

Export control seminar

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1. Thank you for the invitation to this important seminar and for the opportunity to welcome you on behalf of the European Union. Some of you took part in the outreach seminar on export control on 4 May in Vienna where you explored ways to enhance the credibility and coherence of EU export controls for dual use items and arms.

The EU full heartedly welcomes the initiative of the Bulgarian and Hungarian Governments to organise this seminar in the framework of the Australia Group outreach activities.

I am grateful to our host for providing the Boyana residence for this meeting. It is truly very hard, even impossible I would say, to beat the Bulgarian hospitality. You have facilitated the participation of representatives of Western Balkan states, which is in itself a crucial contribution to the success of this seminar.

The Western Balkans, represents one of the key priorities of the EU Council Presidency. The future of these countries lies within the European Union.

Growing economies and growing stability also means growing responsibility. One area requiring specific vigilance and responsibility is the area of arms exports. Lack of such responsibility, that is lack of controls on the arms trade, is fuelling conflict, poverty and human rights abuses worldwide. Every year, throughout the world, roughly half a million men, women, and children are killed by armed violence.

The European Union was the first group of states accepting a regional Code of Conduct in June 1998. All Member States have agreed to apply the Code of Conduct when assessing applications to export items listed in the agreed EU Common Military List.

The EU is committed to strong national and international cooperation on export control. To that end we have to be certain that export controls are watertight and that high technology related to the capacity to produce weapons of mass destruction do not fall in the hands of states and non-state actors.

To do so industry needs to be briefed regularly on legal provisions and must be made aware of potential problems and shortcomings. **Close cooperation between industry and officials as well as licensing officials to avoid misunderstandings, delays and other inconveniences is indispensable.**

I would like to stress that in the long run **strict implementation of control mechanisms**

pays off. It is important for all of us, the European Union member states and your countries, state actors as well as the industry, to take all necessary steps to implement the framework the EU Code of Conduct provides.

Awareness of the risks of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the risk for regional destabilization must be increased. We want to highlight the need for all states to establish and maintain national export controls of dual-use items and conventional arms.

2. All EU-Member States should adhere to the four existing dual use export control regimes: The **Australia Group**; the **Missile Technology Control Regime**, the **Nuclear Suppliers Group** and the **Wassenaar Arrangement**. This is not the case today but should be tomorrow.

These regimes play an important role in protecting technology related to Weapons of Mass Destruction through their control lists and the sharing of sensitive information.

The EU's policy is to make the EU a leading co-operative player in all these export control regimes.

Member States assisted by the EU institutions conducted a **Peer Review mission** of EU export control regimes concerning dual use items and technology. Thereby we want to contribute to the establishment of best export control practices. This mission should lead to further strengthening of the EU export control system and give clear recommendations.

We encourage third countries to adopt best practices in the field of export controls. That process will continue and it will be strengthened by the experience of the "Peer Review" process.

3. Since 2003 the EU is implementing its **Strategy against the proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction**. It does so through "diplomatic action and support to organisations and countries in need of technical assistance in order to accede or to comply with international treaties and commitments.

4. The EU is committed to redouble efforts in order to contribute to the strengthening of the **Non Proliferation Treaty**. Effective export controls are key in the fight against proliferation.

Proliferation of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, as well as their means of delivery, constitutes a threat to international peace and security. The introduction of effective export controls is an effective way to counter these threats.

Non Proliferation and export control regimes are of key importance, directed at preserving peace and making this world a better place to live. As a convinced optimist I do believe in common efforts — and they can be only common — for a better future.
