COUNCIL DECISION (CFSP) 2021/1726

of 28 September 2021

in support of combating the illicit trade in and proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the Member States of the League of Arab States – Phase II

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

Having regard to the Treaty on European Union, and in particular Articles 28(1) and 31(1) thereof,

Having regard to the proposal from the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy,

Whereas:

(1) The 2018 EU Strategy against illicit firearms, small arms & light weapons (SALW) and their ammunition entitled 'Securing Arms, Protecting Citizens' (the 'EU SALW Strategy') states that the Union gives particular prominence to regional cooperation as an efficient means of small arms control.

(2) The EU SALW Strategy notes that the Union will continue to support cooperation and assistance for the implementation of the United Nations (UN) Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (the 'UN PoA').

(3) According to the EU SALW Strategy, Union support to the implementation of the UN PoA will include collection and destruction of surplus SALW and ammunition, physical security and stockpile management for SALW and ammunition, capacity development for marking, record keeping and tracing, capacity development for arms export control, capacity development for law enforcement in countering illicit trafficking, support for embargo monitoring and tracing of diverted weapons.

(4) With regard to the Middle East and North Africa, the EU SALW Strategy notes that the Union will continue to support capacity building for local law enforcement and security forces as regards physical security and stockpile management, surplus destruction and the documenting and tracing of illicit SALW.

(5) The UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted on 25 September 2015, affirms that combating the illicit trade in SALW is necessary for the achievement of many goals, including those relating to peace, justice and strong institutions, poverty reduction, economic growth, health, gender equality, and safe cities and communities.

(6) In his Agenda for Disarmament entitled 'Securing our Common Future', which was launched on 24 May 2018, the UN Secretary-General calls for an inclusive, integrated and participatory approach to small arms control at country level and, in some situations, at the subregional level.

(7) At the third UN conference to review progress made in the implementation of the UN PoA, held in June 2018, UN Member States undertook to strengthen, as appropriate, partnerships and cooperation at all levels in preventing and combating the illicit trade in SALW, in particular on border control, stockpile management and security, destruction and disposal, marking, record-keeping and tracing, and illicit brokering. UN Member States also undertook to strengthen cooperation with relevant subregional and regional organisations in order to reinforce the implementation of the UN PoA and the International Tracing Instrument.

(8) The League of Arab States (LAS) is a regional organisation bringing together all Arab countries, with the purpose of promoting and strengthening cooperation among its members.

(9) In 2016 the Union and the LAS set up the EU-LAS Strategic Dialogue and established a number of working groups.

(10) The Strategic Dialogue Working Group on Weapons of Mass Destruction and Arms Control has defined priority areas for possible concrete cooperation.

(11) The Union, through Council Decision (CFSP) 2018/1789 ([1]), supported Phase I of a project in support of combating the illicit trade in and proliferation of SALW in the LAS Member States, and now wishes to support Phase II of that project,

HAS ADOPTED THIS DECISION:

Article 1

1. With a view to supporting the Member States of the League of Arab States (LAS) with their national implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (the 'UN PoA') and the International Tracing Instrument, the Union will pursue the following objectives:

— sustainably build the national capacity of LAS Member States to combat the illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW), combat terrorism and enhance security in post-conflict situations while fully respecting international human rights standards;

— sustainably build the regional capacity of the LAS to address the same challenges;

— strengthen LAS Member States' national control over SALW at key stages of their life cycle;

— enhance the exchange of best practices and lessons learned.

2. In order to achieve the objectives referred to in paragraph 1, the Union shall, by means of this Decision, support actions in the following areas:

— international SALW transfer control (combating illicit arms flows);

— identification and disruption of sources of illicit small arms (capacity building for law enforcement agencies);

— other measures related to small-arms control including stockpile management, control of related supplies and security;

— disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration;

— provision of information relevant to illicit SALW and enhanced SALW control.

3. A detailed description of the project referred to in paragraphs 1 and 2 is set out in the Annex to this Decision.

Article 2

1. The High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (the 'High Representative') shall be responsible for the implementation of this Decision.

2. The technical implementation of the project referred to in Article 1 shall be carried out by the Small Arms Survey (SAS), represented by the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, with the assistance of the International Criminal Police Organisation (Interpol) and the World Customs Organization (WCO) and in close cooperation with the LAS Secretariat.

3. SAS, assisted by Interpol and the WCO, shall perform its tasks under the responsibility of the High Representative. For that purpose, the High Representative shall enter into the necessary arrangements with SAS.

([1]) Council Decision (CFSP) 2018/1789 of 19 November 2018 in support of combating the illicit trade in and proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the Member States of the League of Arab States (OJ L 293, 20.11.2018, p. 24).

Article 3

1. The financial reference amount for the implementation of the project financed by the Union referred to in Article 1 shall be EUR 5 991 726.

2. The expenditure financed by the reference amount set out in paragraph 1 shall be managed in accordance with the procedures and rules applicable to the Union budget.

3. The Commission shall supervise the proper management of the expenditure referred to in paragraph 2. For that purpose, it shall conclude the necessary agreement with SAS. The agreement shall stipulate that SAS has to ensure the visibility of the Union's contribution, appropriate to its size.

4. The Commission shall endeavour to conclude the agreement referred to in paragraph 3 as soon as possible after the entry into force of this Decision. It shall inform the Council of any difficulties in that process and of the date of conclusion of the agreement.

Article 4

1. The High Representative shall report to the Council on the implementation of this Decision on the basis of regular quarterly reports prepared by SAS.

2. The Commission shall report on the financial aspects of the project referred to in Article 1.

Article 5

1. This Decision shall enter into force on the date of its adoption.

2. This Decision shall expire 36 months after the date of conclusion of the agreement referred to in Article 3(3). However, it shall expire six months after the date of its entry into force if no agreement has been concluded within that period.

Done at Brussels, 28 September 2021.

For the Council
The President
S. KUSTEC

ANNEX

PROJECT DOCUMENT

Project in support of combating the illicit trade in and proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the Member States of the League of Arab States (Phase 2, 2021–2024) – HR(2021) 125

Background

This project (EU-LAS project phase 2) will build on earlier efforts undertaken by the League of Arab States (LAS) and the Union, including those undertaken during phase 1 of the project (2019-2021), to assist LAS Member States in combating illicit small arms and light weapons ('SALW') in the Arab region. ([1])

The EU-LAS Strategic Dialogue Working Group on Weapons of Mass Destruction, SALW and Arms Control defined priority areas for possible concrete cooperation. Phase 1 of the EU-LAS project has enhanced the exchange of best practices and lessons learned in these areas through a series of regional and subregional meetings. It has also provided LAS Member States with practical training designed to sustainably build national and regional (LAS) capacity to address the challenges posed by illicit SALW, specifically in the priority areas.

In the period preceding the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic, the project held its inception meeting (Cairo, June 2019) and first subregional workshop (Abu Dhabi, February 2020). It also conducted three needs assessment missions, in November-December 2019, that laid the groundwork for in-country training programmes that were held in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates and Rabat, Morocco in January and February 2020.

With the onset of the pandemic, in March 2020, the project moved its training activities online. As of 30 April 2021, the project had provided online training to six LAS Member States, with additional online training, including follow-up training, scheduled for May-June 2021. Discussions were also underway to ensure that the project's second (final) subregional workshop and wrap-up regional meeting would be held, in an online format, before the end of phase 1 on 31 July 2021.

The LAS Member State officials who have participated in project meetings and training programmes have consistently reported high levels of satisfaction with these events, with a high proportion of training programme participants indicating that they expected to use the information and expertise shared during the programme in their day-to-day work.

Phase 2 of the project will consolidate and strengthen the foundations laid during the project's first phase. The capacity-building efforts begun in phase 1 will be continued, expanded and deepened in order to ensure long-term sustainability. LAS Member States that did not receive training in the first phase of the project can receive it in the second. LAS Member States seeking to build on capacities acquired during the first phase will receive the necessary support in the second. In addition, for the first time the project will convene region-wide training events that will enable LAS Member States to strengthen national capacity for training on SALW control (train-the-trainer events).

The reduction and eradication of illicit small arms in the Arab region remains crucial to reducing all forms of violence and promoting sustainable development and prosperity in line with the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) — both in the Arab region and in neighbouring regions, including Europe. More specifically, the project aims at strengthening the capacity of LAS Member States to implement the UN Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (PoA) and the International Tracing Instrument (ITI) according to the priorities and needs identified by LAS Member States.

The normative framework for the project also comprises the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular target 16.4, and UN Security Council Resolution 2370 (2017), aimed at preventing terrorists from acquiring weapons. At the same time, the project gives concrete expression to the pledge to take concerted action against illegal arms trafficking, contained in the EU-LAS Sharm El-Sheikh summit declaration of 25 February 2019.

Depending on the preferences of the host LAS Member State, the UN Firearms Protocol and the Arms Trade Treaty could also serve as reference points for project-related capacity-building efforts (export/import control, diversion prevention, etc.).

([1]) COUNCIL DECISION (CFSP) 2018/1789 of 19 November 2018 in support of combating the illicit trade in and proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the Member States of the League of Arab States

Project objectives and long-term sustainability

As in phase 1, the underlying goal of phase 2 of the project is to sustainably strengthen the capacity of LAS Member States to implement the PoA and the ITI, including for the purpose of combating illicit small arms and terrorism, according to the priorities and needs identified by LAS Member States. To achieve this goal, the project has the following main objectives:

a) sustainably build the national capacity of LAS Member States to combat the illicit proliferation of SALW, combat terrorism and enhance security in post-conflict situations;

b) sustainably build the regional capacity of the LAS to address the same challenges;

c) strengthen LAS Member States' national control over SALW at key stages of their life cycle; and

d) enhance the exchange of best practices and lessons learned.

Consultations with LAS Member States indicate that they seek assistance and support in specific areas, with an overriding focus on the building of national capacity to combat illicit arms flows (see next section for further details). All of the project's components are in fact designed to ensure that the project imparts sustainable capacity to its intended beneficiaries, namely government institutions and officials in LAS Member States, as well as the LAS Secretariat (Arms Control and Disarmament Department).

Description of action

The Union project to combat the illicit trade in and proliferation of SALW in LAS Member States (phase 2, 2021-2024) is designed to respond to the needs that LAS Member States have expressed in the following priority areas:

Area 1:

International SALW transfer control (combating illicit arms flows)

1.1. Export/import/transit licensing and control (risk assessment, etc.)

1.2. Preventing the diversion of SALW to unauthorised recipients

1.3. Detecting SALW and their parts during the inspection of transported goods and cargo (inspection methods, techniques and equipment, etc.)

Area 2:

Identification and disruption of sources of illicit small arms (capacity-building for law-enforcement agencies)

2.1. Control of land, air and maritime borders, including technology transfer

2.2. Marking, record-keeping and tracing

2.3. Additional techniques and methods for arms investigation and inspection (use of ballistics information, identification/disruption of smuggling routes and methods, etc.)

Area 3:

Other small-arms control measures

3.1. Stockpile management and security

Area 4: Disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR)

4.1. Exchanging DDR expertise, best practices and lessons learned

4.2. Assistance in designing national DDR programmes

4.3. Other forms of support to LAS Member States during a post-conflict phase

Note that this component, while requested by some LAS Member States, received less interest overall than the other areas listed in this section. For this reason, it is not the focus of the project.

Area 5:

Provision of information relevant to illicit SALW and enhanced SALW control

5.1. Evaluation of the laws and regulations of LAS Member States; advising on possible amendments and revisions.

5.2. Translation of relevant research, published studies and other documents into Arabic.

In responding to the above needs, the project will comprise the following elements:

1. Regional coordination: Cairo inception meeting
2. Regional coordination: two regional workshops
3. Regional coordination: Cairo wrap-up meeting
4. National training
5. Regional training
6. Project support for the development of national training curricula
7. Project facilitation of joint national field operations
8. Provision of information in Arabic
9. Project coordination meetings
10. Project monitoring and evaluation (including a financial audit)

1. Regional coordination: Cairo inception meeting

1.1. Objective: Raise awareness of the project; discuss phase 1 and identify relevant lessons for phase 2; and lay the foundations for phase 2 activities (strengthening contacts with LAS Member States, identifying specific national priorities and initiating planning for phase 2 activities, including training) (priority areas 1 to 5).

1.2. Activities: Three-day inception meeting at LAS headquarters in Cairo, covering all aspects of the project (priority areas 1 to 5), aimed at senior LAS Member State officials, as well as LAS staff responsible for project-related issues.

1.3. Results of the action: Delivery of detailed presentations covering all aspects of the project; identification of relevant lessons for phase 2; strengthening of contacts with LAS Member States; identification of specific national priorities; initiation of phase 2 planning; production of summary meeting report.

2. Regional coordination: two regional workshops

2.1. Objective: To enhance the exchange of best practices and lessons learned begun in phase 1 of the project and identify national and regional priorities in project-related areas (priority areas 1 to 5).

2.2. Activities: Two four-day workshops held in different Arab capitals (target dates: first half of 2022, last half of 2023). Possible topics include: national arms control legislation (priority area 5.1) and topics dealt with as part of the PoA–ITI meeting cycle.

2.3. Results of the action: Exchange of best practices and lessons learned in project-related areas; identification of national and regional priorities in the same areas; production of a summary workshop report.

3. Regional coordination: Cairo wrap-up meeting

3.1. Objective: Evaluate phase 2 of the project and plan for future cooperation (priority areas 1 to 5).

3.2. Activities: Two-day meeting held at LAS headquarters in Cairo at the end of the project, aimed at senior LAS Member State officials and LAS staff responsible for project-related issues.

3.3. Results of the action: Discussion and evaluation of phase 2 of the project; elaboration of plans for future cooperation on small-arms control; production of a summary meeting report.

4. National training

4.1. Objective: Build sustainable capacity for small-arms control in the host LAS Member State in accordance with its priorities and needs (priority areas 1 to 4).

4.2. Activities: Up to 154 days of national training, per implementing agency, comprising a menu of potential programmes that LAS Member States can select in accordance with their priorities and needs and confirm through official communication with the LAS Secretariat (see points a–d, below). Of the 154 days of national training, 94 will be delivered online and 60 in-country (for example, 12 events of 5 days).

When following up on specific requests for training, the implementing agencies, in collaboration with the LAS Secretariat, will give precedence to remote contact with LAS governments (phone, email, and online video conferencing).

As part of the national training offer, the implementing agencies will offer the following types of programmes (non-exhaustive list):

(a) 2 to 5-day introductory courses (online);

(b) national training events complementing those conducted in phase 1, such as:

— course repeats for new groups of participants;

— refresher courses;

— courses providing in-depth treatment of specific topics (3-5 days) or of a broader range of topics (more than 5 days); and

— specialized courses aimed at particular audiences (e.g. a logistics course for officials managing arms and ammunition stockpiles);

(c) new entrants course (in-depth course, lasting 10 days or more, for officials taking up SALW-related responsibilities); and

(d) in-country training programme in an LAS State other than the beneficiary when travel to the latter is precluded (2 events of 5 days each, including transport and meals/accommodation for participants).

Note that, as appropriate, the project will apply a blended (hybrid) learning approach to its training activities, combining the use of online resources with in-person and online training.

4.3. Results of the action: The impacts of the national training events will be assessed, at the end of the event and several months after the event, in order to determine the extent to which project capacity-building objectives have been met.

5. Regional training

5.1. Objective: Build sustainable capacity for small-arms control in participating LAS Member States, including capacity for training (priority areas 1 to 4).

5.2. Activities: Up to 40 days of in-person training, per implementing agency, benefitting participants from several LAS Member States at the same time, including train-the-trainer events (4 events of 5 or 10 days each, per implementing agency, held in an LAS Member State).

Note that, as appropriate, the project will apply a blended (hybrid) learning approach to its training activities, combining the use of online resources with in-person and online training.

5.3. Results of the action: The impacts of the regional training events will be assessed, at the end of the event and several months after the event, in order to determine the extent to which project capacity-building objectives have been met.

6. Project support for the development of national training curricula

6.1. Objective: To strengthen national ownership and long-term sustainability of project training events (priority areas 1 to 4).

6.2. Activities: Where requested, the implementing agencies will support the development of national training curricula through the provision of relevant expertise and documentation.

6.3. Results of the action: The impacts of project support for the development of national training curricula will be assessed upon completion of the intervention and several months following its completion.

7. Project facilitation of joint national field operations

7.1. Objective: To test and reinforce the effective uptake of information conveyed during EU-LAS training events, thus strengthening the long-term sustainability of project training (priority areas 1 to 4).

7.2. Activities: The project will facilitate the preparation, conduct and analysis of two joint field operations, conducted on a voluntary basis by national security forces from LAS Member States. The preparation and analysis of the joint field operations will be led by the implementing agencies and carried out online (two events of two days, with the project covering the costs of Arabic-English-French interpretation for each event). Participating LAS States will have operational and financial responsibility for the conduct of the joint field operations.

7.3. Results of the action: The impacts of the joint field operations will be assessed upon their completion and several months following their completion.

8. Provision of information in Arabic

8.1. Objective: Meet the needs of LAS Member States for independent and reliable information on small arms and armed violence in Arabic (priority area 5).

8.2. Activities: Translation of key publications and documents into Arabic (published reports, best-practice guidelines, etc.). Examples could include new EU documents on SALW, an SAS Handbook on gender-responsive small arms control and the 'Security' chapter in the annual WCO *Illicit Trade Report*.

8.3. Results of the action: Specific outputs will include the translation of important books, reports, briefing papers and other small arms-related documents, as well as the production of podcasts and blog posts in Arabic. Overall, this action will result in a significant increase in the availability of independent and reliable Arabic-language information on small arms and armed violence, building on the foundations laid in phase 1 of the project.

9. Project coordination meetings

9.1. Objective: To ensure optimal project coordination and planning.

9.2. Activities: In-person meetings at implementing agency headquarters in Brussels, Geneva and Lyon (three meetings total), bringing together the three implementing agencies, as well as the LAS Secretariat, for a discussion of project-related challenges and priorities, as well as implementation plans and strategies.

9.3. Results of the action: Production of a short report outlining project-related challenges and priorities, as well as implementation plans and strategies (one report per meeting).

10. Project monitoring and evaluation

10.1. Objective: To ensure that the project has achieved its objectives and that all project expenditures have been made in accordance with the agreed budget.

10.2. Activities: Phase 2 of the project will comprise an internal and external assessment of project impacts. The internal assessment will be carried out by project staff with the support of the SAS Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Specialist. An external consultant will conduct the external evaluation, travelling to the Cairo wrap-up meeting, selected LAS States (four) and the headquarters of the implementing agencies for this purpose. The project will also include a financial audit in line with Union requirements.

10.3. Results of the action: Completion of the internal and external assessments of project impacts; completion of the financial audit.

Implementing agencies and partnerships

Phase 2 of the project will again be implemented in partnership with the LAS Secretariat within the framework of the EU-LAS Strategic Dialogue on Weapons of Mass Destruction, SALW and Arms Control. The LAS Secretariat hosted the project's phase 1 inception meeting in Cairo, Egypt in July 2019. Secretariat personnel participated in two of the needs assessment missions that the project conducted in November-December 2019, as well as the project's first subregional workshop, held in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates in February 2020. The continuing, strong support of the LAS Secretariat remains vital to the successful continuation of the project in phase 2.

As in phase 1 of the project, the Small Arms Survey ('SAS'), an associated programme of the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, located in Geneva, Switzerland, will be the lead implementing agency. In implementing phase 2, SAS will continue to draw on the essential contributions of the International Criminal Police Organisation (INTERPOL) and the World Customs Organisation (WCO). WCO will have primary responsibility for priority areas 1 and 2.1 (international transfer controls, including border controls), INTERPOL for areas 2.2 and 2.3 (capacity-building for law-enforcement agencies) and SAS for areas 3 to 5 (stockpile management and security, DDR, and the provision of SALW-related information).

This partnership represents a model of cooperation in the SALW field. The project harnesses the complementary knowledge and expertise of each implementing agency to offer a comprehensive knowledge- and capacity-building programme covering the major components of the PoA and ITI. In this way, the project translates the concepts of international cooperation and multilateralism, emphasized in documents such as the PoA and the EU SALW Strategy, into tangible results, namely the effective implementation of the PoA and ITI and the strengthening of inter-regional security.

As necessary, in coordination with the LAS Secretariat, SAS will subcontract other organisations to assist with other components of the project. Depending on the needs and preferences of participating LAS Member States, other organisations, including civil-society organisations, as well as certain LAS specialised agencies, could also contribute to the implementation of the project.

The implementing agencies will also coordinate with governmental and non-governmental organisations working in LAS Member States, as well as any Union programmes with a presence there, in order to ensure that all of the activities undertaken within the framework of the project complement and build upon existing initiatives. Note that this project leverages Union support in recent years for the development and implementation of INTERPOL's Illicit Arms Records and tracing Management System (iARMS), the core component of INTERPOL's EU-LAS training offer.

The implementing agencies will also take appropriate measures to ensure project visibility in line with Union guidelines.

Duration

A duration of 36 months is envisaged for the project.