



Brussels, 10 March 2026
(OR. en)

6615/26

LIMITE

CORLX 193
CFSP/PESC 271
CONUN 20
COARM 19

LEGISLATIVE ACTS AND OTHER INSTRUMENTS

Subject: COUNCIL DECISION in support of a global reporting mechanism on illicit conventional arms and their ammunition to reduce the risk of their diversion and illicit transfer ('iTrace VI')

COUNCIL DECISION (CFSP) 2026/...

of ...

**in support of a global reporting mechanism
on illicit conventional arms and their ammunition
to reduce the risk of their diversion and illicit transfer ('iTrace VI')**

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 2016 EU Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy (the 'EU Global Strategy') emphasises that the Union will promote peace and guarantee the security of its citizens and territory and step up its contributions to collective security. The EU Global Strategy also strongly supports the full implementation and enforcement of multilateral disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control treaties and regimes and calls for 'the cross-border tracing of weapons' recognising that European security hinges on better and shared assessments of internal and external threats and challenges.
- (2) The EU Strategy of 19 November 2018 'Securing Arms, Protecting Citizens – EU Strategy against illicit firearms, small arms & light weapons and their ammunition' (the 'EU SALW Strategy') stresses that illicit firearms, small arms and light weapons ('SALW') continue to contribute to instability and violence in the Union, in its immediate neighbourhood, and in the rest of the world. The EU SALW Strategy sets out the framework for action for the Union in order to address those challenges and commits to supporting research efforts targeting the origins of illicit SALW in conflict zones, such as Conflict Armament Research's iTrace project (the 'iTrace project').
- (3) The illicit manufacture, transfer and circulation of conventional weapons and ammunition, and their excessive accumulation and uncontrolled spread, fuel insecurity in Europe and its neighbourhood as well as in many other regions of the world, exacerbating conflict and undermining post-conflict peace-building, thus posing a serious threat to European peace and security.

- (4) The EU SALW Strategy emphasises that the Union will support the work of United Nations' panels that monitor arms embargoes, and that the Union will consider ways of improving access to findings of those panels on diversion and on illicit firearms and SALW for arms export control purposes.
- (5) Under the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in SALW in All Its Aspects (the 'UN Programme of Action'), adopted on 20 July 2001, all UN Member States have undertaken to prevent illicit trafficking in SALW, or their diversion to unauthorised recipients and, in particular, to take into account the risk of diversion of SALW into the illegal trade when assessing applications for export authorisations.
- (6) On 8 December 2005, the UN General Assembly adopted the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit SALW (the 'International Tracing Instrument').

- (7) On 28 June 2024, at the Fourth Review Conference of the UN Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument, all UN Member States affirmed their commitment to encourage states, when tracing illicit SALW, including those found in conflict and post-conflict situations, to consult records within the State where the SALW was found, to consult with the State of manufacture of that weapon, or both. That commitment is in line with the final report, published in 2022, entitled ‘Eighth Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the UN Programme of Action’ which notes the importance of developing or establishing strict national regulatory frameworks for the marking, recording and tracing of SALW, in accordance with the International Tracing Instrument, in order to prevent and combat the diversion and the illicit international transfer of SALW to unauthorised recipients.
- (8) On 24 December 2014, the Arms Trade Treaty (the ‘ATT’) entered into force. The objective of the ATT is to establish the highest possible common international standards for regulating or improving the regulation of the international trade in conventional arms, to prevent and eradicate the illicit trade in conventional arms and to prevent their diversion. The Union should support all UN Member States in implementing effective arms transfer controls in order to ensure that the ATT is as effective as possible, in particular as regards the implementation of Article 11 thereof.

- (9) The Union previously supported the iTrace project by adopting Council Decisions 2013/698/CFSP¹, (CFSP) 2015/1908², (CFSP) 2017/2283³, (CFSP) 2019/2191⁴ and (CFSP) 2023/387⁵ (which supported iTrace I, II, III, IV and V, respectively), and should support iTrace VI, the sixth phase of this global reporting mechanism on illicit conventional arms and their ammunition, in order to contribute to Europe's collective security, as provided for in the EU Global Strategy,

HAS ADOPTED THIS DECISION:

-
- ¹ Council Decision 2013/698/CFSP of 25 November 2013 in support of a global reporting mechanism on illicit small arms and light weapons and other illicit conventional weapons and ammunition to reduce the risk of their illicit trade (OJ L 320, 30.11.2013, p. 34, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dec/2013/698/oj>).
- ² Council Decision (CFSP) 2015/1908 of 22 October 2015 in support of a global reporting mechanism on illicit small arms and light weapons and other illicit conventional weapons and ammunition to reduce the risk of their illicit trade ('iTrace II') (OJ L 278, 23.10.2015, p. 15, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dec/2015/1908/oj>).
- ³ Council Decision (CFSP) 2017/2283 of 11 December 2017 in support of a global reporting mechanism on illicit small arms and light weapons and other illicit conventional weapons and ammunition to reduce the risk of their illicit trade ('iTrace III') (OJ L 328, 12.12.2017, p. 20, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dec/2017/2283/oj>).
- ⁴ Council Decision (CFSP) 2019/2191 of 19 December 2019 in support of a global reporting mechanism on illicit conventional arms and their ammunition to reduce the risk of their diversion and illicit transfer ('iTrace IV') (OJ L 330, 20.12.2019, p. 53, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dec/2019/2191/oj>).
- ⁵ Council Decision (CFSP) 2023/387 of 20 February 2023 in support of a global reporting mechanism on illicit conventional arms and their ammunition to reduce the risk of their diversion and illicit transfer ('iTrace V') (OJ L 53, 21.2.2023, p. 19, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dec/2023/387/oj>).

Article 1

1. With a view to the implementation of the EU Global Strategy, Council Common Position 2008/944/CFSP⁶, as amended by Council Decision (CFSP) 2025/779⁷, the 2018 EU SALW Strategy, and the promotion of peace and security, the iTrace project activities to be supported by the Union shall have the following specific objectives:
 - continued maintenance of a user-friendly global information management system on diverted or trafficked conventional arms and their ammunition ('iTrace') documented in conflict-affected areas in order to provide policy-makers, conventional arms control experts, and conventional arms export control officers with relevant information to develop effective, evidence-based strategies and projects against the illicit spread of conventional arms and their ammunition;

⁶ Council Common Position 2008/944/CFSP of 8 December 2008 defining common rules governing control of exports of military technology and equipment (OJ L 335, 13.12.2008, p. 99, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/compos/2008/944/oj>).

⁷ Council Decision (CFSP) 2025/779 of 14 April 2025 amending Common Position 2008/944/CFSP defining common rules governing control of exports of military technology and equipment (OJ L, 2025/779, 15.4.2025, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dec/2025/779/oj>).

- training and mentoring of national authorities in conflict-affected states to develop sustainable national illicit conventional arms identification and tracing capacity, encourage sustained cooperation with the iTrace project, better identify physical security and stockpile management (PSSM) priorities, more effectively articulate national arms control and law enforcement assistance requirements, notably Union-funded initiatives, such as Interpol’s Illicit Arms Records and tracing Management System (iARMS), and the activities of the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol), and strengthen dialogue with Union missions and initiatives;
- enhanced frequency and duration of in-field research into conventional arms and their ammunition, illegally circulating in conflict-affected areas to generate iTrace data, in response to clear demands made by Member States and Union delegations;
- tailored support to Member State arms export control authorities and arms control policy makers, including repeat consultative visits by iTrace project staff to capitals of the Member States, a 24-hour help desk to provide instant advice on risk assessment and counter-diversion strategies, the maintenance of secure desktop and mobile dashboard applications to provide instant notification of post-export diversion, and the provision to Member States, on request, of post-shipment verification by iTrace project staff;

- increasing awareness through outreach on the findings of the project, promoting the purpose and available functions of iTrace to international and national policy makers, conventional arms control experts and arms export licensing authorities, and enhancing international capacity to monitor the illicit spread of conventional arms and their ammunition and related materiel, as well as to assist policy makers in identifying priority areas for international assistance and cooperation and to reduce the risk of diversion of conventional arms and their ammunition;
- providing key policy issue reports, drawn from the data generated by field investigations and presented on the iTrace system, about specific areas deserving international attention, including major patterns in the trafficking of conventional arms and their ammunition, and the regional distribution of trafficked conventional arms and their ammunition, and related materiel; and
- the continued tracing of conventional arms and their ammunition, with the cooperation of Member States and third countries, as the most effective means to establish and verify, to the fullest extent possible, the mechanisms behind the diversion of conventional arms and their ammunition to unauthorised users; tracing will be supplemented by follow-up investigations focused on identifying the human, financial, and logistics networks behind illicit conventional arms transfers.

2. A detailed description of the supported project is set out in the Annex.

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(2) shall be carried out by Conflict Armament Research ('CAR').
3. CAR shall perform its tasks under the responsibility of the HR. For that purpose, the HR shall enter into the necessary arrangements with CAR.

Article 3

1. The financial reference amount for the implementation of the project referred to in Article 1(2) shall be EUR 6 000 000. The total estimated budget of the overall project shall be EUR 8 400 000, which shall be provided through co-financing by CAR and the German Federal Foreign Office.
2. The expenditure financed by the financial reference amount set out in paragraph 1 shall be managed in accordance with the rules and procedures applicable to the general budget of the Union.

3. The Commission shall supervise the proper management of the financial reference amount referred to in paragraph 1. For that purpose, it shall conclude the necessary agreement with CAR. That agreement shall stipulate that CAR is to ensure the visibility of the Union contribution in a manner commensurate with the size of the contribution.
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 that agreement.

Article 4

1. The HR shall report to the Council on the implementation of this Decision on the basis of regular narrative quarterly reports prepared by CAR. Those reports shall form the basis for an evaluation of the results of this Decision to be carried out by the Council. In order to assist the Council in that evaluation, an external entity shall carry out an evaluation of the impact of the project referred to in Article 1(2).
2. The Commission shall report to the Council on the financial aspects of the project referred to in Article 1(2).

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) or 6 months after the date of its entry into force if no such agreement has been concluded within that period.

Done at ...,

For the Council
The President
