

CLOSING REMARKS

10th Regional Coordination Meeting on the implementation of the Roadmap for a Sustainable Solution to the Legal Possession, Misuse and Trafficking of SALW and their Ammunition in the Western Balkans

Dear colleagues, Ladies, and Gentlemen,

We came to the end of the 10th Regional Coordination Meeting of the Western Balkans SALW Control Roadmap, held here in sunny Tirana.

Allow me in conclusion to summarize some of the key points which came out clearly from the discussions and your important updates during these two days:

- First and foremost, it came out clearly again that the successful implementation of the Western Balkans SALW Control Roadmap counts on your dedicated work, your strong commitment towards the implementation of the roadmap but also towards a strong spirit of cooperation, which as it has been repeatedly emphasized is quite unique. It is inspiring the replication of this approach in other regions and in addressing other priorities.
- Regional cooperation at all levels and sharing of information were emphasized throughout the discussions as key elements in addressing our common security challenges. Bearing in mind the threats deriving from an increasingly challenging geo-political environment, cooperation in the field of SALW control specifically, becomes ever more important.
- We take note of affirmation by the jurisdictions and partners on the continuation of the revision process of the Roadmap for implementation beyond 2024 and the expressed support by the donors for this 2nd phase of the Roadmap.
- Ongoing work in the implementation of the roadmap was reported in particular towards harmonization of legal framework with EU Acquis and ensuring the

compliance with the UN Firearms Protocol. Concrete challenges were highlighted, including the slow-down caused by the political situation in several jurisdictions, as well as the response to the tragic events that prompted some jurisdictions to introduce additional amendments aiming to further tighten control of legal possession of firearms. The need for expertise in the development of the legal framework related to explosive precursors was identified, but we also noted the assistance offered in this regard including from the EU.

- We also took note of the important **progress in the operationalization of firearms focal points** where these have been established; the increased exchange of operational information and cooperation with EU and its law enforcement agencies, among which with Europol, and the increased efforts in strengthening capacities for investigation of firearms related crimes.
- Strengthening of penal policy of firearms related offences was highlighted as a priority in particular related to trafficking of firearms.
- The active participation by the Western Balkans in both planning and implementation of joint actions in the framework of EMPACT and several operational actions was also highlighted, as well as the increased number of seized FAE in these actions.
- Significant ongoing efforts in increasing detection capacities to counter illicit trafficking of firearms, ammunition and essential components and concrete results in this regard were reported by all jurisdictions.
- One notable area of progress centers around awareness-raising under Goal 4. Following mass shootings as well as several femicide cases around the region, robust awareness raising activities have been initiated. We heard about several awareness raising campaigns about dangers of misuse of firearms including in domestic violence, celebrator shootings.

- We also noted the renewed commitment of funding support mentioned by EU Member States through the funding mechanisms and extend an invitation to donors to further contribute to the Multi Partner Trust Fund but also other mechanisms in order to ensure a donor coordinated approach and continued implementation of the Roadmap.
- Let me conclude by extending first my sincere gratitude to the respected speakers at the opening session for their inspiring speeches, to the SALW Commissions for the very comprehensive reports during these two days but also to the chairs of the different sessions.
- Let us build on the momentum of this event and continue working towards achieving our common goal for a Safer Region and a safer Europe.
- Last but not least, let me thank the team working in organizing all the complex logistics for this meeting Ana, Marija and Andreja but also the other colleagues working on preparation of the reports, Nenad, Ivica, Urban and Violeta.
- I would like also to thank the interpreters and technicians for their tireless work in this meeting.

Wish you all safe travels back.