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# Preface

**THE IMPACT OF UNCONTROLLED PROLIFERATION OF SALW** remains a major threat to development in many regions of the world. It undermines the rule of law, fuels crime and instability, exacerbates tensions, negates security confidence-building measures and impedes social and economic development. Therefore SALW control is often an important national priority for reducing the impact of SALW and securing a safer environment – crucial among the conditions necessary for a region to succeed in normalisation.

The term ‘SALW control’ refers to those activities which, together, aim to reduce the social, economic and environmental impact of uncontrolled SALW proliferation and possession. These are: cross border control issues, information management, legislative and regulatory measures, awareness and communications strategies, collection and destruction operations, and stockpile management. Yet ‘SALW control’ and its constituent activities cannot be addressed in isolation, as there is significant overlap with complementary humanitarian and developmental programmes, and in some cases with peacekeeping and peace support operations. SALW control requires management planning at global, national and local levels, and involves international, national, commercial, NGO and military stakeholders operating under a variety of conditions.

The physical collection and destruction of recovered and surplus SALW are important activities that demonstrate the political will of a national government to comply with the contents of the UN Program of Action<sup>1</sup> and the OSCE Document<sup>2</sup> on SALW. They also act as a highly visible sign to the local community that efforts are being made to control the proliferation of SALW, and can therefore have a major impact on improving perceptions of human safety and security. Destruction is therefore a highly important component of any SALW national plan and intervention. It must be emphasised that the primary responsibility for SALW control lies with the government of the affected state. This responsibility should normally be vested in a national SALW authority,<sup>3</sup> which should be charged with the regulation, management and co-ordination of a national SALW control programme. The national SALW authority is responsible for establishing the national and local conditions that enable the effective management of SALW. It is ultimately responsible for all phases and facets of a SALW programme within its national boundaries, including the development and implementation of national SOPs and instructions.

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<sup>1</sup> UN Program of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. (UN Document A/CONF.192/15), 20 July 2001, <[disarmament.un.org/cab/poa.html](http://disarmament.un.org/cab/poa.html)>

<sup>2</sup> OSCE Document on Small Arms and Light Weapons, 20 November 2000.

<sup>3</sup> Regional Micro-Disarmament Standard 03.10, available on the SEESAC website, provides guidance on the establishment of national SALW commissions. See: <<http://www.seesac.org/resources/0310e.pdf>>

Recent efforts by the OSCE in developing their ‘Best Practice Guides’, and SEESAC in the development of Regional Micro-Disarmament Standards (RMDS), now means that national governments and international organisations have both strategic guidelines and operational procedures available to them for use during the development of SALW control intervention programmes. This has been a major step forward during the last year, as previously there was little available to stakeholders to assist them in the development of safe, efficient and effective programmes. The OSCE Guidelines and RMDS both draw on the lessons learned in the recent past, many of which have been obtained from the case studies contained within this research report.

The report highlights in more detail some of the lessons that can be learned from governments’ experiences in this field. Thus it is hoped that it will stimulate, and contribute to, political debate on the best way of dealing with surplus SALW. The selected case studies reflect the wide spectrum of progress made in dealing with the problem of surplus SALW; some represent the best in implementation practices, whilst others illustrate the very real problems of security, safety, technology and resource mobilisation that other countries face in implementing programmes. Time and space precluded including all OSCE countries.

It is apparent from the case studies that the factors relating to the disposal of weapons by sale or export have been well considered. The disposal of ammunition, however, remains more problematic. Ammunition destruction is technically more complex, logistically more challenging and much more expensive than weapon destruction. There were traditionally five options for the logistic disposal of ammunition and explosives: sale; gift; increased use at training; deep sea dumping; and destruction. These options are now not particularly viable. The sale or gift of ammunition and explosives must be in accordance with stringent export legislation, and in fact the quality and condition of much surplus stock means that it would be of little use to a ‘reputable’ end user. This is why so much ammunition ends up on the ‘grey’ or ‘black’ markets where the users’ quality and performance demands are not as stringent. Increased use at training is difficult to achieve, as many stockpiles are just too large for this to be an option. Massive increases in live firing also carry negative implications for confidence and security-building measures. Deep sea dumping is severely constrained or prohibited by the Oslo<sup>4</sup> and London<sup>5</sup> Conventions, and therefore is also not a viable option. This means that destruction, with all of its associated problems, is now the only real viable option.

It is highly unlikely that the international donor community can fund the destruction of all surplus SALW and ammunition within South Eastern Europe, let alone the much larger stockpiles within Central and Eastern Europe. This unfortunate fact means that prioritisation for future SALW and ammunition destruction should be developed based on:

- the identification of SALW and ammunition that pose the greatest risks to the civilian community in terms of explosive safety;
- ensuring the physical security of SALW and ammunition in order to reduce the risks of proliferation;
- the destruction of SALW (weapons only) in order to reduce the risks of proliferation;
- the destruction of that ammunition that presents a direct explosive safety risk to the civilian population, and can therefore be justified on humanitarian grounds alone;
- the destruction of ammunition that is at greatest risk of proliferation or is ‘attractive’ to terrorists and criminals. The detailed ammunition natures will inevitably be subject to the judgement of the individual donors;

<sup>4</sup> Oslo Convention for the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping from Ships and Aircraft, 15 February 1972.

<sup>5</sup> The Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter (London Convention), 29 December 1972.

- the capacity building of national institutions to continue the longer-term nationally financed, safe, efficient and effective destruction of SALW and ammunition to appropriate technical standards.

There is much to be done in this particular area and further detailed operational analysis and research is required.

SEESAC has a mandate under the Stability Pact Regional Implementation Plan<sup>6</sup> to fulfil, among others, operational objectives of: sharing information on and enhancing co-operation in the establishment and implementation of SALW control and reduction programmes and approaches among regional actors; and providing linkage and co-ordination with the other relevant regional initiatives. Therefore we are pleased to have been asked to contribute to this valuable research report by providing the Preface.

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This chapter is part of a wider research study entitled *Disposal of surplus small arms* which examines the policies and practices of ten Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) countries concerning surplus small arms. The report's ten case studies focus on stocks and determination of surpluses, as well as policies on exports, stockpile management and destruction. The report was initiated and co-ordinated by the Bonn International Center for Conversion (BICC) and carried out in close co-operation with the British American Security Information Council (BASIC), Saferworld and the Small Arms Survey.

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<sup>6</sup> Combating the Proliferation of SALW – Stability Pact Regional Implementation Plan for South Eastern Europe, 28 November 2001, <[www.stabilitypact.org](http://www.stabilitypact.org)>