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General and complete disarmament

Conventional arms control at the regional and subregional levels

Report of the Secretary-General

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* A/75/50.



I. Introduction

1. In its resolution [74/38](#) on conventional arms control at the regional and subregional levels, the General Assembly decided to give urgent consideration to this issue and requested the Secretary-General to seek the views of Member States on the subject and to submit a report thereon to the Assembly at its seventy-fifth session.
2. On 20 January 2020, a note verbale was sent to Member States requesting them to submit their reports by 15 May 2020. A revised note verbale was sent to Member States on 4 May 2020 extending the deadline for the submission of reports to 31 May 2020. The replies received are set out in section II below. Any views received after 31 May 2020 will be posted on the website of the Office for Disarmament Affairs.¹ No addenda will be issued.

II. Replies received from Member States

Albania

[Original: English]
[19 May 2020]

Albania is committed to regional and subregional cooperation in international transfers of conventional arms.

Since 2009, we have been actively involved in the Regional Information Exchange Process. In this platform are gathered representatives of authorities from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia.

Under this process, we have organized regional meetings that directly contribute to regional confidence-building and increase transparency among the South-Eastern European countries. Eleven regional reports on arms export have been produced and published under this process and can be found on the website of the South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons (www.seesac.org/Regional-Reports-on-Arms-Exports_1/).

Also under this process we have developed a regional arms law compendium, which we update frequently (www.seesac.org/Regional-Arms-Law-Compendium-/).

Within the framework of the Regional Information Exchange Process and with the assistance of the Clearinghouse, a brokering database was created, which evolved into an information exchange platform – a truly unique tool designed to help participating countries to exchange important information and be better informed as they conduct their daily arms control duties. Each participating country has provided a full and updated list of registered arms brokers and their contact information, which can now be accessed through the database. The database can be accessed through the Clearinghouse website only, by authorized government counterparts from each of the participating countries.

In close collaboration with the participants of the Regional Information Exchange Process, the Clearinghouse continues to develop and expand the scope of the information contained in the database, including country profiles, legislation, export control systems and sanctions lists.

Besides the Regional Information Exchange Process, authorities of the South-Eastern European countries involved in arms transfer controls meet in different

¹ www.un.org/disarmament.

regional workshops/seminars to exchange ideas, information and best practices and share experiences.

Under European Union programmes, such as the partner-to-partner export control programme for arms and the Working Party on Conventional Arms Exports, the region of South-East Europe benefits from assistance on conventional arms transfers at the national and regional levels.

Albania approved a national strategy on small arms and light weapons and action plan and has also established a national small arms and light weapons commission (an interministerial body coordinating all policies related to small arms and light weapons), chaired by the Deputy Minister of the Interior.

Regular regional meetings have been held since 2014, which provide an opportunity for commission representatives to share experiences and technical knowledge, discuss common problems and identify ways of cooperation.

Armenia

[Original: English]
[15 May 2020]

The Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe remains the cornerstone of European security. It has significantly contributed to stability and security in Europe through disarmament and military transparency and remains the most elaborate conventional arms control regime.

Armenia is committed to the maintenance of the legally binding conventional arms control regime in Europe and fully complies with its obligations on force limitations, on-site inspections and the exchange of information on its armed forces under the Treaty.

In 2019, Armenia received five inspections under the Treaty, the results of which testified to Armenia's compliance with its obligations. In cooperation with a North Atlantic Treaty Organization trust fund, the destruction of 21 treaty-limited pieces of equipment was carried out. The process was implemented in compliance with the Treaty and verified through inspections.

Armenia is concerned by grave violations by Azerbaijan of the conventional arms control regime. As at 1 January 2020, according to the official information provided by Azerbaijan, it continues to exceed its ceilings in four out of five categories of major conventional arms established by the Treaty, namely battle tanks (525, the permitted ceiling is 220), armoured combat vehicles (428, the permitted ceiling is 220), artillery (972, the permitted ceiling is 285) and attack helicopters (59, the permitted ceiling is 50).

A total of 14 out of 28 brigades of Azerbaijani armed forces located along the Armenia-Azerbaijan State border and the line of contact with Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) continue to be completely excluded from inspection and verification, which undermines the credibility of data provided by Azerbaijan under annual military information exchange and enables Azerbaijan to concentrate in that area a large amount of unverifiable forces and military equipment.

This military build-up, accompanied with the threats to use force against Armenia and Artsakh by the leadership of Azerbaijan, poses a serious security threat at the subregional, regional and international levels.

Every member of the international community should take responsibility for the maintenance of conventional arms controls and the complete implementation of its acquis. It must be a priority to preserve the existing arms control regime. The

Structured Dialogue within the framework of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) is an important platform to this end, which enables clarification on the positions of the OSCE participating States on the avenues for strengthening and revitalizing the conventional arms control regime in Europe.

Colombia

[Original: Spanish]

[29 May 2020]

The Republic of Colombia is voluntarily submitting this report pursuant to paragraph 3 of General Assembly resolution 74/38 on conventional arms control at the regional and subregional levels, in which the Secretary-General is requested to seek the views of Member States on the subject and to submit a report to the Assembly at its seventy-fifth session.

According to data from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, global military expenditure increased by 3.6 per cent between 2018 and 2019. Similarly, global military expenditure was 7.2 per cent higher in 2019 than in 2010, reflecting an upward trend in recent years that is a result of conventional and nuclear weapons acquisition programmes.

In view of the developments in the current international environment, in which military expenditure is increasing, it is essential to collaborate in different areas within the framework of instruments on conventional arms control, and to demonstrate unwavering commitment to transparency in matters related to conventional arms.

In that connection, Colombia signed the Arms Trade Treaty on 24 September 2013. The relevant internal process concerning the draft law for ratification of the Treaty is still in progress. However, the State is adhering in good faith to the spirit and purpose of the Treaty by adopting practices aimed at promoting transparent and responsible trade in weapons and ammunition.

Although the Arms Trade Treaty has not yet been ratified, since August 2014 Colombia has been a beneficiary of the Arms Trade Treaty Outreach Project of the European Union, under which it has participated in regional and subregional activities. These include a subregional workshop for the exchange of experiences and good practices among countries in the Latin American and Caribbean region (Costa Rica, 22–23 January 2020), with the participation of delegations from Belize, Colombia, Costa Rica, Haiti, Panama and Trinidad and Tobago; a subregional workshop under the theme “Bringing the State closer to border zones: building human capacities to combat illicit trafficking in arms” (Leticia, Colombia, 9 April 2019), with the participation of Brazil, Colombia and Peru; and a subregional workshop under the theme “Addressing common security challenges: combating the illicit trade in arms” (Iquitos, 9–10 May 2018), with the participation of Colombia and Peru.

At the subregional level, Colombia participates in the Working Group on Firearms and Ammunition of the Southern Common Market and upholds Andean Community decision No. 552, establishing the Andean Plan to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects.

At the hemispheric level, Colombia participates as an observer in the conferences of States parties to the Inter-American Convention on Transparency in Conventional Weapons Acquisitions, whose objective is to contribute more fully to regional openness and transparency in the acquisition of conventional weapons through the exchange of information regarding such acquisitions, in order to promote confidence among States in the Americas.

The commitments made under that instrument represent an important step towards the fulfilment of one of the essential purposes set forth in the Charter of the Organization of American States (OAS): to achieve an effective limitation of conventional weapons that will make it possible to devote the largest amount of resources to the economic and social development of the member States.

With respect to conventional arms control, the Inter-American Convention on Transparency in Conventional Weapons Acquisitions is supplemented by the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials. Colombia participates in the annual meetings of the latter Convention's Consultative Committee, and submits biannual reports on the efforts that it has made to implement that Convention.

In conclusion, Colombia believes that conventional arms control at the regional and subregional levels is a common objective which extends to international forums and instruments and bilateral relations, and thus facilitates coordinated work and cooperation in an environment of mutual respect among States, as well as the implementation of confidence-building measures.

Czechia

[Original: English]
[1 April 2020]

In 2019, the Czech Republic implemented all its commitments stemming from international agreements on arms control, disarmament and confidence- and security-building measures.

The Czech Republic, in accordance with the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe:

- Organized and conducted one multinational inspection abroad (with the participation of four inspectors from four countries)
- Organized one multinational training inspection on the territory of the Czech Republic (with the participation of 13 foreign inspectors from 11 countries)
- Participated in the training of specialists in the verification area abroad, which included one training inspection
- Took part in five allied inspection teams abroad

The Czech Republic, in accordance with the Vienna Document:

- Organized and conducted two inspections of a specified area and two evaluation visits
- Took part in seven visits to airbases
- Took part in seven visits to other military facilities
- Took part in four demonstrations of new types of weapons
- Took part in one observation of certain military activities
- Took part in four inspections of a specified area and two evaluation visits as part of a foreign team
- Received one inspection of a specified area and one evaluation visit

The Czech Republic, in accordance with the Dayton Peace Agreement (annex 1B, article IV), participated as an Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe guest observer in two inspections.

The Czech Republic, in accordance with the Treaty on Open Skies:

- Received one observation flight
- Took part in three observation flights as a part of a foreign team

Indonesia

[Original: English]
[31 May 2020]

As the biggest archipelagic country and situated in a region with evolving intra-State security conditions, Indonesia supports strengthened regional and subregional efforts in controlling conventional arms with the aim to promote regional and international peace and security.

Indonesia considers that there is a need to intensify joint efforts to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit transfer of conventional arms by involving various cross-country inter-agency stakeholders. All countries within the region and beyond share the same responsibility in cooperating to prevent such illegal practices, which have caused massive humanitarian and economic loss.

Regional cooperation is indispensable owing to the fact that challenges and problems facing the countries in a certain region tend to be intertwined and interlinked. In such cases, collective handling by countries of a region would therefore be more effective than isolated national measures or imposed external measures.

In that regard, Indonesia underlines several key principles that can serve as a framework for regional arrangements on conventional arms control, namely:

- Respecting national unity and territorial integrity, as well as the right of each sovereign State to protect its borders and civilians from domestic disturbances against non-State actors.
- Abiding by and respecting fully the Charter of the United Nations and international humanitarian law.
- Emphasizing the balanced, full and effective implementation and universalization of the relevant regionally and multilaterally agreed international agreements, which should be in line with the national interest of the respective countries.
- Formulating non-aggressive proportional national defence and military policies by maintaining military capabilities that are consistent with legitimate national defensive purposes.
- Enhancing technical capacity-building and international assistance involving related key inter-State institutions. In addition, each State should take advantage of its regional and subregional forums to share best practices and should enhance national regulatory instruments, as well as capacity-building, that are needed for a full and effective implementation of relevant conventional arms controls.

Indonesia continues to be open to cooperation and coordination by involving key institutions in the region to further strengthen its national capacity, in particular

in key areas identified as the source of diversion and with regard to the applicable governance of conventional arms.

Mexico

[Original: Spanish]

[29 May 2020]

Mexico reiterates that conventional arms control at the regional and subregional levels is essential to building confidence and preventing conflicts among States.

The issue of small arms and light weapons is of particular importance to Mexico, as illicit trafficking in such items is a scourge that deeply affects our country, as well as the entire American continent and subregions. In that regard, Mexico believes that multilateralism is the ideal framework within which to combat this crime.

Mexico also believes that multilateral efforts to address the use of certain conventional weapons which may be deemed to be excessively injurious or have indiscriminate effects should focus on examining and discussing emerging technologies and their impact on armed conflicts, with the goal of establishing a regulatory framework. It is in the interest of the international community to ensure that any conventional weapons which are used or which may be used in armed conflict are fully compliant with the principles of international humanitarian law.

Action taken at the national level

In order to help reduce illegal possession and carrying of firearms, and to advance national efforts to mitigate violence in the country, the Ministry of Defence, in coordination with authorities from all three levels of government and the private sector, continues to carry out the firearms exchange campaign.

Under this programme, people have voluntarily surrendered their firearms in exchange for various economic incentives or household items; as a result, 4,367 firearms, 934,443 cartridges of different calibres and 380 grenades were received between 1 December 2018 and 31 July 2019.

Under the firearms registration campaign, 26,198 weapons were registered and three special inspections were performed on individuals and entities with general permits to manufacture, purchase, sell, store and use explosive material and chemical substances.

In addition, in 2019 the Ministry of Defence issued no permits for the import or export of conventional weapons which may be deemed to be excessively injurious or to have indiscriminate effects, in accordance with the obligations of the State of Mexico as a party to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects.

Action taken at the regional and subregional levels

United Nations

In November 2019, Mexico hosted two meetings under the theme “Strengthening regional cooperation in the Americas on preventing and combating illicit trafficking in firearms and related crimes”, coordinated by the Global Firearms Programme of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

The first meeting was held from 5 to 7 November 2019 at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with the participation of representatives from Belize, Costa Rica, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico,

Nicaragua, Panama and the United States. The second meeting took place from 13 to 15 November 2019 at the Fiesta Americana Reforma hotel, with the participation of representatives from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

Among the conclusions reached at both meetings were the following: (a) because most countries are parties to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (Palermo Convention) and its supplementary Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition, they do not require an additional cooperation agreement, but rather need only to establish viable mechanisms to combat trafficking in arms; (b) it is necessary to standardize ballistic fingerprint systems at the international level in order to facilitate information exchange, while seeking more economical alternatives to the current systems; (c) it is essential to reform national laws on firearms, their components and ammunition, as the vast majority of them are outdated and hinder efforts to address the crime of illicit trafficking in arms.

Organization of American States

With regard to the steps that Mexico has taken to combat illicit trafficking in firearms, their components and ammunition, the second meeting of chairs, governing bodies and secretariats of international instruments and mechanisms related to small arms and light weapons, under the theme “Building synergies to prevent and combat illicit trafficking: achieving Sustainable Development Goal target 16.4”, was held on 4 April 2019 at OAS headquarters, at the initiative of Mexico. During this event, Mexico emphasized that illicit trafficking in arms affects all dimensions of national, regional, hemispheric and international security. It also stressed that illicit trafficking in arms is a phenomenon that fuels violence, facilitates other types of crime and has a direct impact on people’s opportunities for development.

The nineteenth meeting of the Consultative Committee of the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials was held on 5 April 2019 in Washington, D.C., United States of America. At that meeting, Mexico reiterated the need for the countries on the American continent to intensify their efforts to reduce illicit arms flows, and to take cross-cutting measures to more specifically address the persistent socioeconomic structural causes underlying the phenomenon of illicit trafficking in firearms.

In 2020, Mexico will serve as Secretary Pro Tempore of the Consultative Committee of the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials.

Ukraine

[Original: English]
[1 May 2020]

For more than six years, Ukraine has been resisting the direct armed aggression from Russia and has been restraining Russian military expansion in Europe. Russia’s aggression against Ukraine and the seizure and occupation of Ukraine’s Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol were carried out with the open use of conventional weapons, including tanks and other armoured combat vehicles.

Russia’s main strike groupings are currently concentrated along the eastern and southern borders of Ukraine, to which combat aircraft, missile systems, attack helicopters, tanks and other armoured combat vehicles have been massively transferred over the past six years.

Russia has covertly placed the advanced positions of its military groupings in the certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine that it seized during the aggression and has temporarily occupied. Along with this, Moscow seeks to conceal in every possible way the presence of its regular armed forces, military personnel and conventional weapons in the occupied regions of south-east Ukraine.

This tragic course of events was preceded by Russia's "suspension" in 2007 of its participation in the key conventional arms control regime established by the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, with the ultimate termination of its implementation in 2015.

Despite the rhetoric about the alleged "insolvency" and "obsolescence" of the Treaty that the Kremlin has been relaying for 12 years, the Treaty's provisions, principles and goals have never lost their significance and relevance.

Both in February 2014, at the beginning of the aggression against Ukraine, and in 2007, as well as today, the basic meaning and purpose of the Treaty have been and remain extremely relevant. They provide for the following: to exclude the possibility of hidden preparations for aggression, the creation of dangerous groupings of troops and concentrations of weapons and the delivery of surprise military strikes.

Thus, the historical experience of Russia preparing and launching its military invasion into Ukraine, as well as Moscow's efforts to further expand militarily and politically in Europe, constitutes the cause and effect of Moscow's withdrawal from and non-fulfilment and blocking of international conventional arms control regimes.

Attempting to redraw the world map and divide Europe into "zones of influence", Moscow unilaterally rejected its obligations in the field of military restraint and arms control that it itself developed and assumed.

This is nothing but further evidence of Moscow's inability to comply with its obligations to implement international treaties and the obligations undertaken under them. Accordingly, Russia a priori devalues any of its future obligations and so-called "guarantees".

However, even while resisting Russia's aggression, Ukraine continues to responsibly fulfil its obligations in the field of military restraint and arms control and sees no alternative but for their strengthening at the regional and subregional levels.

Ukraine is interested in and will support all efforts of the international community aimed at: (a) Russia's return to the international legal field and multilateral conventional arms control mechanisms existing within its framework; (b) the recovery by Moscow of its lost ability to comply with the international legal obligations with regard to their fulfilment; and (c) Russia's abandonment of its course of military and political expansion and destabilization of Europe.

Within this context, Ukraine considers it necessary to draw special attention to any new and future agreements in the field of conventional arms control developed at the regional and subregional levels in bilateral or multilateral formats, including those for the purpose of strengthening regional peace and security with the lowest possible level of armaments and armed forces. They should in no way:

- Be based on the results of aggression or other internationally wrongful acts of one State against another State
- Be aimed at legitimizing the consequences of aggression and/or illegal occupation and/or annexation by the aggressor State of a part of the territory of another State

As a State party to the Open Skies Treaty, Ukraine confirms its significance as the most important arms control mechanism for the entire Euro-Atlantic region.

The relevance of this Treaty is not in doubt.

Ukraine is interested in the preservation and implementation of this Treaty, which allows for open and legal surveillance of the military activities of State parties in Europe, North America and Russia.

Ukraine is convinced that some controversial issues among the State parties regarding the implementation of the Treaty should be discussed and resolved through negotiations within the framework of the Open Skies Consultative Commission.
