

Podgorica, 31 January - 1 February 2018

Meeting of Deputy Ministers  
of the Interior and Foreign Affairs



REINFORCING  
COMMITMENTS TOWARDS  
**SALW CONTROL**  
IN SOUTH EAST EUROPE

## Joint statement

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**by the Deputy Ministers of Interior and Deputy Ministers of Foreign Affairs in South East Europe**

We, the Deputy Ministers of the Interior and Foreign Affairs in South East Europe, met on 1 February 2018, in Podgorica, determined to further strengthen our commitments towards Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) Control in South East Europe, as a necessary regional, coordinated approach.

*We appreciate* the efforts of the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany, the Regional Cooperation Council, the European Union (EU) and SEESAC for hosting this high-level conference, and the support provided to socio-economic development and human security in South East Europe.

*We express* our strong concern that, many years after the end of the armed conflicts in our region, the **proliferation and illicit trafficking of SALW** is still a concern and challenge for the institutions and societies of South East Europe.

*We recognize* that the proliferation and illicit trafficking of SALW is a constant threat for the internal security of Europe, as some of these weapons have reportedly been used in terrorist attacks.

*We noted* during the meeting that **significant progress and important achievements have been made** in relation to: stronger legislative frameworks and policies; improved management of armament and ammunition stockpiles through security infrastructure upgrades and training of personnel; reduction of stockpiles through destruction; increased transparency and tighter control of arms transfers; improved marking, tracing and record-keeping systems of firearms; addressing the differentiated effects of SALW misuse on women and men; and increased cooperation within the region through knowledge advancement and information sharing.

*We acknowledge* the role of SEESAC, with the support of the EU and other international donors, in the above stated progress in strengthening national capacities to control and reduce the proliferation, illicit trafficking and misuse of SALW, as well as in ensuring coordination and enhancing regional cooperation in the broad spectrum of arms control.

*We recognize* that, despite significant progress, **challenges related to illicit possession, proliferation, misuse and trafficking** are likely to impede economic and social development of South East Europe.

Therefore, we are driven by our common determination, and reinforce the political commitment to put

an end to illicit possession, misuse and trafficking of firearms, and ensure an efficient and effective SALW control by:

- ❑ *Committing* to further strengthening the **development, implementation and monitoring of objectively verifiable SALW strategies** and harmonization with international regimes and EU security policies in the field of SALW control, thus **preparing for EU membership**.
- ❑ *Working* together to increase the transparency, enforcement, and impact of SALW policies and share information as well as good practices to **shape a comprehensive regional approach** to further reducing the impact and proliferation of SALW.
- ❑ *Ensuring* that the **strategic response** to the problem of SALW proliferation is based on vigilant and periodic local and regional assessments of the situation performed through continuous analysis of disaggregated data, collation of good practices and new methods used to prevent and combat the proliferation of SALW.
- ❑ *Committing* to **securing the storage** of SALW and its ammunition; and **reducing stockpiles** to diminish the risk of unwanted explosions, misuse, and proliferation.
- ❑ *Combatting* illicit trafficking of firearms by ensuring proper **marking, tracing and record keeping** of firearms, as well as due criminal investigations, collections, seizures, confiscations, voluntary surrenders, management and disposal of firearms, ammunition and explosives.
- ❑ *Enhancing institutional capacities to prevent, detect, and interdict illicit flows* across regional boundaries and borders, and join efforts to increase border security to prevent and counter the illicit trafficking of firearms.
- ❑ *Committing* to bringing SALW **deactivation** regulation in each one of our jurisdictions up to EU and Organization for Security Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) standards to further reduce firearms in illegal possession, and to thoroughly monitor and implement the necessary changes.
- ❑ *Strengthening, monitoring, and periodic reporting on law enforcement response* in preventing and countering firearms misuse and trafficking through joint controls, joint actions, parallel and joint investigation teams.
- ❑ *Implementing criminal justice response* programmes, such as the system of Firearms Focal Points, to successfully prevent, combat, prosecute and adjudicate the misuse and illicit trafficking of firearms and their unauthorized reactivation.
- ❑ *Committing* to **reviewing and advocating for further strengthening and due enforcement of penal policy** response, particularly with regards to illegal possession, as well as all forms of misuse of firearms, ammunition and explosives.
- ❑ *Advancing* further legislation on **transfers** of arms and ammunition, in line with the Arms Trade

Treaty, EU standards on arms transfers and the EU Code of Conduct, and monitoring its implementation.

- ❑ *Working* together to rethink, address the **underlying causes, and effects** of armed violence, systematically enforce appropriate objectively verifiable measures, and annually report on the methodology pursued and the results achieved through objectively verifiable indicators.
- ❑ *Ensuring* effective mainstreaming of **gender in SALW control**, facilitating women's full and meaningful participation in all SALW policymaking; as well as addressing and reporting on the measures undertaken against the widespread misuse of firearms in domestic violence, and linkages between gender norms and demand for firearms.
- ❑ *Developing* general and specific programmes and partnerships to promote **public education and raise awareness** of the dangers of misuse of the firearms, precisely tailored for targeted groups, and annually report on the expected and achieved results.

Against that background, we hereby express our commitment to further strengthen, formulate and report on our individual and regional response of South East Europe and to continue to cooperate, share information and good practices, as well as exchange expertise at both policy and operational levels.

We fully commit to elaborating a **Roadmap for the Western Balkans**, under the auspices of SEESAC and the Federal Republic of Germany, to be adopted at the London Summit within the Berlin process that shall define precise and tailor-made objectively verifiable measures and targets devoted to small arms and light weapons control in order to comprehensively prevent, pursue and prosecute the illegal possession, misuse and trafficking of weapons in the region. We also commit to updating our SALW strategies and action plans for the implementation of the roadmap.

In this context, we welcome the donor coordination that the Federal Republic of Germany and France will host with the Western Balkan partners in order to come up with an analysis and needs assessment that shall serve as the basis for appropriate donor funding for the road map and action plan activities.

We look forward to developing an even stronger partnership with the EU, the Federal Republic of Germany, the South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SEESAC) as well as other relevant partners in combatting the proliferation, illicit trafficking and misuse of SALW and ammunition.