

# 14. Conventional arms control and military confidence building

## Overview

*In 2014 conventional arms control continued to be underutilized in security and peacebuilding. In general, states do not emphasize the role of arms control as an important part of their national security policy—at either a global or a regional level. Instead of taking a balanced approach, in which arms control plays a role alongside military defence, crisis management, conflict prevention and conflict resolution, states prefer to predominantly rely on the capabilities of their national armed forces to promote their security.*

*Section I indicates that progress continues to be made in humanitarian arms control, and that participation has increased as countries have joined and implemented existing conventions. However, the new adherents mainly appear to be countries for which participation carries relatively few obligations, rather than those countries that would have the greatest material impact on the overall success of the conventions. Discussions on widening the coverage of humanitarian arms control, to take account of new and emerging technologies, continued in 2014—notably the discussion on how to reduce the risks associated with lethal autonomous weapons systems.*

*Section II assesses the development and implementation of ‘small arms’ and ‘firearms’ control measures, with particular regard to the United Nations Programme of Action (UNPOA) on small arms and light weapons and the UN Firearms Protocol. An effort to coordinate and consolidate the main international instruments, in order to avoid unnecessary duplication, might be given added weight by the recent entry into force of the Arms Trade Treaty, which also covers areas dealt with by the UNPOA and the UN Firearms Protocol. The section finds that, while overlap and duplication does exist between these instruments, it has not formed an insurmountable barrier to effective regional work on small arms and firearms issues, particularly in Africa and Latin America. Here, and in other parts of the world, a range of regional and non-governmental organizations have successfully drawn upon both sets of instruments to deal with practical issues such as stockpile management and destruction of surpluses.*

*Section III addresses confidence- and security-building measures (CSBMs) in Europe against the background of a deteriorating security environment. Recently there has been a significant increase in the number of large-scale military exercises organized by Russia at short notice, and a growing number*

*of incidents where Russian military aircraft and naval vessels appear to have engaged in potentially hazardous manoeuvres. Decisions taken in 2014 by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization may further increase the number and diversity of military exercises in coming years. In these circumstances, renewed attention to the role of CSBMs in Europe may be warranted.*

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