2025/1451

16.7.2025

COUNCIL DECISION (CFSP) 2025/1451

of 15 July 2025

in support of efforts to prevent and combat the illicit proliferation of and trafficking in small arms and light weapons (SALW) and ammunition and their impact in the Americas – Phase III

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

Having regard to the Treaty on European Union, and in particular Article 28(1) and Article 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 and their ammunition, entitled 'Securing Arms, Protecting Citizens' (the 'EU SALW Strategy') sets the guidelines for Union action in the field of small arms and light weapons ('SALW').

(2) At regional level, the EU SALW Strategy commits the Union and its Member States to providing assistance to other countries in order to improve the management and security of state-held stockpiles by strengthening national legislative and administrative frameworks and strengthening institutions that regulate the legitimate supply and stockpile management of SALW and ammunition for defence and security forces.

(3) The EU SALW Strategy notes that the Union will look for synergy with the relevant American states and regional organisations to reduce the illicit proliferation of and trafficking in SALW, with a view to reducing armed violence and criminal activity.

(4) The Organization of American States (OAS) is the Secretariat for the Inter-American Convention against Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives and Other Related Materials (CIFTA) and is coordinating and implementing regional initiatives combatting illicit SALW in the Americas.

(5) The Union previously supported the OAS by means of Council Decisions (CFSP) 2018/2010 [1] and (CFSP) 2022/847 [2] in support of activities countering the illicit proliferation of and trafficking in SALW and ammunition and their impact in Latin America and the Caribbean,

HAS ADOPTED THIS DECISION:

Article 1

1. In the context of the implementation of the EU SALW Strategy, the purpose of this Decision is to address armed violence in the Americas. To that effect, the Union shall finance the project described in the Annex, the aim of which is to counter the illicit proliferation of and trafficking in firearms and ammunition, and to prevent engagement with firearms in highly impacted communities.

2. The objectives of this Decision are:

(a) to strengthen regulatory frameworks to address trafficking in firearms in the Americas;

(b) to increase the sharing of knowledge and information in respect of trafficking in firearms and the illicit proliferation of SALW in the Americas;

[1] Council Decision (CFSP) 2018/2010 of 17 December 2018 in support of countering illicit proliferation and trafficking of small arms, light weapons (SALW) and ammunition and their impact in Latin America and the Caribbean in the framework of the EU Strategy against Illicit Firearms, Small Arms & Light Weapons and their Ammunition 'Securing Arms, Protecting Citizens' (OJ L 322, 18.12.2018, p. 27, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/dec/2018/2010/oj).

[2] Council Decision (CFSP) 2022/847 of 30 May 2022 in support of efforts to prevent and combat illicit proliferation and trafficking of small arms and light weapons (SALW) and ammunition and their impact in the Americas (OJ L 148, 31.5.2022, p. 40, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/dec/2022/847/oj).

(c) to improve state capacities to manage the lifecycle of SALW and ammunition, reducing the risk of diversion to the illicit market;

(d) to strengthen national systems for systematic tracing of illicit SALW;

(e) to reduce risk factors associated with armed violence at the community level; and

(f) to strengthen sub-regional cooperation through the development and implementation of the Sub-Regional Firearms Roadmap.

3. A detailed description of the project is set out in the Annex to this Decision.

Article 2

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

2. The technical implementation of the project referred to in Article 1 shall be carried out by the OAS.

3. The OAS shall perform its tasks under the responsibility of the HR. For that purpose, the HR shall enter into the necessary arrangements with the OAS.

Article 3

1. The financial reference amount for the implementation of the project financed by the Union shall be EUR 4 055 956.

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 general budget of the Union.

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

4. The Commission shall endeavour to conclude the financing 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 financing agreement.

Article 4

1. The HR shall report to the Council on the implementation of this Decision on the basis of regular narrative reports prepared by the OAS. Those reports shall form the basis of the evaluation to be carried out by the Council.

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 financing 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, 15 July 2025.

For the Council

The President

K. KALLAS

ANNEX

Project in support of efforts to prevent and combat illicit proliferation and trafficking of small arms and light weapons (SALW) and ammunition and their impact in the Americas –

Phase III

1. **Background**

The Americas continues to be the most violent region in the world, with high economic, social, and human costs, particularly affecting the most vulnerable populations. According to the latest Global Study on Homicides, in 2021, the region registered the highest regional rate of homicides, with 15 homicides per 100 000 inhabitants, compared to the global average of 5,8 per 100 000 inhabitants ([1]). Although there has been progress in reducing homicide rates—from 17,2 homicides per 100 000 inhabitants in 2017 ([2])—one in every three homicides worldwide still occurs in the Americas. Moreover, almost 70 % of these homicides are committed with a firearm ([3]). Therefore, it is essential to strengthen the capacity of Latin American and Caribbean countries to address armed violence.

Several factors contribute to armed violence in the region. The illicit proliferation of arms and ammunition, especially in contexts of high inequality, social exclusion, and lack of access to public services and peaceful conflict resolution methods, jeopardizes community security. Additionally, organized criminal groups threaten the stability of Latin American and Caribbean countries by fueling the illicit arms market through illegal routes that exploit porous borders and insufficient oversight of the legal chain of firearms and ammunition. To effectively address armed violence in the Americas, comprehensive policies must prioritize controlling illicit flows of firearms and ammunition and addressing community-level risk factors through a bifold approach that targets both the supply and demand of illicit firearms and ammunition.

The region already has a framework for strengthening controls over the lifecycle of firearms and ammunition. The CIFTA Convention, signed in 1997 and ratified by 31 countries in the Americas, remains a key mechanism for regional cooperation in preventing, combating, and eradicating the illicit manufacturing and trafficking of firearms, ammunition, and explosives. CIFTA establishes legally binding obligations related to the through-life management of firearms and ammunition, reducing diversion from legitimate users, and addressing firearms trafficking. However, it is necessary to intensify efforts to implement the convention's provisions. Despite government efforts, the region still faces many challenges in implementing these policies to ensure only authorized users have access to firearms and ammunition.

The initial challenge is the lack of data to understand the nuances of the phenomenon in each country and identify gaps in institutional capacities. Countries also lack the legislation, human resources, and equipment to control the legal trade and legitimate use of firearms and ammunition. Although the marking of firearms has increased, the capacity of recordkeeping systems is limited. Most systems are still paper-based or fragmented, without data integration. In practice, once a civilian or a private security company obtains a license to possess a firearm, there is no assigned unit or personnel to verify compliance with licensing conditions. The oversight over state-owned arsenals is also loose. Military and security forces do not systematically implement stockpile management protocols, increasing the likelihood of diversion of firearms and ammunition to the illicit market, as well as the risk of unplanned explosions in storage facilities.

It is also relatively easy to divert firearms and ammunition during international transfers. Licensing authorities, customs, and border agencies do not have the channels to communicate in real time and to track the actual movement of goods. The absence of equipment, including x-rays, and lack of training of border personnel hinders the verification processes and interdiction of hidden firearms and ammunition.

([1]) UNODC, Global Study on Homicide. 2023. https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/gsh/2023/GSH23_ExSum.pdf
([2]) UNODC, Global Study on Homicide. 2019. https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/global-study-on-homicide.html
([3]) UNODC, Global Study on Homicide. 2023. https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/gsh/2023/GSH23_ExSum.pdf

The criminal justice response is also insufficient. Some countries still do not have specialized units to investigate and prosecute firearms trafficking. The absence of protocols and resources for investigating recovered firearms halts criminal investigations that could trace the origin of firearms, connect them to multiple crime scenes, and uncover networks of illicit trafficking.

Countries not only lack capacities to manage the supply of firearms and ammunition, in order to ensure that only authorized users have access to them. Institutional capacities are also limited to address the illicit demand for firearms and ammunition, and risk factors that hinder a culture of peace at the community level.

To address these challenges, since 2019, with funding from the European Union (Council Decision CFSP 2018/2010 and Council Decision CFSP 2022/847), the Department of Public Security of the Organization of American States (DPS/OAS), within the framework of the Program of Assistance on Control of Arms and Munition (PACAM), provides comprehensive technical assistance to Latin American and Caribbean states to strengthen their policies to address and prevent firearms and ammunition trafficking. PACAM is the operational mechanism of the OAS to support OAS Member States in addressing armed violence by strengthening their capacity to comply with and implement the provisions of international instruments, such as the Inter-American Convention Against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials (CIFTA), the UN Programme of Action (UN-PoA), and the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). PACAM supports OAS Member States, at their request, through a multi-layered approach:

— Legislative support to improve the firearms normative framework.

— Tailored, needs-driven, and sustainable technical assistance and capacity-building in various aspects of through-life management of firearms and ammunition.

— Promotion of preventive initiatives to strengthen community resilience against armed violence through the OASIS methodology and reduce unauthorized access to firearms.

From January 2019 to July 2024, the implementation of the two CFSP Council Decisions has generated meaningful results in the region, benefiting 28 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean through various components:

— Development of the Central American Roadmap to Prevent the Illicit Proliferation and Trafficking of Firearms and Ammunition, adopted by Central American countries in February 2025.

— Legislative assistance to 7 countries to strengthen their firearms normative framework.

— Training of more than 3 400 national personnel from 28 countries on good practices and standards of Physical Security and Stockpile Management, Marking and Recordkeeping of Firearms, and Destruction of Firearms and Ammunition.

— Support to 16 countries in marking firearms, including through the donation of marking machines.

— Destruction of more than 219 tons of ammunition and 85 000 SALW seized, obsolete, or in excess in 6 countries.

— Security improvements to 16 depot areas of firearms and ammunition in 8 countries.

— Development of an inventory control software for firearms and ammunition of institutional stockpiles, used by 15 institutions in 9 countries.

— Development of a Regional Communication Mechanism on Licit Transfers of Firearms and Ammunition, including a national solution for countries that still use paper-based systems to manage their licensing processes.

— Strengthening of life skills for 2 600 at-risk youth from Honduras and Peru through afterschool orchestra and choir classes.

— Establishment of a Center of Reference for Victims of Gun Violence in Honduras, which provided psychosocial support to more than 160 people and organized outreach activities to raise awareness.

— Training of more than 300 community stakeholders from El Salvador, Honduras, and Peru in violence prevention and assistance to victims.

— Participation of more than 2 800 citizens from Honduras and Peru in outreach activities and violence prevention events to promote a culture of peace.

Through collaboration with the European Union, significant progress has been made in addressing firearms trafficking in the region. Some countries have participated in the regional components of the project, such as coordination mechanisms and workshops, while a core group of countries has been comprehensively impacted.

Despite these advances, it is still necessary to continue providing long-term assistance for countries to sustain good practices. DPS/OAS experience has shown that continuous, tailored, needs-driven technical and operational support, over the long term, is essential to achieve systematic implementation and national ownership of complex policies, such as firearms control. This new phase will consider the importance of long-term strategies to provide meaningful and sustainable change in security policies and conditions.

Phase III will incorporate new elements building on the progress of Phases I and II, such as targeted assistance to improve tracing practices and prevent firearms use and incidents in schools. During these five years, we created the conditions for introducing these new elements, which require a direct and close relationship with government authorities and an open dialogue about their challenges and needs. As such, Phase III will not only contribute to the sustainability of the assistance offered over the past five years but will also move the needle one step further to address armed violence in the Americas.

2. **Technical Approach**

During this phase, DPS/OAS will continue to invest in a holistic approach that combines strategies for the prevention of armed violence and firearms control to address both the unauthorized supply and demand for firearms and ammunition through five specific objectives:

1. **Strengthen Regulatory Frameworks to Address Firearms Trafficking in the Americas**

One component of the Action focuses on strengthening national legal frameworks to ensure they support the operational activities of firearms control and include all mandatory provisions of international regulations. This involves expanding the availability of standards and guidelines on key aspects of the prevention of armed violence and the through-life management of firearms and ammunition, as well as facilitating access for national authorities and technical personnel.

In the previous phase, DPS/OAS developed three new guidelines (Destruction of SALW, PSSM of SALW, and Prevention of Gender-Based Violence with the Misuse of Firearms) that were approved by the Consultative Committee of CIFTA and integrated into the body of complementary documentation to guide the application of the convention. In this phase, DPS/OAS will continue this effort by developing CIFTA Guidelines on Voluntary Weapons Surrender Programs and safety and security standards for private security companies. These topics are highly relevant to the region. Significant amounts of firearms circulate in highly impacted communities, necessitating awareness-raising about the risks they pose and encouraging their surrender to promote a culture of peace and peaceful conflict resolution. Additionally, private security companies continue to expand in Latin America and the Caribbean, with millions of armed guards providing various security services. It is crucial to regulate the use of firearms and ammunition by private security companies to reduce the diversion and misuse of firearms in their possession.

Moreover, we will expand and continue to disseminate the Hemispheric Firearms Knowledge Platform, developed during Phase II. This platform is a centralized repository of information and data regarding firearms trafficking in the Americas. It features a public area with a library of related publications and a search tool that allows users to filter standards by interest (such as area of application, level of recommendation, etc.). It also includes a private area for registered users from countries, featuring a forum to exchange information, a directory of authorities, and a tool to electronically submit their biennial reports on the implementation of CIFTA. This information is then available on dashboards to assess state capacities and gaps in the convention's implementation.

2. **Increase Knowledge and Information-Sharing on Firearms Trafficking and Illicit Proliferation of SALW in the Americas**

Recognizing the need for continuous data generation to better understand the characteristics of firearms trafficking in the region and to identify the main gaps in institutional capacities, DPS/OAS aims to increase the availability of knowledge-generating tools within the CIFTA framework. We will offer training to national personnel on how to collect and systematize data on firearms trafficking through three sub-regional seminars. Individualized support will also be provided to countries to help them complete and submit the CIFTA implementation questionnaire, which includes specific variables to assess state capacities based on available benchmarks (including CIFTA, MOSAIC, IATG, and other standards).

In partnership with UNIDIR, we will conduct an in-depth analysis of state capacities to manage the lifecycle of SALW and ammunition using UNIDIR's methodology. This analysis will enable countries to implement targeted strategies to address identified gaps.

3. **Improve state capacities to manage the lifecycle of SALW and ammunition, reducing the risk of diversion to the illicit market**

At the operational level, DPS/OAS will continue to enhance national capacities to manage institutional stockpiles and reduce the risk of loss, theft, and diversion of weapons and ammunition. This will include training and targeted assistance on physical security and stockpile management (PSSM), encompassing safety, security, accounting, storage, transportation, and handling of weapons and ammunition, as well as the destruction of seized, excess, or obsolete firearms and ammunition. On PSSM, we will continue applying the methodology developed during previous phases to train national operators to assess the conditions of depot areas. Based on assessed needs, we will implement minor improvements to the infrastructure and security of these depot areas. Additionally, we will continue providing comprehensive assistance for destruction processes, offering equipment, mentorship and training, and certification to ensure compliance with international standards. This technical assistance will be integrated with capacity-building activities (training, seminars, workshops) to build sustainability in through-life management of weapons and ammunition.

4. **Strengthen national systems for systematic tracing of illicit SALW**

Through the support offered in previous phases, particularly in marking and record-keeping, significant gaps have been identified in systematic tracing practices and information management systems. These gaps hinder law enforcement officials' abilities to detect trafficking patterns, prevent diversions, and strengthen cooperation among countries. To address this issue, and leveraging the relationships established with authorities, DPS/OAS is introducing a new component in Phase III aimed at strengthening national systems for the systematic tracing of illicit SALW. This initiative will be implemented in partnership with INTERPOL, given their extensive experience on the topic with law enforcement agencies. This component includes a regional seminar to promote the exchange of information among Latin American and Caribbean countries on the topic of systematic tracing. We will also provide comprehensive technical assistance to a selected country, as a pilot initiative, including the development of a Firearms Recovery Protocol, with standard operating procedures, workflows, and processes to ensure recovered firearms are triaged (considering priority criteria for tracing and investigation), traced, and investigated, and the deployment of a taskforce to support national personnel in implementing the protocol and tracing firearms from a selected sample. This includes the development of intelligence reports to support police work.

5. **Reduce risk factors associated with armed violence at the community level**

DPS/OAS will continue to adopt a holistic approach to preventing gun violence at the community level, with focalized policies considering high-risk groups to be a victim and a perpetrator of armed violence. This includes the implementation of the OASIS methodology of the DPS/OAS in one country, which includes after-school music classes to develop life skills of at-risk youth; offer of psychosocial support, and promotion of community raising-awareness activities through a Center of Reference for Victims of Armed Violence; and training of community stakeholder in the prevention of armed violence. In addition, another focus of Phase III will be the prevention of firearms-related violence in schools by providing training for educators and school personnel on prevention strategies, intervention, and assistance for victims of firearms-related violence . This will be complemented by workshops focusing on journalists and influencers to improve reporting on firearms-related violence violence, aiming to prevent further engagement and replication of such cases. We will also continue building on the progress of Phase II by offering training-of-trainers to disseminate knowledge and good practices on preventing gender-based violence involving firearms. Finally, considering the initial work of Phase II, we will offer technical assistance for raising-awareness campaigns and voluntary weapons surrender programs to reduce illicit firearms circulation in highly impacted communities.

6. **Strengthen sub-regional cooperation through the development and implementation of Sub-Regional Firearms Roadmap**

In Phase II of the cooperation, DPS/OAS, in coordination with UNLIREC and the Central American Integration System (SICA), has successfully developed the Central American Roadmap to Prevent the Illicit Proliferation and Trafficking of Firearms and Ammunition. In Phase III, DPS/OAS will establish a follow-up mechanism to support the implementation of the Central American Firearms Roadmap, as mandated by the General Assembly of the Organization of American States ([4]). The structure of the follow-up mechanism will be defined with the participating States considering lessons learned and good practices of the other Roadmaps, including the following:

— Creation of a Monitoring and Evaluation framework for the Roadmap, including the designation of M&E focal points and the development of a web-based platform for States to report on the progress of the Roadmap;

— Assistance to States to collect the baseline assessments, including technical support to train States in the use of the M&E framework, and the support to gather the necessary data;

— Organization of annual meetings of States following the adoption of the Roadmap;

— Regular meetings of implementing partners, government authorities, and donors (separately and jointly);

— National workshops and technical assistance for countries to develop national action plans, considering the overall goals of the roadmap, including training, raising-awareness trainings, and one-on-one mentorship for countries.

Through Phase III, DPS/OAS will advance key elements of the follow-up mechanism, such as organizing an annual meeting, creating the M&E framework, and supporting some countries with baseline assessments and national action plans. DPS/OAS will also seek additional donor contributions to strengthen the framework for implementing the Central American Firearms Roadmap.

In addition, considering the interest of Andean countries (Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru) to address the issue of firearms trafficking in a more coherent and integrated approach, due to the specific needs of the sub-region (impacted by local dynamics of gangs, drug flows, and illegal mining), in Phase III, DPS/OAS will initiate the process to develop the Andean Firearms Roadmap. During this initial stage, we will map the needs and priorities of the countries and develop a draft of the Roadmap through national and regional workshops with government representatives. We will also strive to find other funding sources to complement the resources of the European Union and achieve the adoption of the Roadmap within Phase III.

Summary and Implementation Approach

By addressing these multiple areas, the Action aims to simultaneously meet the needs of the countries and promote long-term, sustainable changes. Activities to strengthen firearms control and reduce the supply of firearms will be complemented by preventive measures to reduce demand in communities heavily impacted by armed violence.

DPS/OAS, through PACAM, will coordinate and implement the Action in collaboration with other agencies and national authorities. Utilizing OAS political forums and communication channels, DPS/OAS will identify countries requiring support and work with them to create tailored assistance plans. This project will adopt a specific and customized approach to each country, acknowledging that needs and gaps vary. Not all countries will receive support in all project components; instead, DPS/OAS will continue using PACAM's successful methodology: mapping needs, engaging authorities, creating assistance plans, and deploying missions. DPS/OAS will also participate in coordination mechanisms to avoid duplication of work, such as continuing to support Caribbean countries through the Caribbean Firearms Roadmap.

([4]) '27. To request that the SMS, through the DPS and within the framework of the Program of Assistance for the Control of Arms and Munitions (PACAM), which is a voluntary program: a) support the development and implementation of the Central American Roadmap for the Prevention of Illicit Trafficking and Proliferation of Arms and Munitions in coordination with SICA and the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean (UNLIREC), including the creation of a follow-up mechanism to monitor progress and promote effective coordination among governments, implementing partners, and donors;' (AG/RES. 3009 – LIII-O/23, adopted on June 23, 2023)

Gender and Human Rights Perspective

Considering the different impacts of armed conflict on vulnerable persons, Phase III will maintain a gender and human rights perspective. This includes incorporating women at all levels of project implementation and encouraging equal participation of women in project activities. Violence prevention activities will focus on the safety and security needs of women and girls within their communities and their participation in finding solutions to these challenges. Additionally, components will focus exclusively on addressing gender-based violence.

7. **Overall Goal**

To strengthen the capacity of Latin American and Caribbean countries to address armed violence in the region by controlling the proliferation and illicit trafficking in firearms and munitions, and preventing engagement with firearms in highly impacted communities.

8. **Description of Projects' Intervention Strategies**

Objective 1: To strengthen regulatory frameworks to address firearms trafficking in the Americas

Activities

— Technical assistance to countries to review legislation and normative framework considering international standards, and internal harmonization of mandates, as well as the integration of a gender-based perspective;

— Development of CIFTA Guidelines to develop, plan, implement, and evaluate voluntary weapons surrender programs;

— Development of CIFTA Guidelines with recommendations for safety and security standards that private security companies must maintain to avoid the diversion of SALW and ammunition to the illicit market;

— Dissemination of Hemispheric Knowledge Platform, including an optimized search tool to facilitate access to CIFTA standards and guidelines (developed during Phase II).

Outputs

— Legislative assistance offered to improve national firearms normative framework, considering international standards and a gender perspective, to at least 3 countries of the region;

— Increased availability of regional tools to support countries in all aspects of firearms control (both at the supply and demand level) by developing and making available: (i) CIFTA Guidelines to Develop, Plan, Implement, and Evaluate voluntary weapons surrender programs; and (ii) CIFTA Guidelines on Safety and Security Practices for Private Security Companies that utilize firearms;

— Hemispheric Firearms Knowledge Platform expanded and disseminated for stakeholders in the region.

Objective 2: To increase knowledge and information-sharing on firearms trafficking and illicit proliferation of SALW in the Americas

Activities

— Comprehensive assessment of state capacities to manage the lifecycle of SALW and ammunition (considering the Methodology of UNIDIR for Weapons and Ammunition Management Baseline Assessment);

— Implementation of the CIFTA questionnaire to identify state capacities to manage, prevent, control, and prosecute illicit trade of firearms;

— Training of national personnel to collect and systematize data regarding firearms trafficking and illicit proliferation of SALW, considering a gender perspective.

Outputs

— UNIDIR WAM Baseline Assessment conducted in one country of the region;

— CIFTA Questionnaire deployed in the region, with at least 60 % of the CIFTA State Parties submitting their answers;

— Elaboration, publication and dissemination of report with key findings from the application of the CIFTA questionnaire;

— Three virtual sub-regional seminars (Mesoamerica, South America, and the Caribbean), with at least 20 participants in each, conducted to raise awareness of high-level national personnel on data collection tools regarding firearms trafficking and illicit proliferation, as well as techniques and strategies to improve data collection and systematization.

Objective 3: To improve state capacities to manage the lifecycle of SALW and ammunition, reducing the risk of diversion to the illicit market

Activities

— Development and implementation of specialized training for national personnel in weapons and ammunition management, including on PSSM, marking and recordkeeping, voluntary weapons surrender campaigns, and destruction of SALW and ammunition, considering international standards and good practices;

— Provision of international certification in advanced explosive ordnance disposal (EOD-3) to national personnel, in partnership with the Ministry of Defense of Spain;

— Technical and material assistance, and certification of national destruction processes of confiscated, obsolete, or in-surplus SALW and ammunition;

— Technical and material assistance to assess and enhance the infrastructure of national depots of SALW and ammunition, according to CIFTA standards, MOSAIC, and IATG.

— Implementation of one workshop for users of the Inventory Control Software for Arms and Munition (SAM), developed during Phase I and expanded in Phase II, to identify challenges and requirements for upgrades;

— Provision of SAM to national institutions of OAS Member States that require it, including training and help-desk support of users;

— Pilot the initial concept of the electronic solution of the Regional Communication Mechanism on Licit Transfers of Arms and Ammunition (MCTA), developed during Phase II;

— Development of the optional modules of the Regional Communication Mechanism on Licit Transfers of Arms and Ammunition (MCTA), and the additional functionalities, considering feedback received by pilot countries;

— Support the deployment of the National Licensing System for Export/Import Control in countries, developed during Phase II, including adaptation to national standards and processes.

Outputs

— At least 50 000 SALW and 100 tons of ammunition, in excess, obsolete, and/or seized, destroyed through the assistance and/or certification of the project;

— At least 400 national personnel, from 10 countries, trained and improved their knowledge regarding the application of good practices of WAM;

— At least 30 national personnel from 10 OAS Member States certified in EOD-3, in partnership with the Ministry of Defense of Spain;

— Security of institutional stockpiles improved in at least 5 national depots/warehouses of SALW and ammunition in the region;

— Enhanced capacity for the inventory and accountability of SALW and ammunition in stockpiles of national institutions through the improvement and dissemination of SAM;

— Increased capacity of at least 3 OAS Member States in controlling international transfers of SALW and ammunition through the installation of the National Licensing System;

— Regional Communication Mechanism on Licit Transfers of Arms and Ammunition (MCTA) fully developed and tested by OAS Member States.

Objective 4: To establish or strengthen national systems for systematic tracing of illicit SALW

Activities

— Implementation of subregional workshops for the exchange of information on good practices for tracing illicit SALW;

— Development of national firearms recovery protocols to enable systematic tracing and investigation of recovered firearms, in partnership with INTERPOL;

— Technical assistance to national authorities to identify and trace recovered firearms, and generate intelligence information to feed relevant investigative units;

— Assessment of main gaps in record-keeping systems and data collection that hinder domestic and international tracing of recovered firearms, and provision of technical assistance and resources to strengthen or establish these national systems/databases, considering identified gaps;

— Technical and material assistance on marking and recordkeeping, particularly to those Member States assisted in previous phases of the cooperation with the European Union.

Outputs

— Increased capacities in one OAS Member State to trace recovered SALW through the development of firearms recovery protocol, the offer of technical assistance to trace firearms, and improvements of systems and equipment necessary for domestic and international tracing;

— One regional seminar, with at least 20 participants, carried out to disseminate tracing good practices, CIFTA tracing frameworks (including the designation of points of contacts s for tracing), and exchange of information;

— Five national institutions of OAS Member States assisted in improving their marking and recordkeeping capacities.

Objective 5: To reduce risk factors associated with armed violence at the community level

Activities

— Provision of daily extracurricular activities to strengthen the life skills of at-risk youth through the OASIS methodology in one OAS Member State;

— Establishment of a centre of reference for psychosocial support of victims of armed violence in at least one hotspot community of one OAS Member State;

— Training of local-level policymakers, government officials, service providers, educators, parents, and civil society on the prevention of violence with the use of firearms;

— Development and offer of a regional educational training program (through a massive open online course, and a train-the-trainer course) for educators, school officials, and other authorities on how to address and prevent the use of firearms in schools;

— Training of national public sector personnel (through a hybrid approach with in-person modules and a massive open online course) on the prevention of gender-based violence with the use of firearms;

— Implementation of workshops with journalists and digital influencers to raise awareness of risk factors of firearms-related violence and call for action on violence interruption and prevention;

— Technical and material assistance to one OAS Member State in the development and implementation of risk-awareness and voluntary weapons surrender programs in selected communities.

Outputs

— At least 300 at-risk youth (including youth in conflict with the law) from benefitted communities improved their life skills through training and daily after-school activities;

— One Center of Reference for Psychosocial Support for Victims of Gun Violence established in one community, offering (i) individualized psychosocial support to at least 100 survivors of violence and/or persons at risk of engaging or experiencing armed violence; and (ii) thematic workshops on violence prevention, and outreach activities within the school community and local spaces of participation;

— At least 200 local-level policymakers, government officials, service providers, educators, parents, and civil society trained on the prevention of armed violence;

— At least 150 educators, school officials, and other related national authorities trained to address and prevent the use of firearms in schools;

— At least 150 government officials and civil society trained on the prevention of gender-based violence with the misuse of firearms, including 15 persons trained to be knowledge-multipliers through the train-the-trainers course;

— At least 25 journalists and digital influencers increased their awareness of risk factors associated with armed violence through their participation in the workshop on the prevention of firearms-related violence;

— Risk-awareness education and voluntary weapons surrender campaigns implemented in benefitted communities of one country, contributing to the reduction in the demand for and availability of firearms.

Objective 6: To strengthen sub-regional cooperation through the development and implementation of Sub-Regional Firearms Roadmap

Activities

— Establishment of a Monitoring and Evaluation framework for the Central American Firearms Roadmap, including the development of electronic tools to support data collection and analysis;

— Technical assistance to Central American countries regarding the monitoring and evaluation of the Roadmap, including support to conduct baseline assessments, training of national personnel in the use of the M&E framework, and ongoing assistance to gather the necessary data;

— Implementation of one in-person annual meeting of States, donors, and implementing partners of the Central American Firearms Roadmap;

— Implementation of biannual virtual meetings of implementing partners, government authorities, and donors (separately and jointly);

— Implementation of national workshops and technical assistance for Central American countries to develop national action plans, considering the overall goals of the roadmap, including training, and one-on-one mentorship for countries.

Outputs

— Monitoring and Evaluation framework for the Central American Firearms Roadmap developed and approved by participating countries;

— Baseline assessment carried out in at least 50 % of Central American participating countries;

— One in-person annual meeting of Central American Firearms Roadmap;

— Six virtual meetings of the Central American Firearms Roadmap implemented with implementing partners, government authorities, and donors;

— At least 40 % of participating countries of the Central American Firearms Roadmap with national actional plans developed and approved;

— Draft of the Andean Firearms Roadmap developed and agreed with Andean countries.

9. **Duration**

The total estimated duration of the comprehensive regional Phase III will be 36 months.

10. **Technical implementing entity**

The technical implementation of this program is entrusted to the Department of Public Security of the General Secretariat of the Organization of American States (DPS/OAS). The DPS/OAS is uniquely positioned to support the countries of the Americas, given its dual role as the Technical co-Secretariat of CIFTA and as the technical and operational body of the OAS in this area. In this capacity, the DPS/OAS has a track record of implementing projects and programs that assist OAS Member States in meeting their obligations to secure national firearms stockpiles, enact legislative measures to criminalize illicit firearms manufacturing and trafficking, require firearms marking, and share tracing information and patterns of illicit trafficking with other CIFTA signatories. No other regional or subregional organization covering all of the Americas possesses the political influence, technical expertise, or geographical reach necessary to support and assist all American states.

During Phase III, DPS/OAS will continue to coordinate and collaborate with other institutions and organizations. Since Phase I, strategic partnerships have been established with entities that support Latin American and Caribbean countries to avoid duplication of efforts and maximize the effectiveness of the Action. These partners include the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean (UNLIREC), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), the Caribbean Community Implementation Agency for Crime and Security (CARICOM IMPACS), the Inter-American Defense Board, the Ammunition Management Advisory Team of the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (AMAT-GICHD), and INTERPOL.

11. **Relevance**

— **Regional Relevance**

Despite significant progress in consolidating democracy and achieving socio-economic development, Latin American and Caribbean countries continue to face enormous challenges in promoting the safety of their citizens and communities. Public security, or the lack thereof, is a high priority for both citizens and government authorities in the region. The Americas remains one of the most violent areas in the world, with experts identifying the availability of firearms and unrestricted access to them as key risk factors contributing to high rates of lethal violence. Compounding this issue is the increasing sophistication and complexity of organized criminal groups, which have expanded their operations and now dominate the illicit arms trafficking market. These groups have transitioned from vertical structures to networked organizations, resulting in greater efficiency and profitability in their illicit activities and increasing the challenges of identifying and investigating offenders.

It is clear that firearms trafficking and the availability of firearms significantly impact the region, representing one of the main challenges to regional and global security. This is reflected in several political and legal commitments made by countries in the region, including:

— Ratification of the CIFTA convention and other international instruments, such as the ATT and the Firearms Protocol;

— Active participation in voluntary frameworks, such as UN-PoA and the Global Framework on Through-Life Management of Conventional Ammunition;

— Adoption of the Caribbean and Central American Firearms Roadmap.

CIFTA establishes several obligations on State Parties, including the establishment of jurisdiction over criminal offenses, mandatory marking of firearms, maintenance of records for tracing, improvement of transfer controls, measures to prevent diversion, and cross-national cooperation. The Second Course of Action of CIFTA reinforces the aims of the CIFTA States Parties in these areas, in line with the UN-PoA and the Firearms Protocol. This project leverages this framework to provide technical assistance to countries in operationalizing the commitments and dispositions of these treaties, particularly the CIFTA Convention.

— **Alignment with the Priorities of the European Union**

The objectives, activities, and expected outcomes of this project are aligned with the goals and the approach of the EU Strategy 'Securing Arms, Protecting Citizens' ([5]), considering a multilateral perspective to foster engagement across regions of the world. By partnering with the OAS, this Action will continue to foster synergies between the EU and the OAS and, by extension, between Europe and the Americas to reduce armed violence and criminal activity. Particularly, this Action will promote the work of the European Union in the region through targeted support to countries that are seriously affected by the proliferation, excessive accumulation, and trafficking of SALW.

Specifically, Phase III reflects the following priorities of the Strategy:

2.1. Strengthening the Normative Framework: The activities of Objective 1 of the Action seek to ensure countries harmonize their legislation to the international standards and have tools available to promote the implementation of the international treaties and conventions;

2.2.2 Controls on the export of firearms and their ammunition: The promotion of the national licensing system and the regional communication mechanism on licit transfers of firearms and ammunition, on Objective 3, addresses the importance of controlling the legal trade to avoid diversions to the illicit market;

2.2.3 Secure SALW and ammunition stockpile management: Objective 3 has a series of activities focusing on PSSM, including training of officials, and technical and material assistance for improvement of practices and facilities, following the international standards of MOSAICS and IATGs;

2.2.4 Responsible disposal of SALW and their ammunition: Objective 3 includes training, material assistance, supervision, and certification of the destruction processes of firearms and ammunition to countries that so require;

2.2.5 Cross-cutting issues: Throughout all objectives of the Action, we will promote solutions and strategies to address firearms trafficking through a comprehensive approach, including cross-cutting issues such as gender responsiveness and use of information technology.

In addition, this Action is also aligned with the 2020-2025 EU action plan on firearms trafficking, considering its four established priorities:

— Priority 1: Safeguarding the licit market and limiting diversion

— Priority 2: Building a better intelligence picture

— Priority 3: Increasing pressure on criminal markets

— Priority 4: Stepping up international cooperation

Many of the activities and expected results of this Action will contribute to reducing diversion from state and non-state authorized users (such as the offer of technical assistance on PSSM, marking, and destruction), as well as to increase the effectiveness of actions to address firearms trafficking by promoting a comprehensive tracing strategy for law enforcement agencies. In addition, through the Action, the European Union is increasing the support offered to the Americas and the scope of its international cooperation agenda. As mentioned, the Americas is the region mostly affected by firearms-related violence, which jeopardizes security not only in the region, but has detrimental consequences in other parts of the globe, including Europe, such as cross-regional routes of firearms trafficking, and irregular migration due to the instability of the Americas.

The objectives, activities, and expected outcomes of this project align closely with the goals and approach of the EU Strategy 'Securing Arms, Protecting Citizens' ([6]), emphasizing a multilateral perspective to foster engagement across regions. By partnering with the OAS, this initiative will continue to create synergies between the EU and the OAS, and by extension, between Europe and the Americas, to reduce armed violence and criminal activity. Specifically, this project will highlight the work of the European Union in the region by providing targeted support to countries severely affected by the proliferation, excessive accumulation, and trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW).

([5]) 'Securing Arms, Protecting Citizens': EU Strategy against Illicit Firearms, Small Arms and Light Weapons, and their Ammunition, adopted by the Council on November 19th, 2018

([6]) 'Securing Arms, Protecting Citizens': EU Strategy against Illicit Firearms, Small Arms and Light Weapons, and their Ammunition, adopted by the European Council on November 19th, 2018

Phase III reflects the following priorities of the EU Strategy:

Strengthening the Normative Framework: Objective 1 activities aim to ensure countries harmonize their legislation with international standards and have the necessary tools to implement international treaties and conventions.

Controls on the Export of Firearms and Ammunition: Objective 3 promotes national licensing systems and regional communication mechanisms on the licit transfers of firearms and ammunition, addressing the importance of controlling the legal trade to prevent diversions to the illicit market.

Secure SALW and Ammunition Stockpile Management: Objective 3 includes activities focusing on PSSM, including training officials, and providing technical and material assistance to improve practices and facilities, in line with international standards such as MOSAICS and IATGs.

Responsible Disposal of SALW and Ammunition: Objective 3 also includes training, material assistance, supervision, and certification of the destruction processes for firearms and ammunition in countries requiring such support.

Cross-Cutting Issues: Throughout all objectives, the Action promotes comprehensive solutions to address firearms trafficking, incorporating cross-cutting issues such as gender responsiveness and the use of information technology.

This Action is also aligned with the 2020-2025 EU Action Plan on Firearms Trafficking, which establishes four priorities:

Safeguarding the Licit Market and Limiting Diversion: Activities and expected results aim to reduce diversions from state and non-state authorized users through technical assistance on PSSM, marking, and destruction.

Building a Better Intelligence Picture: The comprehensive tracing strategy promoted in this Action will enhance the effectiveness of actions addressing firearms trafficking by law enforcement agencies.

Increasing Pressure on Criminal Markets: By addressing illicit SALW trafficking and enhancing cooperation with law enforcement, this Action contributes to increasing pressure on criminal markets.

Stepping Up International Cooperation: This Action enhances the support offered to the Americas and expands the EU's international cooperation agenda. The Americas region is significantly impacted by firearms-related violence, jeopardizing security and having detrimental consequences globally, including cross-regional firearms trafficking routes and irregular migration due to regional instability.

By addressing these priorities, the project contributes to reducing firearms-related violence in the Americas and enhances regional and international security, demonstrating the EU's commitment to fostering stability and safety across regions.

12. **Reporting**

The DPS/OAS will prepare regular reports, in line with the negotiated Delegation Agreement.