



**Commitments on Conventional Arms Transfers:
Synergies of UN and OSCE Efforts**

By

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Madam Chair, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, allow me to thank Ambassador Milačić [Chairperson of the OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation (FSC)] for inviting me to speak at this meeting.

Today's focus – transparency in **conventional arms transfers** – is a topic that is both of prime significance for the OSCE – as the region responsible for the lion's share of the world's legal arms trade – and crucially important for the United Nations as well.

It is a sad fact that many conventional weapons, in all likelihood sold to governments with the intention of instilling law and order or to provide for national security, also have the potential to wreak havoc on a massive scale.

It is also a sad fact that government forces misuse the arsenals at their disposal; that arms from legal stocks are diverted to illicit use; and that illicit weapons in crisis zones serve to bolster the firepower of insurgent groups, criminal organizations and terrorists.

This is how the unregulated trade in arms pours fuel on the fire of conflict, igniting strife that destroys lives and livelihoods.

For over a quarter of a century, we have seen irresponsible arms transfers and poor arsenal management destabilize entire regions.

During the 1990s, it was arms and ammunition from the OSCE region that were repeatedly the source of these conflicts. Thankfully, due to the diligent work of OSCE members, we have seen enormous progress in better government control over weapons depots and over arms transfers.

For this I give the OSCE and its members States due and deserved credit.

Unfortunately, in the OSCE's immediate vicinity we continue to witness the damage caused by the unchecked availability of weaponry. From Mali through Libya and Syria to Iraq, the illicit and unregulated trade in arms is an immediate threat to regional stability.

The admirable progress in stockpile management and transfer controls made by OSCE States now needs to be replicated across these conflict-ridden regions.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

The flow of arms into such dangerous conflict zones demonstrates yet again the urgent need for a set of global standards for the conventional arms trade.

And here I am happy to report real progress.

With the entry-into-force of the Arms Trade Treaty, or ATT, in December of last year, States Parties achieved one of the greatest multilateral outcomes in the field of conventional arms regulation.

The ATT was born out of a collective desire to prevent irresponsible flows of arms and their diversion to conflicts where they would be used to propagate crime, human rights abuses and humanitarian disasters.

The ATT sets robust, shared standards for international transfers of weaponry, as well as ammunition, parts and components. While States Parties are free to apply even stricter criteria – which the treaty explicitly allows – they cannot undercut the treaty's robust standards.

The ATT faces many hurdles before its true benefits will be fully realised. These include dealing with a plethora of actors and interests, and the need for major arms exporters and importers to sign and ratify the Treaty. However, the Treaty's successful negotiation demonstrates that multilateralism remains a viable avenue for pursuing arms regulation.

The ATT's entry-into-force, so soon after being concluded, is proof that many States recognise the severity and urgency of the problem posed by the diversion of conventional weapons. It underscores the need for strong leadership and a willingness to find compromise to confront this perilous threat.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Working in parallel with the ATT, the UN's **Programme of Action, or POA**, has proven a useful tool to counter the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. For example, the Programme of Action contains strong provisions on stockpile management, which has been historically a prominent issue in your region.

As the Secretary-General has noted, defective stockpile management is often the norm in many developing countries and in States recovering from armed conflict. In those circumstances, national stockpiles are a risk to public safety and continue to be a source of the illicit weaponry used in crime and armed violence.

This is one obvious area in which synergy between OSCE and the United Nations can be effective. The work of the UNDP-funded South-Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons – or 'SEESAC' – is one example. Increased UN involvement in regional initiatives such as the 'Regional Approach to Stockpile Reduction' is another; and our work in Ukraine, where we assist in improving weapons stockpile safety and security, is yet one more.

Indeed, when it comes to improving the physical security of weapons and ammunition, the Office for Disarmament Affairs stands ready to work shoulder-to-shoulder with OSCE and its partners in the Mediterranean region.

At this point, I would like to raise two opportunities within the Programme of Action that could facilitate greater synergy between our two organisations.

First: we can work together to increase the participation by regional organizations in the Programme of Action. Regional implementation is a key component of the Programme. Creating mechanisms to include representatives of regional organizations and to understand their implementation challenges, as well as the good practices they may have developed, would be of great benefit to all States.

Second: I believe that we can better coordinate the processes on small arms at both the regional and global levels. At the last POA review conference an important decision was taken in this regard. All UN Member States agreed that regional organizations should consider aligning the timing of their meetings related to illicit small arms and light weapons with the global cycle of meetings. This would help ensure a maximisation of synergies between actions taken at the national, regional and global levels.

I am a strong supporter of this idea. If, for example, OSCE's meetings on small arms were organized in advance of global meetings, there could be a coherent regional input into the global process. If they were organised following global meetings, a stocktaking exercise could take place on the global elements that should be prioritized in the regional context.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The OSCE has long been a pioneer and leading actor in promoting openness and transparency in military matters.

I firmly believe this is an area where there is great scope for improving the coordination and cooperation between our organisations.

The United Nations has, over the course of decades, attempted to reduce the opacity surrounding military budgets and to build transparency as an important confidence-building measure.

You are aware of our well-established global instrument to promote transparency in conventional arms transfers: the **UN Register of Conventional Arms**. The UN Register allows Member States to exchange information on transfers of conventional weapons in seven pre-defined categories. States can also be able to use the Register to exchange other pertinent information such as military holdings, procurement, international transfers of small arms and light weapons, and export policies.

However, in order for this important transparency instrument to be fully effective, it needs to have universal participation. It is disappointing, therefore, that the UN Register still has a long way to go.

In recent years only around one-third of UN Member States have participated in the Register. But, I am pleased to note that States of the OSCE have a consistently high participation rate, with over 80 per cent of OSCE States reporting to the Register each year.

It is perhaps an obvious question to ask whether the increasingly heavy reporting burden imposed on States is acting as a brake on increased participation. It is an unfortunate irony that the increased and often overlapping reporting requirements contained in the emergence of new global and regional instruments could stifle their very implementation.

In this context, less developed States, which have serious resources constraints and have limited data collection capacity, face a serious challenge in fulfilling their obligations. A case in point is the information submitted by States to the UN Register of Conventional Arms and the OSCE's information exchange on conventional arms.

It is likely that the annual reporting required by the ATT will be very similar to reports submitted to the UN Register, adding another burden to States' load. I believe, therefore, that there is merit in exploring synergistic approaches for reporting under the ATT, the OSCE annual exchange of information, and the UN Register.

My office is in close contact with your Secretariat, exploring ways to help OSCE States to streamline their processes so as to reduce the burden of overlapping reporting. This is not an easy task, as it often boils down to compatibility of IT systems and the use by organizations of vastly different technologies.

I should also emphasize that it is important that any reporting process remains a demand-driven process: elaborating methods to streamline this process will only be effective if States are fully comfortable with the outcome.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Promoting openness and transparency is an important pillar of military confidence-building measures, but it is by no means the only one.

Both the OSCE and the UN are founded on a common desire to find collective security through continuous dialogue between countries with often different perspectives, especially when it comes to their own security.

Confidence-building measures are key building blocks in encouraging dialogue; especially those measures that deal specifically with military matters.

At the United Nations, we will continue to develop our expertise on this matter and I look forward to increased cooperation with OSCE in this regard.

Across the spectrum of arms regulation and disarmament issues there are increasing opportunities to explore common ground. For example, the UNODA **Office in Vienna** has developed a close working relationship with your organisation. One concrete example is cooperation on the 'Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Education for the Global South' initiative. This programme provides scholarships to 140 women from the global south to participate in disarmament and non-proliferation educational courses. It is a practical measure to address the continued under-representation of women on these issues.

Here I'd like to take a small tangent and mention the successful cooperation between the OSCE and the United Nations in promoting implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1540.

Implementation of this important resolution is greatly enhanced when working with a regional partner such as the OSCE. The exchange of information on relevant assistance requirements, identification of effective practices and lessons learned contribute significantly to our ability to assist Member States.

Over the last year, our joint activities included a seminar on the identification of effective practices, an open briefing on the development of a comprehensive chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear security culture, and a round table meeting on UNSCR 1540 focused on technical assistance programmes.

Our concerted efforts and outreach activities have led to the successful development of voluntary National Implementation Action Plans by a number of Member States.

UNODA is also supporting 1540-related aspects of the OSCE project to assist Ukraine in implementing its Integrated Chemical Safety and Security Programme. As we speak, a UNODA representative is participating in the second annual meeting of UNSCR 1540 OSCE Points of Contact in Belgrade, Serbia.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

I would like to **conclude** by stressing the natural partnership that exists between our organisations and the opportunities that this entails. Just as the United Nations does at the global level, the OSCE at the regional level brings States together in a structured, lasting, cooperative setting, which encourages its participating States to find ways forward when tensions and crises loom.

Together, when we focus on improving arms regulation and weapons management, we contribute in real and practical terms to regional and international security.

The industrialist and philanthropist, Andrew Carnegie, once said that “teamwork is the ability to work together toward a common vision; the ability to direct individual accomplishments toward organizational objectives; it is the fuel that allows common people to attain uncommon results”.

The United Nations and regional organisations such as the OSCE must work together as team. We must continue our efforts to streamline our approaches, to ensure State participation and to explore potential synergies. Together, when we focus on improving arms regulation and weapons management, we contribute in real and practical terms to regional and international security. We help to prevent the violence and dislocation caused by conflict.

Thank you.