



**COUNCIL OF THE
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BANGKOK WORKSHOP ON ACHIEVING A MINE-FREE SOUTH-EAST ASIA

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***SPEECH DELIVERED BY
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***Check against delivery.
Seul le texte délivré fait foi.
Es gilt das gesprochene Wort.***

Honourable Minister, Excellencies, distinguished participants, dear colleagues,

Let me, as we start our work today, express my gratitude on behalf of the EU High Representative, Mr. Javier Solana, to all those who have made today's seminar possible and in particular to the Government of Thailand. Our work falls within the framework of the so called EU Joint Action adopted last year by the Council to support the Ottawa Convention (Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction). We are happy that the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining has accepted to ensure the technical implementation of this EU project.

A Joint Action is an instrument of EU foreign policy. It allows the European Union to take diplomatic action but also to allocate financial resources to a specific objective. Already in the past the EU has contributed substantially to the implementation of the Ottawa Convention and towards the zero victims target. As far as activities in Asia are concerned, I remember an interesting ARF meeting on Anti Personal Mines in Penang Malaysia (in April 2008), which the EU supported and at which I had the privilege to speak. In 2007 the EU, through its Common Foreign and Security Policy, has indeed chosen to step up its contribution in support of the Ottawa Convention, with a view to the Review Conference of the Convention. In this sense the workshop also intends to create important synergies with various programmes and to serve as platform to inform participants about them. I thank our colleague from the European Commission who will elaborate later in this workshop on some specific projects for the implementation of the Ottawa Convention.

I. But why is the EU interested in promoting the Ottawa Convention from a security perspective?

The Joint Action in support of the Ottawa Convention falls within the framework of our Security Strategy adopted by the Council in 2003. The European Security Strategy enshrines the principles of effective multilateralism, prevention and international cooperation which are also at the basis of the WMD and SALW Strategies, also adopted by the European Council. The EU is indeed actively developing its Common Foreign and Security Policy and is committed to play a role on the international scene in support of international peace, stability and security. The EU is regularly taking action in the field of civil and military crisis management (ESDP), and also in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation. We are aware that security is not an aim in itself but also a condition for development.

In the area of disarmament and non-proliferation, effective multilateralism consists in strengthening the treaty based system: strengthening by expansion of membership and ensuring its full national compliance. At the outset of our work in this area, the EU turned its attention towards multilateral instruments in the WMD area, by providing support for instance to the OPCW, the IAEA, the CTBTO, the BTWC and UNSCR 1540. This support materialised in a series of Joint Actions which established a particular scheme of work, based on universality, full national implementation and international cooperation. Universality is a major requirement for treaties and conventions banning an entire category of weapons or regulating a certain type of activity. Universality is particularly important in order for a treaty to be fully credible and to achieve its objective. Parties will enjoy the benefit of the Treaty and feel protected if all other countries are also bound by the same rules and comply with them. The progress made by the Ottawa Convention is remarkable but there is still work to be done.

National implementation and international cooperation are the focus of our work in Bangkok during the two days ahead which has been thoroughly prepared by experts.

II. EU action in the promotion of multilateral instruments

This scheme, based on those three elements has proven to be so successful in the WMD field, a particular example being the CWC, that we started to transpose this approach into the conventional field. Along these lines the EU is committed to promote instruments at our disposal in the conventional weapons area. We have participated in a series of regional seminars to promote the International Marking and Tracing, organised by the UNODA and co-sponsored by the EU. Also, last year the EU has been very active in the promotion of the 1980 Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, through a similar Joint Action to this one, implemented by UNODA.

Finally the EU has recently organised an event in Geneva to launch a series of regional seminars in order to promote the Arms Trade Treaty process. One of the regional seminars, which will be organised by UNIDIR, will target this region.

III. Conclusion

The work of the EU in this area is clearly expanding and has been brought to the attention of the political bodies of the EU through the Joint Action, which has allowed to contribute to today's meeting. The promotion of the Ottawa Convention has attracted the attention of EU Member States and of the EU as a whole, all stakeholders must be responsible and take full advantage of the opportunities presented. The EU stands ready to do so building on the activities and projects it has undertaken so far including in Asia.

Thank you for your attention.