

Southern Africa Regional Action

Programme on Light Arms and

Illicit Arms Trafficking

Conclusions from the Institute for Security Studies/Saferworld Conference on 'Developing Controls on Arms and Illicit Trafficking in Southern Africa', Pretoria, South Africa, 3-6 May 1998

PREFACE

The following text outlines an Action Programme for Southern Africa—the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and its members—to tackle light arms proliferation and illicit arms trafficking. It also indicates areas where the European Union (EU) and its member states could co-operate with and support such a programme. The text constitutes the agreed conclusions and recommendations of the participants to the Saferworld/ Institute for Security Studies Conference on Developing Controls on Arms and Illicit Trafficking in Southern Africa, held at Halfway House, near Pretoria, South Africa from 3 to 6 May 1998. The participants primarily comprised officials and experts from SADC member states and from the EU and its member states; officials from some other concerned states and international organisations were also present.

There is a growing recognition of the problem and the associated effects of illicit trafficking in arms, particularly light arms, in Southern Africa. Conflicts such as the long civil wars in Angola and Mozambique have led to the large scale circulation and trafficking of illicit arms in the region and the consequent fuelling of conflict, crime and violence. In recognition of the severity of these problems, and with a desire to identify ways in which the EU and its member states might help Southern African countries to address these problems, the UK government decided to sponsor this seminar as part of its efforts to implement the EU Programme on preventing and combating illicit trafficking in conventional arms, agreed in June 1997. The aims of the seminar were to:

- help to improve understanding of the ways in which Southern African countries could strengthen the effectiveness of their efforts to control arms, and combat illicit arms trafficking, in the Southern Africa region;
- improve understanding of the ways in which the EU and its member states could assist Southern African countries, and associated regional organisations, in such efforts; and
- develop agreement among selected officials and non-government experts from Southern Africa on appropriate and effective elements and priorities for a regional “action plan” involving EU assistance programmes, particularly in the framework of the new EU Programme for preventing and combating illicit trafficking in conventional arms.

These conclusions are those of the conference participants themselves, and do not necessarily reflect the policies of the countries or organisations they represent. Nevertheless, the conclusions are expected to be considered by SADC and EU governments and relevant committees. It is hoped that they will form the basis for developing an official programme within SADC, with EU co-operation under the framework of the EU Programme, and organised through SADC-EU dialogue structures.