High Representative's remarks at the
Assessment Implementation Meeting on Small Arms and Light
Weapons and Stockpiles of Conventional Ammunition

By

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Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to join you at this assessment meeting on projects to combat illicit small arms and conventional ammunition. I congratulate the OSCE on its approach. Taking the time to assess, to take stock of how activities are playing out, is essential to improve one’s output as an organization. As you know, the United Nations has made meaurability a cornerstone of its work – best exemplified by the Millennium Development Goals which next year will need to be attained, after which we will start a new ambitious cycle of Sustainable Development Goals.

Today your focus is on small arms and light weapons.

You are well aware that on all continents, U.N. entities are directly confronted with the impact of illicit flows of small arms. In conflict situations we see how the influx of weaponry and ammunition can become a catalyst for intensified fighting, for surging numbers of victims and for destruction and chaos.

But also in environments of endemic crime, illicit small arms bring mayhem, the crumbling of institutions, and the dissolution of the rule of law.

Importantly, the misuse of arms also makes the provision of life-saving humanitarian assistance even more challenging. The issue of illicit small arms and light weapons is thus of highest priority for the United Nations, including my Office for Disarmament Affairs.

One ray of hope amidst the myriad of grave armed conflicts facing many parts of the world today is that the international community continues to recognize the need to strengthen international law and global policy on illicit small arms and light weapons.

For instance, in 2013, the UN Security Council adopted its historic resolution 2117 on small arms, which enhances the obligations of the international community including the United Nations, its Missions and all UN Member States, to implement their commitments under relevant global and regional conventional arms control instruments.

And most recently, at the Fifth Biennial Meeting of States on the Programme of Action on small arms which took place in June this year, all UN Member States successfully agreed to an outcome document that reaffirmed their commitment to addressing the global illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. States emphasized for the first time the need to examine more closely the implications of new small arms technology in the context of the illicit arms trade. And indeed the topic of new small arms technology will be on the agenda at our 2015 Open-ended Meeting of Governmental Experts under the Programme of Action.

Significantly, the role of regional and sub-regional organizations was also given much attention at the Fifth Biennial Meeting of States, particularly in the context of the provision of technical and financial assistance, training and capacity-building, knowledge exchange and the development of assistance proposals.
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Talking about the importance of regional organizations, I would like to say a few words about UNODA’s cooperation with the OSCE. We highly value OSCE’s support to UN global instruments in the field of arms control.

One exemplary area of cooperation is on Security Council resolution 1540, which deals with the risk that terrorists might obtain, proliferate, or use weapons of mass destruction. I mention this issue because the good work on border controls which is part of this process is very relevant for small arms control as well. UNODA is proud to count OSCE as one of its reliable and valuable partners on “1540”. Through joint or parallel and mutually reinforcing efforts we are facilitating national implementation activities; enhancing cooperation between international, regional and sub-regional organizations; and building effective partnerships with key stakeholders including civil society and industry. It is encouraging to note that these efforts have already started to bring tangible results. UNODA is fully committed to continued and enhanced cooperation with OSCE in all relevant areas.

UNODA’s cooperation with the OSCE on the issue of small arms proper, is steadily intensifying. The signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between our two organizations, less than two years ago, to work on small arms control is a case in point.

Currently, UNODA and OSCE are collaborating on several joint projects.

Of high priority is the joint engagement regarding Ukraine, to support a baseline assessment of non-state armed groups and their weapons. This project has been funded by the UN Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation, or “UNSCAR”, which is managed by my Office.

OSCE and UNODA are also working together to reduce the increasing reporting burden faced by States on their conventional arms transfers and military expenditures – I believe there will be a presentation made on this project later today.

Finally, our two organizations have organized a number of joint meetings on arms tracing and have initiated practical national visits to interested participating States on issues related to small arms control – including the application of international standards and good practices – and I hope that we will continue to do so.

In light of the above, I welcome this OSCE meeting as a valuable platform to assess what has been done and to test ideas for the future.

While progress has been made in the control and management of small arms and ammunition, serious gaps remain, particularly in terms of national capacities, effective operational information exchange, and international cooperation and assistance. It is therefore up to the international community, in forums such as this one, to ensure that global policies are effectively and meaningfully translated to the crucial work that is done on the ground.

I wish you every success.