

Third Meeting of the Regional Information Exchange Process on Arms Export Controls

The third meeting of the Regional Information Exchange Process on Arms Export Controls took place on 23 - 24 November 2010 in Belgrade, with the participation of delegations from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia.



The meeting was preceded by a press conference where SEESAC presented the regional report on arms export in 2008, and, after that, representatives from Albania, BiH, Serbia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia presented their national reports on arms exports.

As part of the process of transparency of national policies in the field of global affairs within the framework of the Regional Information Exchange Process, the meeting started with a presentation by the BiH delegation on their work as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council. Specifically, they informed the gathering about their position on the resolutions considered by the UNSC in the last six months.

SEESAC then presented an update of the development of the Regional Database on Registered Brokers. The database needs to undergo additional modifications in order to comply with the data fields identified by the Western Balkan countries. Currently Croatia and Montenegro have submitted data on the registered brokers. BiH and Serbia will submit data by the next meeting in March 2011. Albania and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia stated that they currently do not have registered brokers for arms exports. Their representatives will provide an update on this issue at the next regional meeting.

Representatives from Bosnia and Herzegovina shared the results from a data-gathering exercise for arms imports and exports held jointly with the custom authorities in BiH. The exercise identified three areas in need of further assistance: capacity building for customs officials on the arms import-export legislation; practical seminars for identification of weapons and dual-use goods from the military list of BiH; and training on risk assessment for arms transits and exports.

The delegations were presented with a comparative evaluation of the work of the Western Balkan countries in the area of development and publication of annual arms exports reports. The achievements of the region were compared with the current EU practices and results in this field. The evaluation concludes that both the EU annual report and the regional report on arms exports in Western Balkans represent important instruments of transparency. The reports have served to drive and consolidate improvements in reporting at the national level and provide insight into the arms export policies of the states involved. It was concluded that, within the EU, levels of reporting remain insufficient while the timeliness of both reports leaves room for improvement. Furthermore, the evaluation concludes that States in the Western Balkans have demonstrated strong willingness and ability in producing national reports on arms exports that are as transparent or more transparent than those produced in EU member states. In several areas - such as the inclusion of detailed descriptions of arms licensed for export and exported and the provision of information on export licence denials - the reports that have been produced by states in the Western Balkans are as transparent as anything published in the world today.

SEESAC informed the meeting that questions on arms exports raised by Montenegro and Serbia have been answered by EU COARM. The delegations will review the EU COARM's answers and discuss them at the next regional meeting. Delegations agreed to invite interested EU COARM members to attend the next meeting.

The delegation of Albania distributed samples of the forms used by AKSHE during the licensing procedures. The other delegations shared the sources from which the same information about their national forms can be obtained. SEESAC presented the concept for the development of a trans-regional information exchange process with the participation of the Western Balkans countries and countries from the Middle East as the main trading partners for weapons and military equipment. The concept calls for closer exchange of information between licencing authorities in the Western Balkans and Middle East countries on the following issues:

- National legislation;
- Implementation of the criteria for licence approval; and

- Post-exports control.

The delegations requested that SEESAC elaborates further on the modalities for such trans-regional information exchange and present options at the next regional meeting.

Delegations discussed the implementation of internal compliance programmes by the national industries engaged in the production and transportation of military equipment. At the next regional meeting, SEESAC will present an overview of the best practices from the EU in this area. Croatia will present the information about their national internal compliance programme.

Delegations once again discussed options for the exchange of information about licence denials. A consensus was reached to share information only on two types of data from the licence denials. This information was deemed insufficient to assist the countries to make relevant decisions. An agreement was reached that countries can share more information about licence denials bi-laterally on ad hoc basis.

NEXT MEETING AGENDA:

The next meeting will include:

- An update by BiH on their work as a non-permanent UN Council Security member;
- A review of national arms export policies to specific geographical regions;
- Presentations by Croatia of the implementation of the TRACKER system;
- Options for initiations of a trans-regional information exchange;
- Update on the regional database on registered brokers;
- Presentations by Croatia and SEESAC on the internal compliance programmes;
- Cooperation between customs authorities and the institutions responsible for issuing import and export licenses.

The next regional meeting will take place in Croatia, on 16-17 March 2011.

The Agenda of the meeting can be downloaded [here](#).

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