

3rd Western Balkan Roadmap Coordination Meeting, 3 July 2020

Briefing by

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Excellencies,

Partners,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to address the 3rd Regional Roadmap Coordination Meeting on behalf of the United Nations Development Programme. We are meeting in extraordinary times. But I am very pleased to see that we have found the way to come together, as planned, and maybe this is also a way for the future to extend the participation as we can connect more people around the globe.

I would in particular like to commend the Small Arms and Light Weapons Commissions from the region for their strong commitment.

This high-level engagement and ownership from the region are a strong evidence of long-lasting cooperation and spirit of trust that has been established in this area in the Western Balkans. It is a remarkable example which further promotes

transparency, confidence and stability, which are so much needed in this region even beyond the scope of this Roadmap.

Second of all, I would like to thank the EU. It is with funding support through an EU Council Decision that UNDP is coordinating and monitoring the Roadmap implementation through SEESAC. SEESAC is our joint initiative with the Regional Cooperation Council –an excellent partnership that we hope to further build on. It has a clear mandate from the governments in the region to facilitate regional cooperation on small arms control, provide technical support to the authorities, support development and implementation of measures and support donor coordination. So, I think all of these partnerships are making it possible for us to have the results that we see out of this Roadmap.

Apart from the EU, our particular gratitude goes to Governments of Germany and France who were ready to assist the Roadmap development process through their Franco-German initiative for the Western Balkans that very quickly brought on board other stakeholders and supporters.

In particular I would like to thank all the donors that are providing funding support for Roadmap implementation. There are three funding mechanisms that are currently supporting Roadmap implementation, the NATO and OSCE trust funds, but also a UN trust fund that was established jointly by UNDP and UNODC. International organisations' ability to support the Government's efforts depend among other also donor contributions. I would like to thank the governments of

Germany and France, the UK, Norway, Sweden, and the Netherlands for their contributions to the UN trust fund that supports efforts implemented by UNDP and UNODC. I really believe that the success of this Roadmap and implementation is because of this broad partnership that brings together the support to the Western Balkans but also brings together the engagement in the region. The first four projects supported through the trust fund were just initiated in the first half of this year and we are hoping new ones will quickly follow – review of new proposals is ongoing as we speak.

We at UNDP are concerned about the impact that misuse and trafficking of weapons and ammunition has on human lives. *Armed violence remains disturbingly prevalent in many parts of the world.* More human rights abuses are committed with small arms than with any other means. They are also a leading type of weapon generating acts of gender-based and sexual violence and a tool for terror.

UNDP has been supporting small arms and light weapons control measures through SEESAC and country offices for over a decade and a half. Our country offices are currently implementing a 5,5 million EUR contribution from Government of Germany supporting efforts to address misuse of firearms in domestic violence, advancing capacities of ballistic laboratories, and supporting other measures to combat illicit trafficking of firearms. The US State Department is supporting efforts to enhance physical security and stockpile management. We currently have 18 projects under implementation, all developed and implemented in close cooperation with the national authorities, in particular the small arms and light weapons commissions.

I am very happy to hear that the good practices developed in the Western Balkans with our support, are replicated in other parts of the world. I know that a dedicated Roadmap following the example of the Western Balkans Roadmap was just adopted in the Caribbean, and I am also very pleased about our partnership with UNODA in which SEESAC was sharing the lessons learnt on how to integrate the gender perspective in SALW control, through a coaching programme with UNODA's regional centres in Asia, Africa and Latin America and Caribbean. So, this is clearly an example of sharing the experience and based on that experience replicating and scaling up the interventions in this very important area. Special greetings to them as I know they have also connected or will be watching the recording of this meeting.

Last but not at all least, let me also thank our partners - we value our extensive partnerships with international organizations and agencies engaged in this area. We work closely with OSCE, NATO, UNODC, EUROPOL, EMPACT and other partners active on the ground as coordination of efforts in support to the national authorities has proven to be a key precondition for success.

Allow me to conclude by congratulating everyone involved for the remarkable efforts and remind ourselves that we need to continue this commitment in ensuring a sustainable solution to the illegal possession, misuse and illicit trafficking of SALW and their ammunition in the Western Balkans. Let me assure you in our continued support and commitment to this program and we will continue

implementing and guiding the process as needed from our perspective, working very closely both at the national level and with the international partners. Thank you very much.

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