



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

The Secretariat

Special FSC Meeting on the Illicit Trafficking of SALW by Air
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Opening Remarks by the OSCE Secretary General
Ambassador Marc Perrin de Brichambaut

Mr, Chairperson,
Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me to be here today and address the Forum for Security Co-operation that gathered today at its Special Meeting to discuss for the first time a highly topical and important aspect of combating trafficking of SALW by air. This meeting shows the innovative approach of the OSCE participating States to solving tasks that stem from the SALW Document and the UN Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate Illicit Trafficking in SALW in All Its Aspects. The respective Decision made at the Ministerial Council in Brussels set the bar high for this meeting: through presentations and discussions, it aims at concrete outcomes that will follow up the Decision's implementation and define the way forward for more OSCE action. Given that the issue is relatively new and a highly complex one, one goal in itself will be to build our knowledge and expertise on the various aspects related to controlling the trafficking of small arms by air.

I welcome the introduction of this topic on the agenda of the Forum for Security Co-operation. This meeting and its subject are also a welcomed further step in building upon the OSCE Strategy to Address Threats to Security and Stability in the Twenty-First Century. As today's agenda indicates, the meeting reaches beyond traditional FSC issues and provides us an excellent opportunity to use it as a forum to raise awareness about the challenges related to combating the illicit SALW trafficking by air, both at the FSC and beyond.

As you know, the military supplies for most today's conflicts are typically small arms, light weapons and related ammunition. Air transportation plays a vital - and often illegal - role in supplying these weapons and equipment to conflict regions around the globe, especially in Africa. Due to difficult geographical conditions in many unstable regions, air transportation is often the preferred means of delivery for weapons and ammunition, since combatants need the supplies to be delivered as close to the combat zone as possible, often through remote and badly monitored areas.

Research and experience have shown that air transportation of arms to an illicit or illegitimate destination usually involves a complex web of commercial arrangements: illegal or grey-zone arms transport flights rarely fly directly to their destinations. Actors wishing to escape controls and benefit from differences in national systems design the arms to be delivered via circuitous routes involving multiple landings, re-fuelling stops, falsifying aircraft markings, or possibly even multiple changes of aircraft and providing falsified documents.

Much of illicit trafficking of SALW by air is done with the assistance of government officials who provide the necessary over-flight, landing and other authorizations, as well as owners of temporary cargo space and aircraft parking slots, and companies that provide airport and ground services. Illegal or controversial air transportation activities thus typically involve several sets of transport companies and a large number of actors in different locations.

The issue at hand is not only cross-regional but undoubtedly also cross-dimensional, requiring the involvement of government officials from export and import control departments, customs, and defence; but also the private sector and international organizations. The illicit trade in SALW is interconnected with the spread of terrorism, regional conflicts, failed states and organised crime. Furthermore, events in the recent past have shown how issues of transport security potentially encompass all three dimensions of the OSCE.

Illicit transportation of small arms and light weapons by air was discussed also at the 14th Economic Forum last spring, where it was noted that the globalisation of civil

aviation and air cargo industries over the past several years have made it more difficult for national authorities to enforce adequate security and monitoring measures on the transport of goods. It was also noted that a number of countries do not have the accountability, technology, training, and resources to properly regulate the private air cargo market.

This makes co-operation and co-ordination necessary at sub-regional, regional and even global levels, since despite tough controls in parts of the transport chain, gaps in other parts of it risk enabling weapons to be transferred to illegal hands, including to forces responsible for committing serious human rights violations.

In this regard, I especially wish to welcome the inclusion of a wide variety of actors in the meeting's agenda, including the Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities, ICAO, International Customs Union, the International Air Transport Association, and several other international organizations and national practitioners from the capitals.

This meeting is the first of its kind to be organized here at the FSC, and it is certainly one that also at the global level is only starting to receive the attention it deserves. At today's working sessions, we will hear more about challenges related to preventing the trafficking of small arms both within the OSCE area and especially from the OSCE to other parts of the globe. I hope that this meeting will contribute to increasing our knowledge about the problem of illicit SALW trafficking by air, and the existing international and national regulations. Hearing about the experiences of participating States in dealing with these issues and exchanging views about practical ways forward in better controlling air transportation of small arms, will certainly be motivating. I look forward to interesting discussion here today, and wish you every success in your work.

Thank you for your attention.