



**Executive summary of the 6th Meeting of the Regional Steering Group for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons
Belgrade, 20 October 2005**

Pieter Verbeek, Director of WT III of the Stability Pact for SEE, chaired the meeting. Representatives from the following SEE countries and international organisations/institutions and NGOs attended this event: Bulgaria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Hungary, Serbia and Montenegro, Romania, NATO/NAMSA, OSCE, RACVIAC, SEESAC, the Stability Pact WT III, UNDP and Saferworld.

The Chair, in his opening remarks, highly appreciated the work done by SEESAC and its Team leader. SP considers the discussion on the future of SP Regional Implementation Plan on SALW & future options for SEESAC as an important element of broader discussion on the future of the SP including progress on regionalisation of SP Task Forces, i.e. including SEESAC. SP focuses on strategies to enhance the political leadership of the countries of the region in the different initiatives as well as the financial and personnel contributions from SEE.

In this context he mentioned that during discussions between SP and its international partners a clear support for continuation of SEESAC activities even beyond 2006 was expressed. SP considers as extremely important the willingness from some of them (in particular EC) to continue financing SEESAC. Having said this he underlined that the role of the NFPs still needs to be improved. Finally, he emphasised the role of NGOs.

Participants took note of the detailed overview made by Adrian Wilkinson, SEESAC TL, on the current stage of implementation of SEESAC Phase 2 project including information about the key activities in 2005 as well as his presentation regarding future options for SEESAC, i.e. in 2006 – 2007.

According TL the key issues for SEESAC in 2006 are: clearer strategic direction from the RSG, small financial contributions by stakeholder nations (in order to establish funding mechanisms and encourage further regional ownership); improved effectiveness of NFPs; EC Western Balkans SALW Action Support Plan; a “vision” for SEESAC in 2007 (and beyond) – and, last, but not least – extension of SEESAC’s mandate to include Defence Conversion (Heavy Weapon and Ammunition Destruction, i.e. above 100 mm). One of the key questions that have to be responded is whether SEESAC capacity should formally be available outside the region and cooperation in these “new regions” established with new partners such as EU/EC, OSCE and UN DDA. This would require a formal mandate from RSG. The relevant decision has to be made by June 2006.

By making a reference to the SEESAC Customer Satisfaction Survey TL underlined that regional ownership of SEESAC had been strengthened (e.g. 75 % of SEESAC staff had been recruited from the SEE region). TL briefed in this context the participants about funding of SEESAC in 2005 (fully funded) and about the perspectives for 2006, and 2007. On the other hand, as it was noted, less than 2 % of funding came from SEE countries.

The representatives of international organisations/institutions highlighted useful cooperation with SEESAC in the region and even outside of it (e.g. in Central Asia and Belarus as mentioned by OSCE). The representatives of UNDP emphasised that



continuation of UNDP funding would be linked with financial contributions coming for SEESAC from the region.

Some countries of the region informed on national progress towards SP Regional Implementation Plan (RIP). The representatives of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia made detailed presentations on RIP implementation.

The Chair asked NFPs to provide RSG members with written information about RIP implementation including from those countries that either did not participated in the meeting or who made only general remarks.

As underlined in particular by SEESAC TL during the discussion on SEESAC activities in 2006 and future of SP RIP & future option for SEESAC, the next RSG meeting should take place by June 2006 in order to take the relevant decisions on following issues:

- SEESAC funding in/after 2006,
- Use of SEESAC capacity & expertise outside the region,
- Extension of SEESAC mandate to include Heavy Weapon and Ammunition Destruction (100 mm+).

NFPs were asked to explain that properly in their capitals. The participants agreed in principle with the above-mentioned points and welcomed the fact that the discussion on these issues had started. Some of them underlined the need to be careful when considering 'exit strategy'. An optional paper on what the countries from the region expects from SEESAC might be prepared.

Although some of attendees stressed the need for seeking an official position of the relevant HQ/Capitals regarding SEESAC involvement in Defence Conversion, SEESAC role in ammunition & armaments destruction was generally supported. UNDP and SP would be in touch to further clarify this issue.

As far as the possible use of SEESAC capacity/expertise outside SEE region (and in particular of the Western Balkans region), was concerned, SEESAC TL expressed his opinion that SEESAC, as well as the whole region, could share experience and 'lessons learnt' with the others, while keeping SEE region as the main focus area. Finally, he again stressed the importance of financial contribution for SEESAC from the region as well as the role of NFPs as important indicators of strengthening regional ownership.

The representative of OSCE Mission in BiH drew the participants' attention to the issue of sale and export of surplus military armaments, SALW from SEE. This issue is directly linked not only with economics aspects (e.g. a price of storage), but also with the risks associated with maintaining large stockpiles of SALW and other military armaments. In this regard he reminded about the unilateral decision by Bosnia and Herzegovina to stop the export of surplus SALW from 2005.

As recommended by the participants, SP WT III should bring this matter on a high political level to invite SEE governments to declare voluntarily a moratorium on the sale of surplus SALW.

The Chair informed that SP WT III had assisted Saferworld and International Alert in organizing the 'Round Table on Small Arms and Private Security Companies in South Eastern Europe'. Newly published report "SALW and Private Security Companies in South Eastern Europe: A Cause or Effect of Insecurity?" commissioned by SEESAC and written by Saferworld and International Alert, was presented on this occasion.