

The EU Strategy to Combat Illicit Accumulation and Trafficking of SALW and their Ammunition

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Introduction

The devastating consequences of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) in certain parts of the world have been long recognised by the EU. In fact the EU is one of the foremost international actors in the fight against illicit accumulation and trafficking of SALW, through the various tools at its disposal. Yet, last December the European Council (composed of the heads of State and Government) judged that even more should be done.

It adopted a SALW Strategy which sets out the EU's policy and the lines along which concrete action shall be taken. This Strategy is a good example of the evolution of the EU over the last few years. It is no longer an organisation focused exclusively on trade and aid. The EU is developing a Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and is committed to play the role of a major actor on the international scene. The EU is active in the field of civil and military crisis management (European Security and Defence Policy, ESDP), and also in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation.

The EU has taken the view that the security challenge coming from SALW accumulation and trafficking has become so significant that it was important to develop a more coherent and strategic approach to the problem and to ensure that the Council, which is in charge of the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy, overlooks, streamlines and

¹ Views taken by the author are not intended to bind EU institutions and are not to be considered as official statement by the Council.

dynamises EU activities including those undertaken through Community instruments managed by the Commission.

To that end the EU Strategy on SALW has therefore tasked the Council Secretariat under the High Representative Javier Solana with ensuring this overall coherence of activities. In practice, within the Council Secretariat, Mrs Annalisa Giannella, the Personal Representative for non-proliferation, and her office are entrusted with this task.

Which Were the Political Starting Points for the Adoption of the New SALW Strategy?

By developing a strategy for combating the accumulation of and illicit trade in SALW and their ammunition, the EU wishes to provide a substantial contribution to multilateral efforts in this field. It is a response to the United Nations Programme of Action to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects, adopted on 20 July 2001, which reaffirms the need for complementarity at global, regional and national levels in its implementation and was a political signal for the Review Conference, which took place in New York in June/July 2006.

But above, all the SALW Strategy is the logical consequence of the fact that the EU now has a fully fledged European Security Strategy (ESS, adopted by EU Heads of State and Government in December 2003), which constitutes the Union's strategic approach. This Strategy notes that the post-Cold War environment is one of increasingly open borders in which internal and external aspects of security are intrinsically linked. In this context the ESS highlights five key challenges to be faced by the EU:

- Terrorism
- Proliferation of weapons of mass destruction
- Regional conflicts
- State failure
- Organised crime

The consequences of the illicit manufacture, transfer and circulation of small arms and light weapons and their excessive accumulation and uncontrolled spread are central to four of these five challenges. Indeed, SALW can contribute to terrorism and organised crime. They are a major factor in triggering and spreading conflicts, as well as in the collapse of state structures. As the SALW Strategy stresses, these conflicts, in which SALW were by far the most instrumental factor, have, since 1990, cost the lives of almost 4 million people and have forced over 18 million to leave their homes or countries.

In order to respond to these challenges, EU action under the ESS and the SALW Strategy is based on a number of key principles, such as:

- **Multilateralism:** The EU is in favour of action through multilateral fora and treaties. Therefore UN activities on SALW are central to the Strategy.
- **Prevention:** We should not simply take action in a reactive way, when it is too late. It is important to tackle the root causes which lead to proliferation such as poverty and weak state structures. The EU therefore intends to use the full range of instruments at its disposal (including e.g. development aid).
- **Cooperation:** Problems can only be solved through a cooperative approach. It is in the interest of all to work together to respond to proliferation threats.

The Main Contents of the EU SALW Strategy

Chapter I: “The Destabilising Accumulation and Spread of SALW Constitutes a Growing Threat to Peace, Security and Development”

The first chapter of the Strategy describes the origins and consequences of the illicit spread of SALW and emphasises the negative consequences of this trend on the stability and development of certain geographical areas. The Strategy identifies Africa as the continent worst affected by the impact of internal and cross border conflicts aggravated by the

destabilising influx of small arms and light weapons, but the strategy also covers Eastern Europe, Asia and Latin America.

An important novelty of the SALW Strategy is that it stresses that the problem of transfers of SALW can only be solved if we look at the sources of the transfers too. Particular attention should be paid to the enormous accumulation of SALW stockpiled in Eastern and South-East Europe and the ways and means by which they are disseminated in the African continent.

Chapter II: “Comprehensive Description of Europe’s Existing Armoury of Measures, Their Objectives and Means”

The new SALW Strategy does not reinvent the wheel. It pulls together all the instruments at the disposal of the EU:

- Member states’ civilian and military capabilities;
- CFSP and ESDP instruments, including the Code of Conduct on Arms Exports;
- Other external action instruments, including action through the European Community; as well as
- police, customs and judiciary action within the EU.

The EU SALW Strategy also continues to take into account a framework Joint Action adopted in 1999 to tackle the threat of SALW accumulation. This Joint Action, renewed in 2002, was used as a basis for specific actions in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Balkans and most recently in Ukraine. Since 1999 around EUR 14.5 million of CFSP funds have been committed through decisions implementing this Joint Action.

Chapter III: “Establishment of a Precise Action Plan”

The Strategy contains a precise Action plan. Some of these actions are currently being successfully implemented, for instance, in relation with the overarching objective of effective multilateralism.

Furthermore the Strategy's action plan calls for discussion and action by the international community on cross-border problems and proposes the strengthening of border controls, in particular in the air, in the countries affected by illicit trade in SALW and their ammunition (exporting and importing countries). This is to be done through:

- assistance programmes to provide equipment and assistance in drafting national legislation on export controls;
- training institutions in the states of sub-Saharan Africa;
- training programmes for customs departments and other agencies, in particular in Eastern European countries;
- promotion of an increased role for peacekeeping missions authorised by a UN Security Council Resolution in the area of SALW and their ammunition.

As mentioned above, the SALW Strategy builds on concrete and successful EU activities in the past and lessons learnt. An example is the very positive achievement of the EU CFSP project in Cambodia (*European Union Assistance for Curbing Small Arms and Light Weapons in Cambodia, EU-ASAC*). This project began in 1999 after the adoption of a Council Joint Action and was adapted and extended seven times. It contains an integrated programme involving legal assistance in drafting an arms law, weapons collection and destruction, building of safe storage facilities and training of army and police with a focus on monitoring and management of the weapons they legitimately possess.

Another interesting and successful example for EU activities in this field is the Aceh Monitoring Mission (AMM) in Indonesia.

The AMM, led by the EU, has been established to monitor the implementation of various aspects of the peace agreement set out in the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed by the Government of Indonesia and the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) on 15 August 2005 in Helsinki, Finland. The European Union, together with five contributing countries from ASEAN (Thailand, Malaysia, Brunei, Philippines and Singapore) as well as Norway and Switzerland, are providing monitors for the peace process in Aceh (Indonesia).

During the fall of 2005, weapons were decommissioned all over Aceh while non-organic troops and non-organic police were relocated as part of the security arrangements described in the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) referred to above.

AMM monitored the demobilization of GAM and the decommissioning of its armaments, which was executed in four stages. In accordance with the MoU the decommissioning was completed before the end of December 2005. A last weapon cutting ceremony was held in Banda Aceh on 21 December. GAM handed in a total of 840 accepted weapons for decommissioning during the four phases. Thereafter, AMM continued to monitor the implementation of the security arrangements described in the MoU. This successful endeavour shows how activities in the field of SALW can be integrated into this kind of EU missions.

As far as future EU action under the new SALW Strategy is concerned, it should be noted that the Action Plan is defined as flexible and adaptable to the circumstances of the international security context. Its implementation will be continuously monitored by competent bodies of the Council. It will be reviewed and updated every six months by means of an interim report on its implementation. It will continue to apply the decisions taken in the Council Joint Action of 12 July 2002 (2002/589/CFSP) and will supplement them where necessary.

The first progress report on the implementation of the EU SALW Strategy was endorsed by the General Affairs and External Relations Council on 12-13 June. The second progress report is under preparation and will be submitted to Ministers for endorsement before the end of the year 2006.

To give some examples for concrete actions currently in the pipeline of the Council: together with Ukraine, possibilities are being examined to finance some projects in the field of SALW and ammunition, in addition to the destruction project lead by the *NATO Maintenance and Supply Agency (NAMSA)* and to which the EU is contributing. As indicated earlier, Africa is also very likely to be a focus of Council activities in the near future. The Council is already cooperating with ECOWAS in

Western Africa. The EU is currently preparing for a more comprehensive initiative for the African continent.

Concluding Remarks

From 2003 to date, in addition to national contributions from member states and CFSP funds, the European Union has allocated some 96 million EUR for action undertaken to deal with the excessive and destabilising accumulation of small arms and light weapons. The EU has indeed become one of the foremost international actors in this field.

The EU Strategy to combat illicit accumulation and trafficking of SALW and their ammunition is an important milestone, confirming the EU's role as a major player in Foreign and Security Policy and more specifically in the fight against the accumulation and trafficking of SALW and their ammunition. This should prove to be a solid basis for visible EU action in the near future, which can make a difference.