

Conference on Firearms Control Initiatives in Southeast Europe

Zagreb, 22 - 24 April 2008

**Co-organized with
The South Eastern and Eastern Europe
Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms
and Light Weapons (SEESAC)
and
The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
(UNODC)**

RACVIAC - CENTRE FOR SECURITY COOPERATION, in close collaboration with SEESAC and UNODC, conducted a Conference on Firearms Control Initiatives in Southeast Europe from the 22nd to the 24th April 2008.



Conference participants

The purpose of the conference was to share the current experience of participating States in regulating, preventing and combating the illicit manufacturing and trafficking in firearms and ammunition, to examine the status of implementation of the legal obligations under the UN Protocol on Firearms among the Southeast

***Promoting regional
dialogue and
regional
cooperation***

European countries, and to develop a consensus for a coherent and coordinated approach to the application of agreed controls, to avoid duplication of effort and to share information and knowledge amongst the authorities involved.

The conference gathered thirty-eight participants from eleven countries with intimate knowledge and experience in the area of firearms control, representing the lead Ministries with a mandate for firearms control, and parliamentary committees.



Plenary Session

During the three conference days a multinational team of experts provided an insight into international SALW norms and standards and subsequently

discussed the status of the their implementation in each country. The experts stressed the importance of identifying different ways of enhancing the bilateral, regional and inter-agency collaboration as to discuss lessons learned, challenges and problems, to share knowledge and experience as well as to seek common solutions.

***Developing
consensus building
and interagency
cooperation***

Making contacts for future networking



From right to left;

LTC Thomas Mergel, Planning and Liaison Officer, Western European Countries & International Organizations, RACVIAC - CENTRE FOR SECURITY COOPERATION, tmergel@racviac.org;

Mr. Efrem Radev, Senior Expert on Security Issues, Regional Co-operation Council (RCC), efrem.radev@rcc-see.org;

COL Vladimir Superina, Deputy Director & Chief of Staff of RACVIAC - CENTRE FOR SECURITY COOPERATION, vsuperina@racviac.org;

Ms. Amna Berbić, Small Arms Control Programme Manager/ Chief Technical Advisor, UNDP, aberbic@undp.ba;

Dr. Alun Howard, Policy Officer, International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA), alun.howard@iansa.org;

Mr. Diman Dimov, Team Leader SEESAC a.i., diman.dimov@undp.org;

AMB Nedžad Hadžimusić, Director of RACVIAC - CENTRE FOR SECURITY COOPERATION, nhadzimusic@racviac.org;

Ms. Nicole Maric, Crime Prevention Expert, Anti-Organized Crime and Law Enforcement Unit, Anti-Trafficking Section, UNODC, nicole.maric@unodc.org;

COL Claes Nilsson, Military Adviser, Permanent Delegation of Sweden to the OSCE and FSC co-ordinator for SALW, claes.nilsson@foreign.ministry.se;

COL Mihajlo Mladenović, Chief, Defense Conversion Cell, RACVIAC - CENTRE FOR SECURITY COOPERATION, mmladenovic@racviac.org;

MAJ Ermir Alibali, Conference Coordinator, alibali@racviac.org;

Conference Opening



From right to left; Ms. Nicole Maric, AMB Nedžad Hadžimusić, Keynote speaker Mr. Efrem Radev, Mr. Diman Dimov.

Mr. Efrem Radev expressed his content with this conference referring to it as the joint initiative of the two most valuable task forces inherited by RCC. He noted that RACVIAC and SEESAC were the initiatives bearing the birthmarks of regional cooperation and ownership and the countries of the region should follow this initiative by taking more ownership of all the processes in the region, especially those with regard to defence and security sector cooperation, and with a view to building the

lasting security and stability through political means and political dialogues. He welcomed constructive discussions and exchange of expert opinions and ideas, which would formulate right messages to relevant governmental institutions and legislative bodies as well as to RCC.

Plenary Sessions



Moderator: COL Claes Nilsson

The first plenary sessions ensured that all participants shared a Common Relevant Operational Picture (CROP) on SALW issues, by a presentation on international standards in small arms control. Ms. Nicole Maric, Anti-Organized Crime and Law Enforcement Unit Anti-Trafficking Section, UNODC gave a presentation on the UN Firearms Protocol and other relevant instruments. She stated the strategic importance of the Protocol as the only legally binding instrument on firearms aimed at setting the clear control measures to prevent the illicit manufacturing and trafficking of firearms. It was also noted that all the countries present at the conference were Party to the UNTOC, and had also ratified the Firearms Protocol. Ms. Maric reminded countries of their legal obligation to implement the Convention and the Firearms provisions.



Moderator: COL Mihajlo Mladenović

Discussions addressed the definition of firearms and the scope of application of the Protocol, in particular the participants agreed on the necessity to practical implementation of the protocol, such as marking requirements, record-keeping and tracing, to adopt appropriate legislation, but also to harmonize those laws and regulations among all the countries of the region, which would again seek for a closer collaboration of the countries' relevant governmental institutions, ministries, NGOs and other agencies and organizations involved. These efforts were welcomed, but there was still a strong need for a better coordination.

The experts reiterated that entire region should put more effort to ensure constructive exchange of information and expertise as to avoid duplication, thus Mr. Diman Dimov, Team Leader SEESAC a.i., encouraged participants to ponder on the suitable form that would deal with coordinating those efforts. He emphasized the necessity to maintain a functioning and efficient network of national focal points for issues related to the implementation of the SALW commitments.

In his presentation Mr. Dimov provided an overview of the achievements of the region in the area of SALW control and pointed out the main success stories in every country. Reflecting on transformation process between the Stability Pact and the Regional Cooperation Center, he re-stated the importance to continue working towards ownership of the regional initiatives. He also reiterated that countries should take the initiative, identify their needs, formulate their requests and actively participate in the contributions, thus taking greater ownership over the region. Following the regional overview of SALW initiatives, Ms. Amna Berbic and Mr. Zachary Taylor, UNDP Programme Managers in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia, provided detailed information on the holistic SALW programmes implemented in those countries.

Countries Presentations



Speaker: Ms. Mihaela Barić, Croatia

Participants Consolidated Findings



The consolidated findings from the participants of the conference are as follows:

The participants agreed upon a need for developing new ways and greater opportunities for sharing common relevant operational picture among all relevant organizations and institutions with a view to promoting stronger cooperation and avoiding duplications.

The countries should consider launching media campaigns to increase SALW awareness.

There was still a strong need for a closer cooperation between the governments, communities and NGOs as to insert topics on SALW into their activities with a view to building stronger programme awareness.

The participants stressed the urgent necessity for international cooperation and assistance, including financial and technical assistance, as appropriate, to support and facilitate efforts at the local, national, and regional levels to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects.



They all agreed on the necessity of conducting these kinds of conferences in the future and proposed organizing seminars with a practical part, which would also provide the participants with the appropriate training.

Subject Matter Experts Suggestions



Key findings from the guest expert faculty are as follows:

The countries should continue to fully implement the provisions of the UNTOC and the Firearms Protocol and specially promote the harmonization of legislation on brokering and reduce the number of international brokers.

Members of the Parliaments have a unique and important role to play in terms of legislative initiatives and mobilizing resources for implementation of the SALW provisions.

It is important to recognize that measures taken by the countries will be determined in part by their capacity to undertake appropriate action.

Countries should adopt administrative procedures to exercise effective control over the export, import and transit of SALW and their ammunition, including the establishment or maintenance of effective systems of export, import, and international transit licenses or authorizations for transfers.

Focal Points are a key access point for cooperation and assistance in implementation of the SALW provisions hence it is important to continue maintaining a functional and efficient regional network.

The countries should encourage negotiations, where appropriate, with the aim of concluding relevant legally binding instruments aimed at preventing, combating and eradicating the illicit trade in SALW in all its aspects,

Countries of the regions should develop, where appropriate, measures to enhance transparency.

Technical assistance is valuable, as are broader support and capacity-building mechanisms.

A clear framework for needs assessment is required.

Summary

During the last session all the participants agreed upon the need for establishing a common approach in the area of SALW, recognizing the important contribution of civil society, including non-

governmental organizations and industry in, inter alia, assisting Governments to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in SALW in all its aspects. Therefore, they proposed setting more common initiatives in the future. They also expressed a support for initiating a discussion on the implementation of holistic arms violence prevention programmes with a focus on the local communities.

There is a strong mandate inherent in the participant's conclusions, which will contribute to RACVIAC ongoing Needs Assessment.

All countries representatives wanted SEESAC and UNODC to support and assist them. This engagement would then send a strong message to the international donor community that countries of the region are taking more ownership of the initiatives by submitting a part to the limited budget and asking SEESAC and UNODC to deliver the requested needs.

The countries had already achieved a significant progress in this field, but they should move one step further and engage their parliaments to vote for allocating funds for such initiatives.

All the participants and representatives present expressed their readiness and strong commitment to promote regional cooperation, and organizations expressed their willingness to assist the countries in the process.



The feedback of participants strengthened RACVIAC aim to continue with this subject at the next activity on SALW, which should be organized this year.

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