



Regional Seminar
on
**Peace and Security in South Asia: Issues and Priorities for Regional
Cooperation on Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) Control**
8-9 November 2009, Dhaka

SUMMARY OF THE PROCEEDINGS

Regional Seminar on
**Peace and Security in South Asia: Issues and Priorities for Regional Cooperation on
Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) Control**
8-9 November 2009, Dhaka

SUMMARY OF THE PROCEEDINGS

The Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BIISS) in collaboration with Saferworld, UK organised a two-day regional seminar on *Peace and Security in South Asia: Issues and Priorities for Regional Cooperation on Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) Control* on 08-09 November, 2009 at the Sheraton Hotel in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Security experts from leading think tanks and government officials from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Austria, China, and the UK, as well as representatives from international organisations, participated in the seminar.

Major General Sheikh Md Monirul Islam, ndc, psc, Director General of BIISS, delivered the Address of Welcome in the Inaugural Session. **Ms. Rosy Cave**, Head of Asia Programme of Saferworld made the introductory remarks. **Mr. Abul Maal A. Muhith**, Honourable Minister for Finance, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, was the Chief Guest of the occasion. More than 100 distinguished guests also attended the Inaugural Session. The seminar, which was spread over two days, was divided into six working sessions. The first session gave an overview of the impact of SALW trafficking and measures that can be taken to address the problem. The second session dealt with nature of the problem in South Asia. The third session focused on the international policy context and the problem of illicit arms trafficking. The fourth session was on national perspectives: issues and priorities for strengthening control and regional cooperation. The fifth session covered regional perspectives of issues and priorities for strengthening control and regional cooperation. The sixth session focused on cooperation and assistance for national capacity building – meeting the needs of governments and law enforcement agencies.

In the Welcome Address, **Major General Sheikh Md Monirul Islam**, ndc, psc, Director General, BIISS said that BIISS and Saferworld have been working together in the last few years on various research activities related to non-traditional security issues. In 2008, BIISS and Saferworld organised a series of high-level roundtable meetings on small arms and light weapons (SALW) control, climate change and human security. The Director General outlined the aims and objectives of this particular regional seminar: to (i) identify key regional SALW control issues and priorities to be addressed; (ii) explore opportunities for enhancing regional cooperation on SALW control, focusing on ways to address illicit trafficking and prevent diversion of SALW to unauthorised end-users; and (iii) enhance understanding of the significance and implications of existing relevant international agreements and instruments. Major General Monirul Islam emphasised the need for consensus on national, regional and sub-regional initiatives and cooperation and international responses to control illegal SALW. He noted that the primary purpose of the regional seminar was supporting the development of dialogue among the South Asian states on SALW control within the broader context of regional peace and security.

In her introductory remarks, **Ms. Rosy Cave**, Head of Asia Programme, Saferworld gave an overview on the activities of Saferworld at diverse levels, their thematic priorities, and regional and country programmes in Africa, Europe and South Asia, including Bangladesh.

Ms. Cave focused her discussion on the increased globalisation of the small arms trade and the public debate concerning the effective control of small arms transfers internationally, including across the South Asian region. Failure to take prompt actions by the South Asian states to bring an end to the unauthorised brokering, trafficking and circulation of small arms could hinder post-conflict security building initiatives. She also emphasized the need for regional and international cooperation to tackle small arms proliferation.

In the address of the Chief Guest, **Mr. Abul Maal A. Muhith**, Honourable Minister for Finance, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, gave a historical insight into the various peace movements and security initiatives developed after major events such as the Napoleonic War, the Treaty of Vienna, and recently the 2001 UN Conference on Small Arms and Light Weapons Control. The chief guest of the inaugural session termed illicit arms trading a 'monster' and cautioned the audience about its threat to security, peace and development. Referring to the numerous incidents and socio-economic impacts of armed conflicts around the world, he criticised the practice of keeping illegal arms and ammunitions intact even after capturing those from smugglers and illegal arms' traders. It is in this context that the Honourable Minister urged states to destroy all illegal SALW *immediately* after recovery to ensure peace and security in the South Asian region. He consequently emphasised mutual cooperation and undertaking of different strategies in this region to combat terrorism. Finally, he hoped that the seminar would recommend some measures to reduce the threat of illegal SALW.

The first working session on *Overview of the Impact of SALW Trafficking and Measures that can be taken to address the Problem* was chaired by Major General Sheikh Md Monirul Islam, ndc, psc, Director General of BIIS. **Mr. Roy Isbister**, Team Leader, Small Arms and Export Controls of Saferworld made two presentations. The first presentation on *Introduction to Illicit SALW Trafficking* defined illicit trade (namely that of illicit weapons) and differentiated it from legal trade, noting that the difference was not always straightforward, as almost all illicit arms started life as licit. According to him, proliferation of SALW was often a symptom rather than a root cause of a problem, and easy availability of SALW aggravated conflicting situations. Mr. Isbister focused on various types of illicit transfers including state transfers using fraudulent documentation, theft and leakage from stockpiles, capture through conflict, transfer without permission, cross-border smuggling by individuals and groups supplying to Non-State Actors (NSA) and so forth. Attention was also drawn to arms brokers who were intimately involved in illicit SALW trafficking. According to him, the scale of illicit trade was extremely hard to measure but it was substantial, indicating that terrorists, criminals, warlords and insurgents were well armed with illicit SALW.

On his second presentation on *Preventing Diversion of SALW for Strengthened Control*, **Mr. Isbister** said that diversion was the process by which weapons moved into the illicit realm, and smuggling of small arms was a global problem. He urged upon the need for effective and urgent measures to be adopted at regional and international levels. At the national level, states needed to look at measures to control the risk of diversion at each point along the transfer chain including a systematic end-use risk assessment before approving any SALW transfer. Strong cooperative relations between exporters and importers would help to prevent the diversion of SALW, and control arms brokering and transit at the same time. In his view, the comprehensive implementation of international marking, record-keeping and tracing provisions would help to address diversion. Surplus and captured illicit SALW should be destroyed, as inadequate stockpile management was a contributory factor in diversion.

Finally, Mr. Isbister re-emphasised preventing diversion across borders and the benefits from cross border cooperation by enforcement officials.

During **open discussion**, several questions, comments, suggestions and responses were made. The following were the major questions: Has Saferworld carried out any study on SALW cases related to Bangladesh? What can be done to stop the cottage industries from manufacturing illegal weapons in countries like Pakistan and India? How can the spread of SALW be controlled without resolving political differences/conflict in conflict-ridden countries? What were the existing international laws to prevent small arms smuggling? How can the illegal production of arms by legal manufacturing companies be traced and addressed? What about the huge stockpiles available in the black market?

Saferworld informed the participants that the initial work Saferworld did in Bangladesh was on community consultation and measuring the extent of the SALW problem. In responding to the questions on arms control, it was highlighted that controlling SALW was necessary as their proliferation could give rise to numerous problems. Criminals often hide their true identity under legal (company) names. Comments and suggestions from the floor were focused on issues related to production, trafficking, rapid proliferation and management policies of SALW regionally and internationally.

The second working session focused on the *Nature of the Problem in South Asia* chaired by **Mr. Abbas Qureshi**, Assistant Director, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Pakistan. Two presentations were delivered in the session. The first presentation, delivered by **Ms. Neila Husain**, Senior Research Fellow, BIISS, was on the *Challenges for the region and measures to address the problems of SALW*. She focused on the violence induced by SALW and the main users. According to her, almost all of the South Asian states were manufacturers, transit countries and end-users for illegal weapons while in some countries, civilians (e.g. non-state actors) have more small arms than the military forces. Briefly discussing the impact of the widespread availability of SALW on national security, development, governance and democracy, Ms. Husain mentioned the various but limited measures that have been undertaken at national and regional levels. She identified the major challenges for controlling SALW in South Asia, such as the lack of regional cooperation and commitment between and among states, a strong inter and intra regional network of trans-national actors and low Human Development Index ranking of South Asian countries. In light of increasing violence exacerbated by SALW, Ms. Husain urged for increased cooperation and commitment among the governments of South Asian states to work jointly to improve human and national security as well as promoting transparency with regards to arms transfers.

The second presentation, delivered by **Dr. Nishchal Pandey**, Centre for South Asian Studies, Nepal, was on the *Challenges and Measures to Address in Post Conflict Countries*. Dr. Pandey focused on regional politics, Indian- Pakistan politics and Chinese influence – factors that are very critical to control the flow of SALW and ensure regional cooperation in South Asia. In his presentation, he discussed the challenges to deal with SALW in post conflict countries with special reference to Nepal. In his view, illicit trading of small arms both at state and non-state level increased due to improved connectivity in the porous border areas between Nepal and India, as for example, the case of Terai insurgency in Nepal. The speaker also identified the persistent availability of SALW, the political vacuum and instability in Nepal as key drivers for the re-emergence of conflict and violence in Nepal. Dr Pandey stressed the need for regional cooperation to minimise the impact of SALW in post conflict countries of South Asia, particularly in Nepal.

During the **open discussion**, the key concerns raised by the participants were as follows: What has happened to the ten trucks of arms seized in Chittagong, Bangladesh in 2004? What was the total amount of arms surrendered by the Maoist insurgent group in Nepal? Dr. Pandey responded that the nature of conflict and dealings of SALW in Nepal were nearly similar to the conflict in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar in India. The role and the commitment of the SAARC Secretariat were necessary along with the political will of the regional leaders on the issue of SALW control at the regional level. He emphasised the need to reduce the bureaucratic complexity within the SAARC Secretariat as SAARC could not implement any issue properly as it is focused on too many issues. The Maoists were keeping their arms because they were not sure about their future in Nepal. Ms. Husain responded to the question of the arms seized in Chittagong, saying that the seized arms were safely stored by the Ministry of Home Affairs, Bangladesh. The Prime Minister of Bangladesh had proposed the formation of a Regional Task Force on Terrorism that would be able to tackle the problem of SALW effectively. She called for development partners and civil society organisations to come forward to help address the challenges of SALW.

In addition to the questions and responses, there were several comments and suggestions from the participants. They emphasised on the inadequacy of regional measures and asked for political and regional cooperation not only from SAARC countries but also from the observer states of SAARC to address the issue of SALW. Discussion then focused on the nature of cooperation where the law enforcing agencies, ministries, Interpol, UN agencies and other national and international organisations could step forward to solve the problem. The floor suggested to the individual member states of South Asia to address the problem of SALW from top-down and bottom-up approaches and to offer assistance to one another regarding information and expertise sharing.

The third working session was on the *International Policy Context and the Problem of Illicit Arms Trafficking* chaired by **Ambassador M. Maroof Zaman**, Additional Foreign Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Bangladesh. Three presentations were delivered in this session. The first presentation was on *International Initiatives: UN PoA, Firearms Protocol, Marking and Tracing, and ATT* by **Mr. Roman Hunger**, Special Coordinator, United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific. Mr. Hunger discussed the UN Programme of Action (PoA) designed to combat the illicit trade in SALW through strengthening norms and developing international measures. He emphasised the need for international cooperation and assistance at diverse levels. For the implementation and future development of the International Instrument on Marking and Tracing, he emphasised on bringing national laws, regulations and administrative procedures in line with the requirements. On the UN firearms protocol, Mr. Hunger discussed the Open Ended Working Group (OEWG) and the UN Convention against transnational crime which observes trafficking in persons, smuggling of migrants and the firearms protocol. Additionally, Mr. Hunger talked about the UN register on conventional arms, and the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT).

The second presentation was on the *UN Convention against transnational organized crime and its protocol against the illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms, their arms, components, and ammunitions*, by **Ms. Simonetta Grassi**, Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Officer, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). She discussed armed violence, inadequate understanding of the changing nature of Transnational Organised Crime (TOC) and the inter-connectedness of illegal trade in drugs, money laundering and firearms

trafficking. She urged upon the need for addressing the issues through national, regional and global responses and truly integrated approaches. On firearms specific issues, she traced impacts of multiple global and regional instruments, different marking and record-keeping practices, lack of political will, etc. Ms. Grassi also discussed at length on the structure of four legally binding instruments, status of ratifications and revision mechanism against TOC; scope of application of the UN Convention on TOC (UNTOC); and structure of the Convention including eight key provisions, for example, four basic offences, confiscation and seizure, control measures, international cooperation, protection of witnesses and victims, etc. Emphasising international cooperation in regards to extradition, special investigative techniques, joint investigations, law enforcement cooperation, transfer of criminal proceedings, mutual legal assistance and transfer of sentenced persons, Ms. Grassi requested the states to criminalise illicit manufacturing and trafficking of firearms and ammunition and falsifying/obliterating markings, and to implement control measures on firearms.

Ms. Grassi also discussed the Conference of the Parties (COP) established by UNTOC. The functions of the COP are to identify the difficulties to the implementation of UNTOC, and to make recommendations to promote and review its implementation. The issue of a self-assessment checklist on five crime-related instruments was raised. Ms. Grassi stressed on the priorities for firearms, the UNODC's activities on firearms, legal and operational tools, and opportunities for future actions. She also emphasized on national laws and practices, integrated and balanced approaches between short-term law enforcement and long-term social crime prevention responses. In addition security measures combined with adequate control and effective cooperation were discussed in the presentation. At the end of her presentation, Ms. Grassi also gave emphasis on the importance of knowledge and awareness of international criminal law and legal regime against the TOC.

The third presentation was on *Implementation and Development Progress in South Asia*, delivered by **Dr. Mallika Joseph**, Deputy Director, Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, New Delhi. She discussed the UNPoA and its progress, as well as national commitments of the SAARC countries based on national points of contact, national commissions on small arms, national reports, domestic disarmament/destruction of stockpile, review of national legislation on transfers, and national action plans. She informed the participants about the slow progress in South Asia due to the lack of regional initiatives and cooperation. Dr. Joseph called for a greater integration of government efforts with those of civil society organisations. On the ATT, she urged the UN Secretary-General to seek views of member states on feasibility, scope and draft parameters for a comprehensive, legally binding instrument, and to establish a group of governmental experts.

Dr. Joseph also discussed the different motivations for conventional arms production and acquisition. Weapons being traded in the illicit market could be used for terrorist acts, organised crime and other criminal activities. In addition, she supported the need to prevent the diversion of conventional arms from the legal into the illicit market, as well as the respective responsibilities of exporters and importers. In order to begin improving the current situation, she recommended states ensure that their national systems and internal controls are at the highest possible standards, and that states who are able to do so, render others requested assistance in this regard. Finally, she spoke on how civil society can be engaged with working on SALW control. She emphasised on regional dialogue on SALW control at civil society level. Civil society can assist the government to fulfil the UNPoA on SALW control. It can lobby for inclusion of ATT or assessment of the UNPoA.

During **open discussion**, the participants were concerned about the technological advancement of weapons. They suggested the South Asian member states to be cooperative in sharing information on arms manufacturing companies. According to Ms. Grassi, the tracing instrument was not obligatory. However, the demand and supply chain should be identified properly, but this requires state cooperation. Mr. Hunger reminded the participants of Protocol 4, saying that marking and tracing were political instruments. He emphasised the need for unique marking and tracing of arms manufactured in South Asia at the time of manufacturing as well as at the time of both import and export. In addition to the questions and responses, there were several comments and suggestions. The floor focused their discussion on transnational illegal arms trafficking, implementation of initiatives undertaken by international organisations, and urged that future seminars and workshops discussing the control of SALW globally and regionally should invite International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

The fourth working session was on ***National Perspectives: Issues and Priorities for Strengthening Control and Regional Cooperation*** and the first part was chaired by **Ambassador Geetha De Silva**, Regional Centre for Strategic Studies (RCSS). The first presentation was on *Collection of Weapons, the Law of Light Weapons, National Legislation, Regulation and Stability, Peace and Security in all over Afghanistan in order to prevent killings of innocent people and government actions* delivered by **Brigadier General Aziz Ahmad Farahi**, Chief of DIAG, Ministry of Defence, Afghanistan. He focused on Disarmed, Demobilised and Reintegrated (DDR) and the Afghan National Army (ANA) first, and later on the DIAG (Disbandment of Illegal Armed Groups) programme launched to disarm those groups who were not disarmed during the DDR. These programmes were established in all provinces of the country to work jointly with security agencies to collect weapons from all illegal armed groups and individuals. Brig. Gen. Farahi mentioned that weapons were entering from neighbouring countries into Afghanistan. Weapon movements between illegal armed groups are controlled by the *Jehadi* commanders, who transport these weapons through mountains from one province to another where terrorist groups were active. Therefore, he suggested to secure the south and west borders of Afghanistan. He emphasised the need to immediately register and prosecute terrorist groups and that the armed forces should also have a SALW database. Furthermore, he requested the international community to support the Afghan armed forces and the DIAG programme.

Md Kaikobad Hossain, Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of Bangladesh made the second presentation on the *Nature and Trafficking Routes of SALW in Bangladesh*. The speaker discussed the marking and tracing of small arms manufactured in Bangladesh, monitoring illicit trade of SALW within Bangladesh's territory, and how legal and illegal possessions and use of small arms and ammunitions were being regulated in Bangladesh. Mr. Hossain mentioned that illicit arms brokers often did not own the goods they deal in. However, they capitalised on the increased opportunities in international transportation, finances and communication. To deal with such issues, Mr. Hossain urged universal efforts for enacting legislation and national plans of actions of all countries to combat illicit arms brokering by way of active cooperation on regional and international forums. The Government of Bangladesh had taken steps towards the implementation of the UNPoA, and was following precautionary measures accordingly. Some of the recent measures were, (1) adoption of destruction as a major means of disposal of confiscated illegal SALW, (2) observance of 9 July every year as "Small Arms Destruction Day", (3) issuing license for small arms after strict verification, (4) monitoring licensed arms traders to control illegal arms uses, (5) increasing patrolling along its borders and checking all entry points, (6)

deploying border security forces at border outposts, (7) monitoring and vigilance of welding machines factory; and (8) monitoring and vigilance of activities of courier service providers and transport agencies. The government of Bangladesh had decided that of the illegally confiscated SALW, only those that are re-useable according to expert opinion, would be allocated for use and the rest of such weapons would be disposed through destruction. In this respect, he asked for UN cooperation for Bangladesh to establish effective tracing mechanisms of illegal arms recovered inside the country, and urged for a regional plan and cooperation for combating illicit arms brokering, as well as detail technical training program for law-enforcement personnel to use modern technology for illegal arms control.

The third presentation was delivered by **Mr. Karma Dorji** from the Bureau of Law and Order, Ministry of Home, Bhutan. According to him, terrorism was the major cause of cross-border arms trafficking, armed activities and other sorts of transnational crimes in Bhutan. The solution to decrease violent battles against terrorism and avoid deaths and injuries would be the undertaking of systematic and stringent regional and bilateral monitoring mechanisms through enhanced cooperation, coordination and intelligence sharing between and amongst the states. At the national level, porous borders need to be better guarded to avoid illegal trafficking of arms and movement of criminals. The border security forces and other relevant agencies like immigration, customs and police should be dedicated and be obliged to remain on high alert and intensify their vigilance at all times. Any private possession, sale, export and import of arms and ammunition are strictly regulated by the Fire Arms and Ammunition Act of Bhutan, 1990. The storage, usage, handling, transportation and licensing of explosives were regulated by the Explosives Rules and Regulations now but soon the country would be having the Explosives Act of the Kingdom of Bhutan which is being drafted. Moreover, he informed that the private possession of weapons is minimal and that Bhutan does not face any serious problem from misuse of arms by private individuals. Mr. Dorji then focused on how SALW caused massive amount of destruction at present and that Bhutan could not afford to tolerate terrorist activities, arms trafficking, illegal use of arms and misuse of legally possessed weapons. Hence, he notified that the Royal Government of Bhutan was highly committed to curb such illegal activities and entered into any regional and bilateral cooperation to combat against these activities for peace and security in South Asia and the world at large.

The fourth presentation was on *India's Position on SALW Control* delivered by **Brigadier R. Narayan Nair**, Defence Adviser of the High Commission of India, Dhaka. He informed participants that the Government of India had legislation to deal with activities of arms dealers and brokers and a penal provision related to illegal provision of SALW. Arms exports from India always required end user certificates in conformity with India's foreign policy objectives. He also said that the manufacture, transfer and repair of any SALW without a licence were prohibited by the Government of India which was able to regulate the categories and types of weapons that may be manufactured and transferred. Brigadier Nair mentioned that India had a good mechanism for effective control and regulation of SALW, which covered all aspects of lawful possession, sale, export and import of arms and ammunitions. Classification of firearms and other prohibitive weapons were ensured so that dangerous weapons for military use were not available to anti-social elements. He also mentioned that the Government of India had taken measures to arrest the proliferation and trafficking of SALW, bilateral initiatives with a number of countries, and joint working groups with member states of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) and the European Union (EU). However, the Government of India continues to face the challenges of illicit SALW proliferation. Therefore, the presenter

suggested that India continues to work further to strengthen regulations to control illicit brokering and trade in SALW - the main factors behind cross-border crimes. According to him, the UNPoA should include a ban on transfer of small arms to terrorists and non state actors, and address the issue of illicit trade in ammunitions and explosives. Brig. Nair requested the international community to have a policy of 'zero-tolerance' on terrorism, further concerted efforts to fight terrorism, a focus on 'root causes of terrorism', and a close global and regional cooperation for SALW control.

During **open discussion**, several questions were asked. Following were the major questions: What were the sources of illegal arms for the insurgent groups in India? From where did the Naxalites receive light weapons? What were the regulations of arms importation into India? Was there any correlation between drug trafficking and weapons proliferation in Afghanistan? If the correlation existed, what was happening there or can one deal with them separately? Why was it not possible to have government cooperation to control illegal weapons? Brig. Nair called for holding regional dialogue, saying that, 'Naxalites use old weapons raided from police station, but we do not know their source of modern and heavy weapons. Even on the manufacture, export and import of modern and heavy weapons, these were coming illicitly from other countries'. Finally, he said that legal imports of arms were strictly regulated by government authorities. On the question related to Afghanistan, Brigadier General Farahi commented that 'there is a close relation not only in Afghanistan in general but in particular in the southern provinces, such as Helmand province'. Afghanistan was working on both light weapons smuggling and drug trafficking. In addition to the questions and responses, there were some comments, including that controlling small arms might be impossible due to difference in laws and regulations among South Asian states. Therefore, harmonisation of the laws and regulations is important.

The fourth working session on *National Perspectives: Issues and Priorities for Strengthening Control and Regional Cooperation* continued, chaired by **Mr. Roman Hunger**. Three presentations were delivered in this session. **Lieutenant Ahmed Zubair**, Junior Staff, Integrated Headquarters, Maldives National Defence, made a presentation on the measures adapted to control the use and trafficking of illegal weapons in the Maldives, and what measure can be taken to increase regional cooperation. Lt. Zubair said that there was no specific definition of SALW in the Maldives and therefore the country has adopted the international definition. He shared with the participants that the legal system in the Maldives only allowed national defence force to possess arms and ammunitions. He explained that, for Maldives, threats came from its geography, as it comprises of dispersed small islands in the Indian Ocean. There were three international maritime passages where any international carrier could pass freely through without any checking from the defence force. There could always be a chance of trafficking of small arms through these channels. Even if a ship carried illegal weapons, the defence force could not check it unless and until they were confirm. There is also a shortage of resources for keeping such a large area under surveillance. Therefore, it was very difficult to monitor illegal arms traders. Lt. Zubair, thus, believed that national initiatives in the South Asian region, information sharing among the states in the region and bilateral relations between the neighbouring countries were critical in addressing illicit arms trafficking. He made a number of proposals for national initiatives to control SALW, such as strengthening of export and custom controls and stockpile security, increasing effectiveness of border controls, introducing 'weapons buy-back' programme, improving law enforcement and intelligence capabilities, and prosecuting illegal gun producers and traffickers.

The second presentation was delivered by **Mr. Pradeep Poudyal**, Under Secretary, Ministry of Defence, Nepal. Mr. Poudyal focused on the *Agents in Demand and Supply Side of SALW from Nepal's Perspective*. On the demand side, he said that there were extremist groups, illicit traders, drug traffickers, human traffickers, money launderers, arm brokers etc., while the supply side included the production centres located in the remote rural areas of Nepal. As the Maoist insurgency started in 1996, people in the remote villages who were generally blacksmith by profession, turned to weapon manufacturers. Opportunist groups and non state actors (NSA) used them for production of illegal small arms. Trans-border traders and communities in the border areas continued to be involved in trafficking and trading of small arms. As a result, the issue of SALW emerged as a major threat to peace and security in Nepal since 1996. Mr. Poudyal said that the government of Nepal introduced an Act in 1965 that restricted private possession of small arms without license. According to the Act, one could only possess a 303 rifle, 0.22 bore rifle or guns for hunting if one had a license. All other types of arms were illegal. Recently, the government revised the law, enacting some strict measures, and also introduced a new security strategy that included civilian police, armed police forces and intelligences. But the challenges for the country were the management of the Maoist combatants, arms and ammunitions. Therefore, he called for a restructuring of security institutions in Nepal, including the Ministry of Deference and the Ministry of Home, as their capacities are insufficient. Mr. Poudyal further suggested community policing in the southern districts and bordering communities. Moreover, he recommended forming security institutions in the border communities in the south of Nepal, and more cooperation between the central and local governments.

Mr. Abbas Qureshi, Assistant Director, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Pakistan was the third speaker. His presentation focused on the *Root Causes of the Use of Illicit Arms and Trading in Pakistan*. According to him, there were several underlying causes, such as the lack of trust between and among the political parties, the lack of political will, the existence of unresolved issues, inadequate human and financial resources, mass scale arms production, cultural aspects and a lack of expertise in the intelligence agencies. To control illicit SALW, he highlighted the need to differentiate between legal and illegal arms trade and to strengthen the national legislative, administrative and regulatory mechanisms. Instead of having multiple and overlapping mechanism of arms trade, Pakistan should concentrate on different regulatory and legislative mechanisms. He stressed the importance of collaboration in case of information sharing among the South Asian states, pursuing pro-active policies including collection and destruction of illicit arms, listing and licensing of arms, initiating public awareness programmes and monitoring the export and import of arms. At the regional level, Mr. Qureshi focused on reducing historical shortcomings and increasing regional cooperation within South Asia. At the international level, he suggested that Pakistan should submit regular reports to the UNPoA.

During **open discussion**, several questions were asked: Were all of the arms licensed in the North-West border region of Pakistan, FATA, where people traditionally carry arms and weapons? What was the civil society of Pakistan doing to increase awareness on historical shortcomings, long standing disputes and lack of political will among the parties to create a win-win situation? What were the steps the Government of Nepal was taking for not sliding back to the state of insurgency like before? What was the state of recruitment in the Nepalese army after the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA)? Why was there no law for civilian possession of arms in the Maldives? Was it because of low rates of crime, or is it because the government wanted to undertake full responsibility of the security of its people?

Mr. Abbas Qureshi replied that from an administrative perspective, the rules and regulation in FATA were different from the rest of Pakistan. Carrying a weapon had been a part of their traditional culture and social heritage. Tribal elders are responsible for controlling their people and stop them from abusing their weapons in any illegal activities. Thus, a sense of collective responsibility operated there, which was very functional. People in FATA did not need any license to carry weapons. In Pakistan, the media has also been very active since 2001. The political parties were now more alert than before. Pakistan civil society was very vibrant, making use of the media to get increasing access to the political parties and the government.

Mr. Pradeep Poudyal replied that the Government of Nepal and the insurgent groups came up with the CPA in November 2006. Although the pace of implementation has been slow, both parties are in dialogue. In 2008, there was recruitment following the CPA, in spite of the disputes about the interpretation of the CPA – a dispute that took the Maoist, the government and the army to court, which decided to allow the recruitment on that occasion. However, there was no recruitment after that. On the question on the Maldives, Lt. Zubair replied that the crime rate in Maldives was very low and the people did not need to possess private arms.

The fourth working session on *National Perspectives: Issues and Priorities for Strengthening Control and Regional Cooperation* continued on the second day, chaired by **Mr. Roman Hunger**. Two presentations were made in this session. **Brigadier Ranjan de Silva**, National Coordinator, National Commission Against the Proliferation of Illicit Small Arms (NCAPISA), Sri Lanka presented the first paper. Brig. de Silva said that SALW fuelled many forms of criminal behaviour in Sri Lanka. Terrorism was one of them, but others included human trafficking, illicit manufacturing and trafficking in firearms, drug trafficking. To counter these transnational crimes, Sri Lanka had called for closer dialogue and cooperation among countries at the regional and global levels in many forums for several years. To this end, Brig. de Silva mentioned that Sri Lanka itself had signed and ratified a number of conventions and protocols and passed enabling legislation. It had also been playing an active role in international bodies like SAARC and UN on this issue. He urged for close transnational ties among the South Asian states to build strong cooperation like the countries of EU. Referring to the Sri Lankan government's action against the LTTE, in the last six months the government had taken a number of steps including small arms control to bring the country back to normal. Given the nature of the conflict and large scale proliferation of small arms in Sri Lanka, and also given the fact that the disarmament process was expected to be slow, the government and the Ministry of Defence, will develop a comprehensive island-wise small arms control mechanism through the national action plan. The following are the manifold actions under the consideration of the government: gathering relevant information on small arms proliferation, identifying options of SALW control, updating legal frameworks to tackle SALW and arms related crimes, collecting and seizing illicit SALW and ammunitions and destroying surplus stocks,; and boosting public confidence on safety and security in communities.

Mr. Sayed Fahim Srosh, Deputy Programme/Coordination Manager, UNDP/ANBP/JS presented the second paper on the *Overview of the Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR), and Disbandment of Illegal Armed Groups (DIAG) Processes in Afghanistan Including Outcomes and Challenges*. Mr. Srosh said that Afghanistan had taken two approaches for small arms control – DDR and DIAG. DDR targeted ex-combatants while DIAG is aimed at Illegal Armed Groups (IAGs). After the completion of DDR, DIAG was launched led by the Disarmament and Reintegration Commission (D&RC). The D&RC

works on five points to aid the process of small arms control and peace consolidation that include: DIAG and weapons management, including establishing a main data base with all the information regarding weapons of all intelligence and security organisations; stabilisation of high threat districts focusing on identifying the source of the conflict through negotiation with people; linking district development with the arms control process; capacity building for the Ministry of Interior (MoI); and vetting of political candidates. The speaker mentioned that DIAG included various ministries and law enforcement agencies of the government, international development agencies and donor countries. He informed that the first round of DIAG targeted those candidates for national assembly election who were connected to IAGs. When faced with a number of challenges, D&RC turned to a new approach, DDI (District DIAG Implementation). Under DDI, a report on IAGs was prepared by DIAG joint secretariat and is sent to the province governors for proper action. To gain public support, DDI was linked to the disarmament process with development activities. The district assembly identified the most significant needs of the people, for example, controlling SALW. Then they encouraged people to support government's initiatives to control small arms saying that if they joined or helped the process of handing over weapons and disbanding the IAGs, they would receive several benefits. Mr. Srosh thought that, despite the attempts made by DDI, DIAG still lacked political support. The government therefore urged the United Nations Assistance Mission for Afghanistan (UNAMA) to bring pressure on politicians to support DIAG.

During the **open discussion**, several questions were raised from the floor: Did DIAG have public support? How were the private security companies or NGOs related to DIAG? Which nations were funding DIAG? What was the relation between DIAG and police and other security agencies? Since Afghanistan was also running judicial reform and narcotics control on the side of disarmament, was there any difficulty running all these programmes at the same time? In case of arms control, with so many agents, was there any difficulty combining all these agents and make a cohesive national policy? Since DIAG was instrumental in accepting/excluding candidates from elections, was DIAG considered politically neutral? In the case of Sri Lanka's LTTE, what kind of international cooperation did Sri Lanka actually receive? Did the signing of treaties, conventions and protocols for international cooperation result in any assistance?

In responding to the questions on DIAG, Mr. Srosh said that there was opposition, but there was also evidence that local people supported DIAG. Aided through capacity building of the Ministry of Interior (MoI), the registration and regulation of weapons belonging to private security companies were significant achievements of D&RC. He also said that Japan was the leading country in funding DIAG. The US, UK and Norway funded the programme too. The ceiling of the number of police had been increased to support DIAG. In the provincial level, the chief of police was not allowed to get any position until he complied with the process of DIAG. District managers also had to go through the DIAG process. Mr Srosh believed that the five pillars ensured overall security. There was coordination among these five bodies: the Judiciary, DIAG, the Ministry fighting narcotics, the Afghan National Army and the Afghan National Police. There was also no problem assembling the various programmes and agents related to security or to make a cohesive national policy. Finally, he replied that all decisions of DIAG were taken by all the five members of D&RC which included both national and international bodies. According to the speaker, this was how D&RC kept DIAG unbiased.

On the questions regarding, Brig. Silva responded that in the operation against the LTTE, the Sri Lankan government received support from countries which was decisive in achieving

success. He thought that the signing of treaties was not of much use. However, treaties give a country the opportunity to receive assistance in this regard. In addition to the questions and responses, a few comments were also made in the open discussion, such as, simply signature or ratification of a treaty does not change the world, and political commitment and effort to implement were the main components of SALW control.

The fifth working session on *Regional Perspectives: Issues and Priorities for Strengthening Control and Regional Cooperation* was chaired by **Dr. Nishchal Pandey**, Centre for South Asian Studies, Nepal. Three presentations were delivered in this session. **Dr. Anand Kumar**, Associate Fellow, Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, India focused his paper on *Small Arms and Failing States of South Asia*. He gave an overview of the political situation in South Asia and regarded the region as volatile. Some of the states have been branded as failing states due to poor governance and poverty. He tried to look at the impact of small arms on South Asian states' structures, many of which were threatened significantly by the proliferation of small arms. He defined a failed state as a state which failed to fulfil the basic conditions and responsibilities of a sovereign state. Though some countries' economies were growing very fast, their respective states had failed to provide reasonable public services and security to their citizens. The speaker referred to the failed state index of the journal *Foreign Policy*, which illustrated that three South Asian countries were listed as failed states among 177 states. Dr. Kumar mentioned that South Asia had become a region of armed conflict on the basis of caste, class, community, ethnicity and religion. It was also witnessing several separatist movements and insurgencies such as insurgencies in North East India, and the North Western Frontier Province (NWFP) and FATA in Pakistan, as well as Maoist guerrillas in Nepal, the LTTE in Sri Lanka and Al-Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan. Thus, use of SALW by those groups termed as 'non-state actors' were creating the feeling of insecurity among civilians. Both states as well as militants were trying to improve their striking power. He explained that weakening of state authority triggered small arms proliferation and vice versa. Small arms were being used to launch assault on the spirit of democracy. Dr. Kumar concluded with an emphasis on encapsulating the lessons learnt from the previous experiences, to addressing mistrust among the countries in South Asia and forging cooperation at national, regional and international level.

Professor Xia Liping, Dean, School of Political Science and International Relations, Tongji University, Shanghai was the second presenter. He focused on *Issues and Priorities for Strengthening SALW Control and Regional Cooperation: Chinese Perspectives*. He started his discussion with two recommendations to control SALW in South Asia. According to him, the region should have 1) restrictions on transfers of SALW to non state actors, and 2) guidelines for national decisions on whether to authorise the transfer of SALW. These two suggestions are closely linked and should be given top priority to prohibit illicit trade in SALW. Prof. Liping argued that non state actors often acquired most of their arms from within the countries where they operated, but also depended substantially on supplies of arms from abroad. He urged the governments to establish a strong case for developing international and regional norms and measures to enhance controls on transfer of SALW to non state actors. In order to reduce risks of spread of SALW in the South Asian countries, a number of recommendations were made. These were, establishing a regional coordinating institute; making norms for the transfer of SALW based on national regulation that were consistent with the relevant international laws; establishing a forum to sharing experiences and lessons for controlling illicit transfer to unauthorised non state actors to prevent arms diversion; establishing a framework to systematically exchange information on their regulations and controls; signing an agreement to control the export of arms; and ensuring responsibilities

and commitments at the regional or international level. Mr. Liping cited the example of China to describe the major features of its policy towards controlling the transfer of SALW. He said that the Chinese government had taken concrete measure for implementing the UNPoA, and the international instrument on identifying and tracing illicit SALW. In this regard, China had issued and implemented new detailed rules on marking of SALW and had taken part in the work of the UN Group of Government Experts (UNGGE) on the Arms Trade Treaty. He mentioned that China welcomed the conclusion of the report of UNGGE on the problem arising from arms accumulation, ammunitions and surplus stockpiles. Mr. Liping concluded with a request to enhance communication and cooperation with all parties in an effort to eradicate the illicit trade in SALW at an early date.

The third presentation was on *SALW Reduction: Issues and Priorities for Strengthening Control and Regional Cooperation* delivered by **Dr. Amir Rana**, Director, Pakistan Institute of Peace Studies, Pakistan. The paper presented from Pakistan perspective was divided into three major parts: firstly, the use of SALW in Pakistan in conflict situations such as terrorism, political violence, ethnic or tribal conflicts and crimes. He tried to present the total number of injured and death due to those causalities in 2008 and 2009. Recent statistics showed that most of the people were injured by terrorist attacks with SALW in Pakistan. He also noted that the crime rate was increasing day by day due to the unrestricted flow of SALW from national and international sources. According to the findings, Pakistan had about 18 million SALW, with Baluchistan province having the highest amount of SALW (about 10 million) of all the provinces. Secondly, Dr. Rana discussed the proliferation of SALW in different provinces of Pakistan, in particular from the surrounding countries such as Afghanistan, Central Asia, and Iran. He demonstrated that about 45 to 55 per cent of SALW were either produced domestically or imported/smuggled from the surrounding countries. These SALW were used in the tribal insurgencies in Baluchistan and in the political violence as well as crime all over Pakistan. Thirdly, he focused on issues and priorities for Pakistan to resolve the problem of SALW. He highlighted the issues that should be addressed immediately, including solving internal issues regarding conflicts and flow of SALW among the provinces; taking appropriate measures to resolve SALW trafficking and smuggling from surrounding countries; and building strong regional mechanism. Therefore, he recommended some of the priority areas for strengthening control of SALW such as establishing strong border security, incorporating SALW control in conflict resolution strategies, curbing terrorists' capabilities to produce explosives, and designing a comprehensive approach against criminal networks.

During **open discussion**, the following were the main questions that were raised and discussed: What about the recurrence of insurgency in Nagaland? What were the measures that were taken by the Pakistan government to control the contemporary flow of SALW? What were the root causes of the incapability of law enforcement agencies to overcome threats in Pakistan? What were the reasons behind delivering arms to terrorist groups by middle persons involved in transfer process? What about the authenticity of existing proposals and recommendations on SALW control? What were the challenges of implementation? Referring to China as one of the largest suppliers of SALW in South Asia, questions were raised on the possibility of China to take the initiative to control the availability of illicit weapons.

In response to the questions, Dr. Anand Kumar said that insurgency in Nagaland had been successfully sorted out in past years. However, the internal division among tribal groups was hindering the peace process. He also mentioned that suppliers refused to agree on the transfer of SALW to the terrorist groups. Therefore, he proposed taking the initiatives to the civil

society of South Asian countries. Dr. Amir Rana responded that Pakistan was successfully handling the terrorist groups. He emphasised on the need to focus on what, where, how and who were illegally producing, supplying and buying the SALW. Finally he stated that urban areas in Pakistan were under the de-weaponisation campaign, but due to lack of administrative control, the rural areas were still not

The sixth working session was on *Cooperation and Assistance for National Capacity Building – meeting the needs of Governments and Law Enforcement Agencies* chaired by **Ms. Simonetta Grassi**, Crime Prevention and Criminal and Criminal Justice Officer, UNODC. Four keynote papers were delivered in this session. **Mr. Hubert Oldenhuis**, Associate Expert, UNRCPD made his first presentation on *Update on Coordinating Action on Small Arms (CASA) and Matching Needs for Resources Initiative*. He mentioned that CASA started with addressing cross cutting issues related to gender, development, security, building synergies among UN bodies, etc. Mr. Oldenhuis discussed the CASA agenda 2009, the Geneva Declaration, and CASA strategic framework 2009-13. His presentation highlighted UN initiatives in 2009 that included identifying legislative needs, the need to address unregulated trade and transparency; initiatives in 2009-10 that would include Pacific Regional Meeting to take place in Sydney where the draft of 2009 would be implemented. Mr. Oldenhuis also highlighted UN initiatives elsewhere that included arms development project in Sierra Leone which would be conducted under the supervision of UNDP; adopting a legally binding instrument for SALW control in Central Africa; and one for Caribbean region and South America. The initiative would be named SALSA which would be conducted by UN Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean (UNLiREC). He commented that international assistance for implementation of the UNPoA should have to be evaluated. From 2001 to 2006 about 94 states had received US\$ 660 million to deal with hazards emanating from the spreading of SALW. Donor countries lacked knowledge of the states in need. The states also had their own inabilities to judge the needs and make requests. Extent of international assistance was also difficult to assess as a result. The presenter discussed three priority areas in addressing the spread of SALW: capacity building, national commissions, and linked issues. He stated that African states made more requests than their Asian counterparts between 2001-2005. He also discussed the significance of the implementation of the UNPoA. For the countries seeking assistance, he stressed on the importance of accurate record keeping of small arms, identifying needs for which they would require assistance and submitting proposals. As for donors' responsibilities, he pointed out the need to identifying countries that would need assistance, assess proposals, and provide information on types of assistance that could be provided to those seeking assistance.

Mr. Oldenhuis made the second presentation on *Update on Any Initiatives for South Asia Region*. His presentation highlighted a joint project of UNODA and UNDESA to support the establishment of a National Commission in Sri Lanka, initiated in 2003 and extended until 2008, as well as undertaking of pilot small arms surveys and the organisation of workshops and missions. Key themes of UN initiatives in South Asia included addressing unregulated trade, a call for universal, practical, balanced and implementable ATT, SALW and their illicit proliferation, expansion of participation base – industry involvement etc. Other UN initiatives in Asia in 2009-10 included Southeast Asian regional meeting in Bali 2010, development awareness raising campaigns, training of trainers' courses on special investigative techniques relevant to the import, export, re-export and transit of arms, and a sub-regional seminar to enhance multi-sectoral responses for armed violence reduction and prevention in South and Central Asia. For the implementation of the UNPoA, he suggested some policies which

included establishing a well resourced national commission, a coordinating body, national focal points and a national action plan; accurate record keeping; donor guidelines; centralisation of information (clearing house); broad approaches (multifaceted, regional); classification (broad interpretation of PoA activities); etc.

Ms. Simonetta Grassi delivered the third presentation on *UNODC's Self Assessment Tool*. According to her, in the UN's attempt to stop the proliferation of SALW, the CASA process was an evolving approach. The UNODC dealt with several interconnected issues that were related to security and development. About transnational crimes, she mentioned the UN Conference would need much more information. In her opinion, the compilation of requests by the countries seeking assistance, a checklist and self assessment would be necessary. The questionnaire would be like a peer review but would not point finger at anyone. She also discussed the UN Convention against corruption and mentioned that there were a lot of gaps between compliance and application. Ms. Grassi proposed a number of suggestions which were as follows: the selection of the level of obligation should be assessed; support material would have to be included; links to other instrument should be established; technical assistance was needed; self assessment had to be merged and reports finalised.

Brigadier General Ranjan de Silva, National Coordinator, National Commission against the Proliferation of Illicit Small Arms (NCAPISA) made the fourth presentation on *Update on the Ongoing Firearms Database Project in Sri Lanka*. The database was established with a view to finding out more about illegal weapons and their rapid spread, by registering legal weapon ownership. He then said that this database had geographic parameters which contained elements like city, sub-city, full name of the owner, date of birth, gender, etc., as well as specific parameters which contained information such as the type of the weapon, ownership of the weapon, police division, etc. This database would provide information about the weapons and dealers and that information could be narrowed down to trace those involved in illicit arms trade or misuse of weapons. He described it in the Sri Lankan context. The establishment of this database had made it much easier for the Sri Lankan security forces to deal with illicit weapons. The more information they would have, the easier would it be to trace a potential criminal. Finally, he thanked Japan and the UN for their assistance.

During **open discussion**, several questions and comments were raised. The following were the major questions: How many states had used the questionnaire? Whether the software from UNODC was available to the public? Whether there was any treaty or agreement between South Asia countries to deal with SALW proliferation? Whether the Sri Lankan database was connected with the Interpol or other international bodies to fight crime? Ms. Grassi responded that the software was available on the UNODC website. She said that the necessary measures would depend on different state practices and replied also that they would not need to wait for long but would have to make sure that UN assistance was sought for. Brig. de Silva proposed that the Sri Lankan database be extensively used to identify weapons. He responded that the Sri Lankan database was not yet connected to international bodies for fighting crime. In Sri Lanka, the National Commission against the Proliferation of Illicit Small Arms (NCAPISA) had been established to stop the proliferation of SALW, and his country would like to share information about developing the database with other countries in the South Asian region with a view to building closer relations and network to fight proliferation of SALW. Brig. de Silva expressed his concern that there is a great demand for SALW. Therefore, strategies and approaches in this respect need to be changed as demands for SALW are on the rise.

In addition to the questions and responses, a number of comments or suggestions were made from the floor, such as, undertaking necessary legislative measures for the ratification of the ATT; addressing accuracy of database and information; stressing the significance on holding bilateral meetings, confidence building measures and incremental approach; focusing on proper needs assessment in South Asia; addressing SALW control as a gradual process and proposing that states identify their capacity for action by the next Biennial Meeting of States (BMS); highlighting the importance of conducting baseline studies to assess the issues related to proliferation of SALW and providing fact sheets to different countries; the necessity of bilateral border management to control the spread of SALW. The participants also proposed the recommendations that emerged from this seminar to be sent to the respective governments and also to SAARC.

After completion of the sixth working session, there was a discussion on *The Next Steps – Towards the Next BMS, the COP and the SAARC Summit 2010* chaired by **Ms. Rosy Cave**, Head of Asia Programme, Saferworld. This discussion addressed some common issues and suggestions, which can be summarised as follows:

- Importance of tackling armed conflict, arms trafficking, and terrorism in South Asia should be stressed;
- Illicit small arms was a common problem though the impacts vary; therefore, regional cooperation was essential;
- There was an urgent need to address not only the users but also the suppliers as well;
- Organised crime and criminal groups needed to be tackled;
- Border control and information sharing deserved greater attention;
- Dialogue among South Asian states and cooperating with other actors, e.g., UN, ICRC, civil societies at national, regional and international levels was necessary;
- Historic sensitivities in the South Asian region needed to be considered;
- The role of law enforcement officers was vital in controlling spread of small arms;
- National legislations of some countries needed be reviewed to deal with modern day problems;
- The 25th Anniversary of SAARC, the next SAARC Summit, the upcoming 4th BMS under the UNPoA may provide great opportunities to focus on the impacts of small arms control and how that can reduce the proliferation and misuse of small arms;
- A Declaration that calls for cooperation among all states in the South Asian region to deal effectively with the proliferation of small arms was very important;
- Importance of confidence building measures among states so that states can meet to discuss particular issues. Besides, importance of joint investigation, border patrol, information sharing and exchange were reiterated. States should have political will and determination to control and prevent the proliferation of SALW. The states may also look for international assistance;
- Incremental approach - bilateral and/or trilateral meetings or agreements could be built up from there;
- SAARC should establish a database like that of Sri Lanka;
- A focal point was necessary. It could be a person or an organisation that would keep in contact with all the participants present here, send seminar report with decisions, and ask states to write about what they can do or make proposals, to be built on during the next meeting;

In the *Closing Remarks and the Presentation of Co-Chairs Summary*, Ms. Rosy Cave delivered the closing remarks. She said this Seminar has been quite helpful in bringing together a number of countries, demonstrating how the South Asian states can work together to help each other. She mentioned that Saferworld and the relevant UN agencies were trying to help the states to strengthen the control of small arms. She thanked all the presenters, chairs of all the sessions, the participants, Saferworld and BIISS. She stressed the importance of confidence building measures among South Asian states, and the many instruments for controlling the small arms, such as the UNPoA, the UN firearms protocol, the ATT initiative, international tracing instrument, SAARC Suppression of Terrorist Act, etc. In addition, she said that these treaties/agreements were mutually reinforcing and should not be treated in isolation. They all fit together, as these were complementary and should be treated as such. There were demand and supply sides in arms trafficking. Supply sides responses are complemented by demand sides responses; brokers and traffickers may try to use gaps in national and regional systems. She also mentioned that national level efforts may not be effective enough in dealing with this international problem. Exchange of information was necessary. This may help in initiating dialogues. There were common issues and concerns for South Asian states and also common ways to tackle them. More cooperation was needed among South Asian states to effectively deal with the spread of SALW. International assistance may help in dealing with this problem. States need to step forward and ask for assistance from the relevant UN agencies, CSOs and international non-governmental organisations (INGO).

In his concluding remarks, **Major General Sheikh Md Monirul Islam**, ndc, psc, Director General, BIISS, thanked all participants for their valuable contributions. With the participation of distinguished experts representing several national, regional and international organizations, he believed that the efforts of the two days regional seminar were worthwhile. The scholarly presentations of the experts provided everyone with the most current data and a clearer perspective on peace and security in South Asia, while at the same time covering the priority issue of regional cooperation on SALW control. He also mentioned that South Asian states have commonalities in approaches in dealing with the problem. Nevertheless, what is possibly needed for South Asian states to work on common grounds, cooperate on common problems, share common burdens at times on common space to control and eradicate the proliferation and illicit use of SALW. He hoped that, the common understanding and knowledge gathered during the regional seminar would be shared with respective government agencies linked directly or indirectly to this issue. He expected that concerted efforts can and will make a favourable difference in peace and security in the South Asian region in the future. For that, he congratulated Saferworld for offering a unique platform to the participants mainly from South Asia to attend this seminar. He extended sincere gratitude to the Government of Norway for funding this seminar. Finally, he conveyed appreciation to all for making this regional seminar a great success.