTIVITIES IN SOUTH EAST EUROPE (EUSAC)

The European Union entrusted SEESAC with the implementation of a series of region-wide activities in the period 2014 – 2016 through **EU COUNCIL DECISION 2013/730/CFSP**. The regional course is part of Component 1 of the resulting EUSAC Project (EU Support of SEESAC Disarmament and Arms Control Activities in South East Europe) which is an integral part of the SEESAC SALW Control portfolio.

EUSAC marks a continuation of the trust placed in SEESAC by the EU since 2002. The Union previously supported SEESAC through Council Decision 2002/842/CFSP, extended and amended by Council Decisions 2003/807/CFSP and 2004/791/CFSP. Most recently, the Union supported SEESAC arms control activities through Council Decision 2010/179/CFSP.

Designed in close cooperation with national authorities, the EUSAC project works on the following five interrelated streams of activities:

- Increased security of stockpiles: through the renovation and security improvements to storages of arms and ammunition.
- Stockpile reduction: through the destruction of surplus arms and ammunition held in storages.
- Improved marking, tracing and registration of SALW: through the provision of support to the establishment or enhancement of existing weapons registration and record-keeping systems.
- Improved regional cooperation on awareness raising, information sharing and knowledge transfer: through the facilitation of regional cooperation between national institutions tasked with arms control.
- Implementation of collection and awareness raising campaigns.

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

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