



FES GENEVA REPORTS

INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP

REINFORCING DISARMAMENT: COMBATING ILLICIT
TRADE IN WEAPONS AND MATERIALS – REGIONAL
CHALLENGES

6 APRIL 2011

AT THE GENEVA CENTRE FOR SECURITY POLICY

GENEVA

The expert meeting was jointly organized by GCSP, the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) and the Friedrich Ebert Foundation Geneva with the support of the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs. It was attended by some 40 participants with a focus on Africa: academics and researchers, government officials, military officers, representatives of civil society organizations from various regions, including some 15 participants from Africa.

“Reinforcing Disarmament: Combating Illicit Trade Weapons and Materials – Regional Challenges” was a follow up workshop on this topic, the first one having been convened by the same institutions on 1-2 February 2010. The four sessions of the meeting in 2010 addressed the issues of (I) Disarmament and its Actors; (II) Synergies to be used, (III) Challenges that actors face to combat trafficking and (IV) drawing a matrix of actors, mechanisms and synergies and how this matrix might behave vis-à-vis the challenges ahead.

During the workshop on 6 April 2011 the following inter-related aspects of the illicit arms trade issue were put under special review: (I) the need for acquiring and managing reliable information, (II) the requirement for effective legal and law-enforcement systems, and (III) the challenge of implementing and operationalizing the existing legal and political instruments. The speakers (see link: program) and participants highlighted the main difficulties in those areas: coping with insufficient resources, especially in developing countries and conflict-torn regions; matching the needs of developing countries and the assistance offered by donor countries; and improving coordination between national,

regional, and international actors. They also discussed how to better integrate the fight against the illicit arms trade into a holistic approach, including security sector reform, transnational organized crime, export control and non-proliferation regimes, etc. In Africa, social inclusion is seen as a remedy against desperate youth and marginalized parts of a nation’s population that otherwise would be dragged in the trafficking business.

Participants also described and compared experiences in various regional initiatives, principally in Latin America and in the African sub-regions or at the level of the African Union. Most of the discussion focused on small arms and light weapons (SALW) but also covered trafficking in radioactive and nuclear materials. Although African participants to the first workshop in 2010 focused their attention on Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW), it is clear that illicit trafficking encompasses all sorts of other armaments, technologies, and materials, both conventional and non-conventional, including delivery vehicles or other sensitive equipment or information. Therefore, the April 2011 Workshop was not limited to addressing SALW, but included a presentation by an expert of the International Atomic Energy Agency. Similarly, the discussions and early negotiations on an Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) already cover a number of issues which turned out to be relevant to the 2011 Workshop. This is particularly true for the question whether and how SALW are going to be covered by an ATT. One pertinent aspect was obviously the implication of an ATT on anti-trafficking policies. One of the purposes of this series of workshops was to identify and develop possible synergies

between the various regimes already in place or to be developed, in particular by an Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). Several recommendations in this respect were formulated, among them:

(i) including into the ATT a reference to the existing legally and politically binding instruments such as the International Tracing Instrument; (ii) appointing national points of contacts dealing with the various instruments; (iii) increasing the response to information requests within international or judiciary cooperation mechanisms; (iv) promoting, through awareness efforts and training, better coordination between national security agencies, including customs, with

regard to investigations on firearms used in criminal activities; (v) allowing civil society organizations, thanks to proper capacity building, to play an active role in advocacy and the fight against corruption and share information in order to complement and support the action of government agencies; (vi) making better use of and contributing to existing data bases such as the ones maintained by INTERPOL, the IAEA, or UNODC; (vii) considering some methods used by UNODC and other organizations to promote compliance with existing commitments, such as peer review or self-assessment.

Matthes Buhbe
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Dr. Matthes Buhbe is the director of the FES Geneva office.