

## CLOSING REMARKS

14<sup>th</sup> Regional Coordination Meeting on the implementation of the Roadmap for a Sustainable Solution to the Legal Possession, Misuse and Trafficking of SALW, their Ammunition and Explosives in the Western Balkans

Excellency,

Dear Colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

- We've come to the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> Regional Coordination Meeting, in sunny Tirana for those of you who joined us in person, which I hope allowed all of you a little escape from the grey and the cold of the rest of Europe.
- We couldn't have asked for a more significant backdrop to the closing of this meeting, with today marking the **International Human Rights Day**. Let me stress that the proliferation and use of weapons directly threaten, violate, and undermine a range of fundamental human rights, including the **Right to Life and Security, the Right to Health and Education and the Protection of Civilians, to name a few**. And this seems a good occasion to me, to repeat what was already mentioned yesterday and is the ultimate objective the Roadmap is striving for, **which is to build a safer future for all people**, where citizens can live free from violence and fear, thus meaning their fundamental human rights can be respected, protected, and fulfilled.
- Allow me also to thank all the delegations for the invaluable contributions and updates, which produced another successful meeting. It is becoming increasingly difficult to keep these updates within the time allocated, which is a simple indication of the increased efforts and results, yet on our side we will aim for the future meetings to dedicate more time to focused, inter-active and thematic discussions.

- Let me also emphasize a key message coming out of the preliminary findings of the Final Roadmap Review: **Its implementation has had a positive impact on regional trust and cooperation on SALW control.**
- In the wake of growing polarization, violence, and instability worldwide, which put international arms control at risk, examples like the Western Balkans Roadmap show the importance of consensus and coordinated action for effective SALW control.
- The meeting took note of the progress reported by all jurisdictions in particular in the area investigations, ballistic examinations, increased detection capacities, strengthened operational cooperation, and capabilities of prosecution of firearms related crimes. An increased number of jurisdictions are reporting concrete steps and activities across the roadmap goals through the development of SOPs, accreditation of processes, development of guidelines and integration in the educational system curricula, training of trainers, ensuring thus a sustainable approach **in building the capacities required to tackle the firearms related threats**
- The Firearms Focal Points where these are now operational have become key units in ensuring the concrete results and demonstrating how the FFPs have become central in ensuring improved investigations and contributing to a more proactive approach in operational cooperation with the counterparts in the region and the EU law enforcement agencies.
- A number of important activities was reported in translating the policy commitments of gender mainstreaming into SALW Control at the operational level whether through awareness raising or in preventing gender-based violence. Allow me to highlight one of the findings from our AVMP: for the first time since 2018, the AVMP recorded **no women killed by a firearm** in a domestic setting. I hope we will be able to report the same in the upcoming meeting.

- We also kept note in particular of the ongoing progress related to Goal 1 and harmonization of legal framework with the EU Acquis and UN Firearms Protocol, with key laws in several jurisdictions pending adoption in 2026, but also of challenges associated with the drafting and adoption process in each jurisdiction.
- The important role and contribution of civil society organizations was highlighted by several jurisdictions and we look forward to supporting you in the future to ensure a more meaningful contribution from their side, which in turn would take us a step further towards a whole of society approach in the implementation of the roadmap.
- Impressive and innovative efforts were shared during the meeting on outreach and awareness-raising on the dangers of firearms by all jurisdictions.
- Allow me very shortly recall some interesting data from the most recent SEESAC's demand study. The study showed that unfortunately only 23% of respondents think the region is safe. Yet, the vast majority of residents (78%) responded they do not want to own firearms and 60%, responded they would oppose a family member or close friend acquiring firearms- The percentage of what respondents think is the main motive people possess firearm majority responded: as means of protection (33%). The percentage of the main reason people would like to own a firearm though is: Recreation (46%), protection of self and family (7%).
- The data convey two important messages: **that even though majority of citizens perceive the region still as unsafe, they overwhelmingly reject personal firearm ownership as a mean for self-protection.**
- What is I think new though **is that there is visible difference between the reality and the perceptions of unsafety.** And to narrow this difference we need to continue the work in **addressing the root causes of insecurity and continue fostering the trust in the security providers through awareness, outreach and stronger cooperation with the communities.**

- Let me conclude by extending my sincere gratitude to the respected speakers throughout the meeting, to the SALW Commissions once again for the comprehensive reports during these two days, and to the chairs of the different sessions.
- I would also thank the donors supporting the implementation of the roadmap in particular the European Union for the announced continued support in the last session.
- As always I would not want to conclude without thanking the SEESAC team working behind the scenes on the logistic and substantive preparations for this meeting.
- Many thanks to Ana, Marija and Andreja for their tireless efforts enabling the logistics of this meeting, and Igor for ensuring the visibility of your activities and capturing the key moments of the meeting. And to my colleagues working around the clock to consolidate and prepare the reports ahead of this meeting: Nenad, Edin, Majlinda and Violeta.
- Please also join me in thanking the interpreters and technicians for their tireless work in this meeting.
- For those of you travelling wishing you a safe trip, and to those who are staying for the regional meeting of SALW commissions tomorrow, I look forward to another productive meeting.
- My best wishes also for a festive season and happy 2026!