EU Statement on the consideration of the implementation of the UN Programme of Action

by

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Sixth Biennial Meeting of States on the UN Programme of Action to prevent, combat and eradicate
the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects

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It's an honour for me to speak on behalf of the European Union. The Candidate Countries Montenegro* and Serbia*; the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova, align themselves with this statement.

Allow me first to congratulate you on your appointment as chairperson. The EU welcomes the transparent and inclusive way you have steered preparations for this meeting, including the informal consultations and early circulation of the Chair's drafts. In the view of the EU the objective of this biennial meeting is to agree on recommendations on a way forward to an improved implementation of the UN Programme of Action and preparing the third Review Conference in 2018.

The diversion, illicit trade and unauthorised use of small arms and light weapons still constitutes a serious impediment for peace and security, growth, development, and security in the world. The EU considers that the Programme of Action continues to provide a valid and effective strategy to cope with this problem and that these meetings remain the global forum to share and develop further action on national, regional and international levels.

The European Union welcomes today's opportunity to consider the implementation of the UN Programme of Action. We welcome the Chair's draft on this topic. The EU's position and the elements that we would like to see included in this meeting's outcome-document can be found in the working paper the EU submitted on May the 4th.

With this statement the EU would like to highlight the following elements:

The EU remains convinced that an effective implementation of the UN PoA requires the inclusion of ammunition in its scope.

States should address the growing importance of internet and on-line transactions with regard to the illicit trade in SALW and their parts and components. The curbing of online trafficking is one of the objectives of the EU Action plan against illicit trafficking and use of firearms and explosives.

BMS6 should welcome the inclusion of small arms and light weapons in the scope of the Arms Trade Treaty, acknowledging that efforts to better regulate transfer of conventional arms contribute to the prevention of diversion, un-authorised export and illicit trade in SALW. The EU would like to recall chapter II paragraph 11 of the UN PoA where states undertake to assess applications for export authorizations taking into account in particular the risk of diversion of SALW and § 12 to put in place authenticated end-user certificates. In this regard the EU welcomes UNIDIR's new publication on End User Control Systems.

The EU welcomes the adoption of the 2030 agenda for Sustainable Development, including SDG Targets 16.1 and 16.4 that are shared objectives with the UN PoA.

The EU is very supportive for the involvement of civil society in BMS6 and UN PoA-related activities in general. The EU also supports the involvement of the SALW-industry, especially in the discussion on the consequences of developments in SALW-design and technology.

Support for Physical Security and Stockpile Management (PSSM) is essential to prevent diversion. Physical measures like fences, locks etc. are necessary, but only sustainable when part of an approach built on legislation, management and monitoring. The security of stockpiles should lie in well-trained and experienced professionals who have a thorough knowledge of procedures, norms, regulations and international standards for the handling of small arms - such as the International Small Arms Control Standards (ISACS) - and ammunition - such as the International Ammunition Technical Guidelines (IATG). The EU along with its
Member States is investing considerable resources to assist states in the field of physical security and stockpile management, notably in the Sahel-region, the OSCE area, including South-East Europe.

Moreover, the EU considers that the potential of available technology should be fully explored to improve stockpile security, this includes the application of electronics such as RFID in SALW-design.

Destruction should be the preferred option for the destination of surplus SALW. States should take legislative measures to make sure that reactivation of destroyed and deactivated SALW is physically impossible. With its Regulation 2015/2403 the EU created a standard on deactivation of firearms. This measure was taken after the tracing of firearms used in terrorist attacks revealed that the illegal re-activation of poorly deactivated guns was a source of firearms for terrorists.

Mr Chair,

This example illustrates how tracing the source of diversion and exchange of information between relevant authorities support the fight against the illicit trade in SALW. Improving the exchange of information between law enforcement, customs agencies and arms control authorities on a national, regional and international level can yield tremendous results and should therefore be a shared objective. On a regional level EU member states have created an electronic database to exchange information on arms export license denials. This database will also provide information on entities that have a diversion track record. On a global scale the EU believes in the value of databases where information on identified diversion is connected, compiled and shared. Therefore the EU has supported the Global Firearms Trafficking Study of UNODC, the iArms database of Interpol and the iTrace database by Conflict Armament Research.

The EU would like to see a reference to UNSCR 1325 of 2000 on Women, Peace and Security in the BMS6 outcome document, and in this regard a special reference to UNSCR 2242 of 2015 that specifically encourages empowering women with the efforts related to the fight against illicit SALW. The EU wishes to encourage donors to integrate the gender aspects in SALW-control projects. When conceiving and implementing SALW-control projects, identifying gender aspect and taking them into account is a pre-condition for effectiveness.

Finally the EU wants to highlight the role of the UN PoA in the fight against terrorism. The effective implementation of the UN PoA contributes to thwarting the acquisition of SALW by terrorists, thus reducing their firepower and the potential impact of their attacks. In this light synergies between UN PoA and UN counter terrorism initiatives should be considered. The EU notes that man-portable air-defence systems (the so-called MANPADs) pose a specific threat of terrorist use against civil aviation and therefore deserve special attention in the context of the UN PoA.