converted firearms include imitation guns—such as alarm weapons—and deactivated firearms that have been modified to function as real, lethal-purpose weapons. Basic engineering skills, available workshop space, and commonly used tools are often all that is required to perform some conversions. In the last 20 years, legal loopholes and the absence of regional standards have enabled the proliferation of different types of converted firearms across Europe. While petty criminals are generally the primary users of converted alarm weapons, organized crime groups and terrorist actors have used both reactivated firearms and converted ‘acoustic expansion weapons.’ There is also a growing concern that organized crime and terrorist actors might increasingly resort to converted alarm weapons.

This panel will examine the scale and mechanics of the firearms conversion challenge in Europe and beyond, and how terrorist actors have exploited these loopholes. The European experience in dealing with this issue is relevant beyond the continent, as it is clear that the proliferation of these firearms takes place in other global sub-regions and especially in Africa.

Chair: Ambassador Alice Guitton, France

Presentations:

- Converted firearms in Europe: Trends and challenges / Nicolas Florquin, Small Arms Survey
- Terrorist access to (converted) firearms in Europe: Project SAFTE / Nils Duquet, Flemish Peace Institute
- Converted firearms beyond Europe: Somalia case study / Nazanine Moshiri, UN Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea
- Discussant: John Hageman, Interpol

For more information:

- From Legal to Lethal: Converted Firearms in Europe, Report, Small Arms Survey, April 2018
- Firearms Acquisition by Terrorists in Europe: Research Findings and Policy Recommendations of Project SAFTE, Report, Flemish Peace Institute, April 2018