

Remarks by Ambassador Aapo Pöyhö, Head of the Mission of Finland to NATO

EAPC-OSCE Co-Sponsored 2008 Synergy Conference for Regional Organizations on the Implementation of the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons

Brussels, 28 May 2008

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As the current Chairman-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, Finland warmly welcomes this joint EAPC-OSCE initiative to hold a synergy conference for regional organizations involved in the implementation of the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms. In this regard, we would like to extend our thanks to the staffs of NATO and the OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre, who worked innumerable hours and invested a lot of manpower in making this event possible. Our gratitude also goes to our co-funders and supporters of this Conference: [the United Kingdom, Norway, Lithuania and Luxembourg].

Finland finds this initiative both valuable and timely. This conference provides an excellent opportunity to examine how the implementation of the UN Programme of Action has promoted security and stability in regions around the world and to encourage synergies of effort among regional organizations. In addition, its timing at the end of May is ideal in providing momentum on the small arms issues at the regional level, and to provide constructive input to July's Biennial Meeting of States at the UN. We should strive towards building consensus at both regional and international levels.

We highly welcome the thematic approach of this conference and hope that this will bring us best possible results by enabling cross-regional exchange of views and experiences and optimize "lessons learned" and "best practises" outcome. This will also be important given that the Biennial Meeting of States will be organized around a number of key themes, and one of the main desired outcomes of this Conference is to support it in the best possible manner.

From the OSCE perspective, this conference is another step in a continuum of events successfully co-organized by the OSCE and the EAPC. Most recently, we

co-sponsored a workshop on Man-Portable Air Defence Systems (MANPADS) in June 2007 also here in Brussels.

Regional initiatives are crucial in complementing and strengthening the implementation of the UN Programme of Action. In less than a decade following the adoption of the OSCE Document on Small Arms and Light Weapons, the OSCE has done a great deal of solid normative work on small arms control, and implemented several successful assistance projects throughout the OSCE region.

During its Chairmanship Finland will seek to intensify the activities of the OSCE in the area of SALW and surplus ammunition with regard to both norms and practical field work. During the last third of 2008, Finland will act also as the Chair of the Forum for Security Co-operation.

This year alone, the Forum for Security Co-operation, the OSCE's decision-making body on politico-military aspects of security, has conducted an overview of its participating States' implementation of their commitments regarding small arms brokering controls. It has also discussed a number of normative initiatives related to small arms and light weapons. Among these are proposals to update the OSCE Principles for Export Controls of MANPADS, take further measures to facilitate the verification of End-User-Certificates, as well as adopt a Questionnaire and a Best Practice Guide on the prevention of illicit trafficking of SALW by air. By organizing a workshop on "Existing and Planned OSCE Projects on Small Arms and Light Weapons and Stockpiles of Conventional Ammunition" (held in Vienna, 5-6 February 2008) we have also looked at ways on how to further enhance the effectiveness of OSCE practical assistance to participating States in addressing problems related to surplus small arms and light weapons and conventional ammunition.

As we pointed out during that workshop, Finland is of the opinion that co-ordination and co-operation between different organizations is of crucial importance if we want to effectively address the problem of illicit small arms. This is one of our priority areas during our OSCE Chairmanship, and we believe that also this Conference will prove useful in this regard, in helping organizations to learn from each others' experiences and co-ordinate future action to prevent duplication and strengthen the effectiveness of activities with joint efforts.

The goals of the Conference are ambitious and stimulating. In the three days available to us, we aim at identifying and facilitating synergies between organizations to further implement the UN Programme of action, exchange information on achievements, best practices, and recommendations for further achievements; as well as pointing out duplications of efforts as well as areas where more emphasis may be needed.

The bar is set high. I hope that the coming days will provide enough time and incentive for all of you to actively participate in the discussions and help us get

a concrete outcome, which can then be passed on to the United Nations Biennial Meeting. In this regard, let me warmly welcome also our UN colleagues and NGO representatives to the meeting, as well as the Chairman-Designate of the BMS, Ambassador Dalius Cekuolis of Lithuania. Finland believes that a well-focused BMS will be crucial in supporting and re-vitalizing consensus-building around the PoA process. We hope that this Conference will also be a step in that direction.

Beyond the concrete goals that we have for these three days, I hope that this Conference and its outcome will for its part encourage organizations to be more active and influential in combating the illicit trafficking in SALW in all its aspects. My wish is that it will also support ongoing UN efforts to match resources with requirements to aid organizations, which have declared their willingness to cooperate on the implementation of the UN Programme of Action, to combat illicit trade and proliferation of small arms.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.