The European Policy on Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW)

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SALW: Framing the issue

• Weapons of calibres of less than 100 mm which can fire a projectile and may be carried by an individual or a small number of people (1997 UN Panel of Experts)
• Easily available, simple to carry and use, require a minimum of maintenance and logistics, easy to conceal
• Weapons of choice in armed conflicts and violent crime
• Consequences of SALW use and proliferation
  – More than 740,000 deaths each year as a result of armed violence
  – Majority of death (490,000) outside of armed conflicts zones
  – In conflicts zones, most death are indirect consequences of SALW use (200,000 out of 250,000)
  – Social and economic implications of armed violence
  – Undermine security and long-term development
• SALW are the real weapons of mass destruction
EU Position on SALW

- The destabilising accumulation and spread of SALW and their ammunition constitute a growing threat to peace, security and development
- 2005 Strategy to combat illicit accumulation and trafficking of SALW and their ammunition
  - Integrated approach and comprehensive plan of action
  - Build upon EU existing policies and actions
  - Mainstreaming SALW in EU overall policies
  - Focus on assistance to other countries
  - Geographical priorities: sub-Saharan Africa + Eastern and S-E Europe
  - EU “compelling obligation to act”
- Main objectives of the EU Action Plan
  - Promote multilateralism
  - Respond to the accumulation and the problems caused by existing stocks
  - Deal with the causes and consequences of SALW for human development
  - Establish and/or develop structures within the EU
EU Activities/Initiatives on SALW

• Multilateralism
  – (Sub-)Regional: OSCE, African regions, etc.
  – Agreements, structured dialogues: SALW clause, promotion of EU export control principles, etc.

• SALW-specific assistance initiatives
  – National: Cambodia, Ukraine, etc.
  – Regional: African RECs, E and S-E Europe, etc.
  – Continental: 2010 Pan African Project

• Broader initiatives
  – Instrument for Stability: Central America, Bosnia-H, Africa
  – European Development Fund: Cotonou Agreement
EU Activities/Initiatives on SALW

- SALW export controls initiatives
  - 2008 Common Position on arms export (ex-Code of Conduct)
  - 2003 Common Position on arms brokering
  - 2011 Regulation on firearms transfers?
  - 2007 Initiative to hinder illicit trafficking of SALW by air transport

- SALW export
  - 2.1 billion €: Export licences granted annually by EU MSs for SALW in 2005-2009 (7.5% of total)
  - Geographical distribution
    - Sub-Saharan Africa: 0.8%
    - Other European countries: 9.0%
    - Latin America: 2.5%
    - Middle-East: 19.7%
    - North Africa: 2.1%
EU Activities on SALW: An Analysis

- Strong European political stance on SALW
- Limitations
  - EU SALW definition
  - Focus on “illicit” SALW trade
- EU approach encompasses a broad range of actions
  - Geographical priorities
  - Long-term initiatives
- Gradual improvement of institutional coordination within the EU
- No structural monitoring of EU SALW Policy implementation
- Loopholes/failures of EU Member States SALW export and brokering controls
Perspectives

• Institutional implications of the Lisbon Treaty
  – Before: Council (Secr.) + Commission (RelEx + Dev) + MSs
  – After: External Action Service (N-Prolif. + Security Policy Units) + Commission (AidCo) + MSs

• Next steps for multilateral initiatives
  – Implementing existing instruments
  – Seeking improvement of export controls in main non-EU exporting countries: China, Russia, etc.

• Importance of “long-term”
• A monitoring body for a greater coherence and consistency of EU actions
• Improving EU MSs SALW export and brokering controls
• Squaring the circle: exporting multilateralism, assistance and SALW?
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