

## SALW control and safe storage – “International support will be crucial to make progress”

PRESS RELEASE

23 August 2012

After the end of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) Conference, another main event for the Small Arms Control community is coming up. The UN Programme of Action (PoA) Review Conference (RevCon) in New York. BICC will participate in the conference and Marius Kahl, BICC SALW expert, provides some related background to the conference.

Can you please put the upcoming UN Conference in New York into context?

The “UN Programme of Action (PoA) to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects” was passed as a politically binding document in 2001. It reflects the challenge to take holistic action against the intricate, illicit flow of small arms and light weapons. The comprehensive PoA celebrated its 10<sup>th</sup> birthday last year. Within this time one Review Conference was conducted in 2006, four Bi-annual Meetings of States (BMS) were held as well as a Meeting of Government Experts (MGE) in 2011.

This year will mark the Second Review Conference. Together with the 2001 UN Firearms Protocol and the 2005 International Tracing Instrument (ITI), the PoA is the key reference frame for national, regional and international efforts to reduce the burden of small arms and light weapons (SALW). It is important to come together during this 2<sup>nd</sup> Review Conference, face the weaknesses and leverage the strengths of the PoA, and renew the impetus to further implement the PoA in the coming years.

What are the challenges to improved control over the flow and use of SALW in the context of the PoA?

Let me share a nicely fitting quote I came across recently related to the PoA from a book edited by Greene and Marsh (2012): “For most developing and fragile states, a combination of weak domestic regulation of authorized firearms possession with theft, loss or corrupt sale from official holdings tends to be a bigger source of weapons concern than illicit trafficking across borders.” The PoA targets SALW control on the global, regional and national level. The actual implementation of these international frameworks in the member countries is demanding especially for many of the developing states. Technical knowledge, capacity,

INFORMATION:

SUSANNE HEINKE

HEAD OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

Phone.: +49 228/911 96-44

E-Mail: [pr@bicc.de](mailto:pr@bicc.de)

FURTHER INFORMATION:

[http://www.bicc.de/press/p  
ress-  
releases/press/news/side-  
event-to-un-programme-of-  
action-review-conference-  
2012-308/](http://www.bicc.de/press/p<br/>ress-<br/>releases/press/news/side-<br/>event-to-un-programme-of-<br/>action-review-conference-<br/>2012-308/)

infrastructure and funds are often weak and lacking. The now established "Matching Needs and Resources" mechanism of the UN in the PoA Framework is a great tool. Countries need to use the opportunity of delivering the requested annual national reports to make their needs transparent in order to match them with available resources. BICC supported South Sudan in this regard with the first national report this year.

The PoA is not a legally binding document – it is politically binding, yet, the incorporation of the PoA aspects into national legislation and regional commitments regarding SALW control is happening. The degree, to which the (often newly-developed) national legislation and regional frameworks are implemented, enforced and then turned into effective control mechanisms, is a really crucial area to assess in support of the respective countries and regional bodies. I am referring, specifically, to the identification and destruction of surplus SALW, functioning marking, registration and tracing mechanisms (stressed in the 2011 MGE), enhancement of stockpile facilities as well as training of security sector staff. International support will be crucial to make progress there. The German Foreign Office is actually quite active in this regard.

Finally, it is important in the next few years to maintain balanced attention in dealing with ammunition and SALW. The long term interest of the international community, and its commitment to assisting and financing programs to improve Physical Security & Stockpile Management, will be most decisive in moving ahead with better control of stockpiles and fighting illicit flow of small arms and light weapons. A balanced focus on ammunition and Physical Security & Stockpile Management will be very important.

How do the BICC activities in South Sudan relate to the PoA?

BICC is actively engaged in supporting the Government of South Sudan to improve their approaches and practices of SALW and ammunition management towards better control of state owned weapons and ammunition. Considerable progress has been made in the last 12 months in terms of awareness-raising in the security sector and government, supported by our technical advice. The issue of Physical Security and Stockpile Management is now approached actively by the Government of South Sudan, which is great. The country submitted its first national PoA report and also launched an international assistance request through the matching needs and resources mechanism. We hope to be able to continue our support to the Government of South Sudan with German funds next year. I am also hoping that SALW storage infrastructure improvement projects will take off next year and the already drafted national arms law will finally be passed.