



**Deutscher Bundestag**



**PARLIAMENTARY FORUM**  
ON SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS

### **The Berlin Declaration**

#### **Parliamentary Resolution from the European Regional Meeting of Parliamentarians Organized by the German Bundestag and the Parliamentary Forum on Small Arms and Light Weapons**

#### **“Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons – Responsibilities, Challenges and Opportunities for European States”**

The illicit accumulation of small arms and light weapons (SALW) represents one of the biggest threats to human security. Their wide availability exacerbates insecurity. Since the UN Charter was signed on 24<sup>th</sup> of October 1945, nearly 30 million people have been killed in armed conflicts. 87 per cent of these – or about 26 million – have been killed by firearms. There are more than 600 million small arms and light weapons in circulation today. About 40 percent are in the possession of military and police forces or other various non-state actors. However, the lion’s share, nearly 60 percent, are privately owned. This is the most important explanation for why so many people –200,000 in total – are killed every year by small arms in non-conflict related violent situations around the world. On top of this are a further 300,000 deaths caused by small arms in armed conflicts.

The proliferation and illegal accumulation of small arms increases deaths resulting from armed crime, hinders peace processes, increases domestic violence and weakens socio-economic development. Although the negative impact on peace, reconstruction, security, stability, human rights and sustainable development is especially damaging to developing countries in the global south, European countries are also directly affected by small arms, as well as indirectly through the spread of instability, cross-border crime and flow of refugees. A significant proportion of the small arms in circulation are also produced in European countries.

The complex problem of small arms proliferation must be addressed in a multi-dimensional way through international agreements, improved and harmonized national legislation, codes of conduct, strengthened accountability on the part of governments, awareness-raising as well as consolidated efforts to address the root causes.

Recognizing that parliamentarians have a key role in all aspects of such a multi-dimensional approach to address proliferation of small arms, European parliamentarians, meeting in Berlin February 13<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> 2009, discussed their opportunities with regard to harmonisation, stockpiling of conventional ammunition, cluster munitions and arms brokering. The participants reached the following conclusions:

### **1. Model legislation for Europe**

- To emphasize that European countries and citizens would benefit from deeper cooperation and harmonization of legally binding instruments and common standards for small arms and light weapons,
- To recognize the successful work of the Parliamentary Forum on SALW, the Parlatino and Latin American NGO's in developing model legislation for Latin American Parliaments. The meeting encourages the Forum to initiate a dialogue with the appropriate European Parliamentary Organizations to explore the opportunity for a similar model for Europe.
- To support in their Parliaments the recent EU "Common Position" on arms control, which is legally binding and more substantial compared to the previous Code of Conduct.

### **2. Cluster Munitions:**

- To welcome the Convention Against the Use of Cluster Munitions signed in December 2008 in Oslo by 94 countries as well as its implementation as a legally binding document banning the production, use, stockpiling and trade in cluster bombs, as an important humanitarian achievement.
- To encourage nations to ratify, apply and transform the Convention Against the Use of Cluster Munitions into national law.
- To stress its concern regarding the continued production, proliferation and stockpiling of cluster munitions in the region, recognizing that such weapons cause enormous suffering amongst civilians living near in areas affected by armed conflicts.
- To encourage the Forum together with parliamentarians in all European countries to work for a Europe-wide abolition of cluster munitions.

### **3. Stockpile Management of Conventional Ammunition**

- To acknowledge the risks and hazards that unsafe stockpiles of conventional ammunition present to individuals, communities and society, as well as the negative impact this can have on lives, livelihoods, housing and development.

- To welcome the efforts and initiatives at different levels of the United Nations and the 2008 Group of Governmental Experts to address the problems arising from the accumulation of conventional surplus ammunition stockpiles.
- To recognize that a number of countries in Europe have substantial conventional ammunition stockpiles stored in exposed and inappropriately equipped facilities.
- To encourage the development, implementation and enforcement of national legislation, supported by effective operational procedures, to ensure the safe, effective and efficient stockpile management of conventional ammunition in surplus.
- To recommend international cooperation to improve the control at national and international level related to the accumulation of conventional ammunition stockpiles in surplus in order to avoid the risks of theft, loss, explosion and pollution.
- To encourage parliaments and governments who have passed the appropriate national legislation on stockpiling of conventional ammunition, to share their experiences with other states, thus contributing to the effective implementation of the UN Programme of Action on SALW.

#### **4. Arms Brokering:**

- To welcome the efforts and initiatives of the OSCE and at different levels of United Nations and the 2007 Group of Governmental Experts to prevent, combat and eradicate illicit brokering in all its aspects.
- To reaffirm that arms brokering is not an illicit activity per se, but that the lack of effective regulation and governmental control in many countries contributes to an increase in illicit deals and trafficking.
- Encourages parliaments to promote greater international and, where appropriate, regional efforts to develop effective common standards to control brokering activities which cover the implementation of appropriate export control norms that are consistent with relevant international law, including international criminal law, human rights and humanitarian law, and with current best practice guidelines and recommendations of the UN, OSCE and EU..