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Introduction

The present paper is based on the findings of a study conducted in the Gardabani and Marneuli Districts from April through September 2004 by the Caucasus Institute for Peace, Democracy and Development (CIPDD) with support from GTZ. Bridge, a union of intercultural cooperation, acted in the study as CIPDD's partner.

The study was preceded by a research conducted by CIPDD in cooperation with the above partners and the Georgian Union of Azeri Women in the spring and summer of 2003. The goal of the research was more general than - to assess conflict potential in the Kvemo Kartli Region, in particular, in the Gardabani and Marneuli districts. The findings of the study, which used both qualitative and quantitative methods, revealed that there were no immediate preconditions for a serious armed conflict in the region. However, certain alarming signs manifested themselves. These included the ethnic Azeri population's low level of awareness of social and political developments in Georgia and their low integration in these developments; lack of trust towards the state among the population in general, and, namely, displeasure with the land distribution and personnel policies; alienation of various ethnic groups which against the backdrop of the existence of a multitude of ethnicity-based criminal gangs serves as the grounds for occasional local tensions; high level of unemployment (most acutely manifesting itself amongst the youth); ineffective border controls leading to a high turnover of illicit arms. This is compounded by the unfavorable social and political situation, widespread poverty and the deterioration of social infrastructure throughout Georgia.

All the above factors are providing fertile soil for conflict, and may cause a more serious tension if other (political or economic) problems aggravate. Because of this, there is a need for the authorities to urgently address the problems in the region and take decisive steps. The international community and Georgian NGOs also need to make more effort.

It is too early to say how the situation has changed in the region following the change of government in November 2003. General information allows us to say that the effectiveness of the government's action has significantly increased in certain areas (such as combating crime, tightening border controls and eradicating or reducing smuggling). Despite this, the majority of the above mentioned problems still need to be dealt with.

One of the main issues of concern that the 2003 study revealed was the wide proliferation of arms in the region. Therefore, a further study of this specific issue was initiated. The goal of the new research project was to study the SALW related situation in the region, to identify major tasks for addressing the SALW problem and to develop specific recommendations for action. It is obvious from the outset that the problem is complex by its nature and addressing it will require efforts of various actors. Therefore, many of the recommendations given below are general and their enforcement will require more specific action plans. The goal of the paper is to present a general overview of tasks and activities required for achieving progress in addressing the SALW problem.

Main Findings

The study has revealed that wide circulation of arms among the population of the Marneuli and Gardabani districts poses a serious threat to the region's stability and development.

Along with other problems facing the region, SALW proliferation and their easy availability among the population create preconditions for conflict-provoking situations, jeopardize stability in Georgia and the South Caucasus Region as a whole and make it difficult to build confidence amongst various ethnic groups and develop democratic institutions, as well as create an unfavourable investment climate and seriously reduce the effectiveness of the fight against crime.

Wide proliferation of SALW in the Kvemo Kartli is caused by the following major factors:

- The consequences of the conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia and the existence of uncontrolled territories within the state;
- The presence of Russian military bases on Georgian territory that are not controlled adequately;
- Low level of integration of ethnic minorities and insufficient level of trust among various ethnic minorities living in the region;
- Low level of legal knowledge among the population;
- Population's lack of trust in law-enforcement agencies and other state bodies;
- Ineffective law enforcement system and high crime rates;
- Ineffective state border controls

In order to address the problem or achieve significant progress in addressing it the underlying causes need to be eradicated. This, for its part, requires taking steps in a number of directions. These steps should be aimed on the one hand at curbing the availability of SALW and setting up a regime that would be maximally safe for storing and using SALW in circulation and, on the other hand, at reducing the citizens' motivation to own weapons.

In order to achieve these goals the following tasks have been identified:

- **Building confidence and increasing the legal knowledge among the population.** Low level of trust in state bodies as well as mistrust among different ethnic groups give rise to the impunity syndrome among the citizens which for its part triggers the motivation to acquire weapons and provide for one's own security with own resources. Therefore, steps should be taken to increase the level of trust both in the authorities and among different ethnic groups. In addition to that, the citizens should acknowledge better both their accountability for the illicit storage and use of weapons and the risks associated with the proliferation of weapons in general.
- **Efficiency of the police and their relations with society.** The motivation of owning the weapons is unlikely to diminish unless the efficiency of the police is increased considerably. The citizens need to feel that the police are protecting their rights rather than abuse them. Therefore, there is a need for fundamental reforms within the police in order to raise the effectiveness of their action on the one hand and on the other to protect democratic norms unswervingly.
- **Coordination within the law-enforcement and administrative system.** It is advisable that a coordination unit is set up within the executive that will bring together the work of different state bodies on the SALW related issues into one system. The functions of this agency should include intragovernmental coordination of an action plan on SALW controls as well as inter-governmental discussions on the issue.
- **Effective use of the resources provided by the international community.** The international community has acquired considerable experience in curbing SALW proliferation and can provide assistance to Georgia in this respect. Such assistance can encompass work with state bodies as well as supporting the efforts of Georgian NGOs and media.

There is a need to carry out a series of specific activities in all the above directions. The final chapter of this paper offers recommendations to this effect.

Methodology of the Study and the Structure of the Paper

Qualitative social investigation methods such as focus groups and in-depth interviews were used during the study. In total, 4 focus group and 40 in-depth interviews were conducted. Respondents were selected on the basis of their ethnic origin, scope of activity, age and gender. A separate group was set up to represent the Svan community, as the majority of Svans who have settled down in the

region relatively recently and have not been fully integrated into local society are perceived by the rest of the population as a distinct group. Consequently, the following groups were identified for the purposes of the study: Georgian, Svan, Azerbaijani, and Armenian. Respondents represented different age groups ranging from 16 to 60 year olds, different professions and different levels of education (civil servants, students, small businessmen, peasants etc). It is noteworthy that 50% of the respondents were unemployed, the fact reflecting the region's reality.

In addition, meetings were held with the local government, police, the Customs and Border Control Departments of the Marneuli and Gardabani districts as well as with journalists, local religious, business, youth and non-governmental organizations.

For the findings to be perceived properly it is worth mentioning that there is no definition of small arms agreed upon universally. International experts and in this specific case the organizations working on this project use the definition adopted by the UN Council of government experts in the 1997 report (A/52/298, N24, 27 August 1997), according to which SALW included the following types of weapons:

Small arms: Revolvers and self-loading pistols, rifles and carbines, machine guns (sub-, light-, or general- purpose);

Light Weapons: heavy machine-guns; mounted automatic grenade launchers; portable anti-aircraft guns; recoilless rifles; anti-tank rocket and missile systems; anti-aircraft missile systems; mortars of calibres of less than 100 mm;

Ammunition and explosives for SALW: cartridges (rounds) for small arms, missiles or shells for single-action anti-aircraft and anti-tank systems, hand grenades (anti-personnel and anti-tank), landmines and other explosives

The present document analyzes the SALW-related situation and the causes and impact of SALW proliferation. The following chapter gives an overview of the steps that could be taken at the international, national and regional levels. The final chapter of the paper provides recommendations for developing the state policy that will address the problem of SALW proliferation. The recommendations aim at working out the steps to be taken at the national, regional and international levels in order to reduce the scale of SALW proliferation in the region.

SALW Proliferation and its Impact in Kvemo Kartli

Scale of Proliferation

The study has shown that approximately one third of the population of Kvemo Kartli owns registered legal weapons. According to a more general estimation which covers both registered and illicit weapons, 70% to 80% of the adult population owns different types of weapons ranging from hunting rifles to machine guns at present. This estimation was made by a group of sociologists who conducted a study in the Marneuli and Gardabani districts and who base this estimation on the results of a quantitative study. Despite this, the sociologists assert that the above figures reflect quite precisely the scale of SALW proliferation in the Marneuli and Gardabani districts, as the study findings have shown that a certain portion of households own more than one unit of SALW. It should also be noted that there is a larger quantity of SALW in circulation in the villages than in towns whereas the largest amount of weapons is concentrated in the villages close to the border where automatic guns abound. According to the local population, the amount of weapons amassed in the villages near the borders is such that the police avoid entering the villages or reacting properly to the crime committed there.

The results of the sociological survey allow us to say that the amount of weapons is almost evenly distributed across all strata of population. It is possible to identify the following categories of SALW owners:

- Persons who hold positions that entitle or allow them to own SALW (policemen, army, border guards);
- Persons who can afford acquiring weapons legally after paying respective fees and receiving licenses;
- Criminals (as a rule, they own weapons illegally);
- Young men who wish to flaunt weapons;
- Businessmen who wish to protect their business or avert a likely attack (hoping that an attack will be averted if would-be attackers know that they own weapons);
- Households living in the villages near the border because of their heightened sense of insecurity;
- Hunters

Arms spread widely in the late 1980s and early 1990s against the background of the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the start of the civil and ethno-territorial conflicts. However, the trend still prevails: weapons are still available while people still feel motivated to acquire them.

In 1995-1996, the central government in Georgia initiated a weapons collection programme which envisaged the collection of uncontrolled weapons, which the population had got hold of during the conflict. However, the implementation of this programme did not influence the situation essentially. According to experts, within the framework of the initiative, only about 25% of the weapons in civilian possession was collected (the weapons were later on handed over to the interior troops and police). The population in Kvemo Kartli is unanimous in expressing skepticism to the outcomes of the programme.

Consequently, the critical mass of the weapons that the population of Kvemo Kartli got hold of in the early 1990s still remains in the population's possession whereas the new legislation on arms possession has not affected the arms owners' further behaviour or motivation.

For instance, on 15 March 1994, Georgian parliament passed the "Law on Firearms" which in principle defined the list of weapons the acquisition and storage of which was permitted for physical or legal entities. According to the law, the Interior Ministry was to exercise control over the weapons in civilian possession. However, the law failed to ensure the effectiveness of the 1995-1996 weapons collection programme.

Legislative Base

Laws on weapons have been elaborated and refined in Georgia since 1994. Since then the state has been attempting to curb illicit arms sale and proliferation in Georgia in compliance with the international norms. At present, the Georgian legislation regulates arms production, sale, transit and transfer to the third party as well as carrying arms and the control over export and import of arms, military products and dual purpose goods.

The status of SALW in Georgia is defined by the following laws:

- 1) Law of Georgia on Firearms, passed on 8 May 2003;
- 2) Law of Georgia on the Fundamentals of the Issuance of Licenses and Permits for Entrepreneurial Activities, passed on 14 May 2002;
- 3) Law of Georgia on Export and Import Control of Arms, Military Equipment and Dual Purpose Production, passed on 28 April 1998;
- 4) The 1997 Presidential Decree N582 which defined the procedures for technical documentation, other works and services in the process of production of goods of military designation and export and import of such goods;

- 5) The 1999 Presidential Decree N103 putting the Ministry of Justice in charge of issuing licenses on the export of arms.

Of these laws and decrees, the Law on Firearms is most important in terms of its effect on the control of SALW proliferation. The law regulates the right of citizens to the acquisition of weapons. Under the law, citizens of Georgia or any other physical entities are entitled to purchase and store long- and short-barrel firearms or purchase and carry gas, sports or hunting rifles. The law allows for the above types of arms to be purchased only on the basis of the permit issued by the Interior Ministry within the period of 3 months after the issuance date. An individual who has purchased a unit of arms is obliged to have it registered at the Interior Ministry within three days after the purchase. The permit should not be issued for persons under the age of 18, mentally disturbed persons, disabled persons, drug or alcohol addicts, convicts, or persons who are wanted by law-enforcement agencies et al.

The Law on the Fundamentals of Issuing Licenses and Permits for Entrepreneurship regulates the procedure relating to arms production that stipulate that entrepreneurs should first receive a license on production and, later on, have the weapons certified. Under the Law on Firearms all types of weapons in circulation on Georgian territory, manufactured in or imported to Georgia, are subject to mandatory certification. The same law states that details about the certified weapons should be incorporated into the unified state weapons cadastre. The State Department for Standardization, Metrology and Certification is responsible for maintaining such cadastre while the certification rules are to be presented by the head of the department to the president of Georgia and be approved by the latter.

In addition to that, the Law on Export and Import Control of Arms, Military Equipment and Dual Purpose Production has laid the basis for the system of control over export and import of arms and military equipment in Georgia. The Law sets strict limitations to the arms exporters and importers operating in Georgia by introducing the system of licensing. The licensing procedures were enforced following the presidential Decrees of 1997 and 1999.

The findings of the studies conducted in Kvemo Kartli provide the basis for an estimation of the quality and effectiveness of the enforcement of the above mentioned laws. In this regard, it should be noted that the local population, experts and other concerned people have a number of critical remarks.

For instance, a number of law-enforcers believe in the need for making the norm allowing an individual to purchase arms stricter. The Law on Firearms bestows any resident of the country with the right to purchase arms, e.g. a hunting rifle, if they submit relevant paperwork and pay the amount set by the law. The study showed that the proliferation of the registered arms has a higher influence on the worsening of crime situation and the rise in crime rates in the Kvemo Kartli region than the circulation of illicit weapons due to the following reasons:

Firstly, the process of the acquisition of paperwork necessary for getting the permit for owning arms is quite informal and at times involves corrupt deals. Besides, the permit deals are quite cheap and therefore the majority of those who want to acquire weapons, including criminals, can get them easily.

Secondly, the Law on Firearms fails to provide the basis for fighting criminals and armed crime. Many law-enforcers believe that making the law stricter may help decrease significantly the number of those who own weapons illegally.

Heads of state-owned military-technical enterprises have a distinct attitude towards the law. They want the law to consider the interests of local entrepreneurs and place fewer restrictions on technical and intellectual resources available to arms producers. In particular, they want Georgia to maintain the arms industry and the government to actually support producing goods of military designation including firearms.

Despite the concerns over the legislation, it may be complex to speak about the soundness of the legislative environment in today's Georgia, because the studies have shown that the priority tasks for combating the SALW proliferation problem should be limited to the actual implementation of the law, strengthening of the administration and building confidence.

For instance, because it is often criminals who get hold of arms, improving the law administration would be a more effective measure than making the licensing system stricter. Apart from that, because Georgia is not an arms producing state and there is no demand for additional goods from new producers, at the present stage it seems groundless to criticize the law in this regard.

Risks Linked to SALW Proliferation

The population in Kvemo Kartli links the wide proliferation of SALW in the region with the exacerbation of the political, social and crime situation. The situation is further compounded by the fact that ethnic groups are haunted by the sense that their rights are abused by other groups. Ineffectiveness of police work, high crime rates and impunity of criminals often trigger the use of arms in solving everyday life discords. In one instance the Georgian customs officers' demand that an ethnic Azeri resident pay the customs duty led to a confrontation between Georgians and Azeris involving threats of use of arms. In the past years, political battles following the elections have more than once led to armed confrontations.

The effects of uncontrolled SALW proliferation can be summarized as follows:

- People's concerns are on the rise due to their sense of insecurity;
- The migration is on the rise due to the pessimistic attitudes of the population, especially the youth, towards the prospect of the region's development;
- Risks are increasing that ordinary disputes including those occurring on the grounds of ethnic discords will grow into armed confrontations;
- Business development is hampered;
- Population develops mistrust in the authorities;
- Crime rates, including human and property violence rates, are on the rise;
- Drug abuse rates are on the increase;
- Illicit trafficking rates are rising.

Causes of the Present Situation

Causes of arms proliferation can generally be broken down into two groups: one is related to the arms availability and the other to the motivation of citizens to acquire weapons. In both regards, the 1989-93 period is of special importance, when the Soviet Union and its repressive communist political regime broke up which along with other things strictly controlled arms proliferation. On the other hand, it took the new Georgian state quite some time to introduce at least minimum control on most of its territory. The Georgian state of that period can be described as a failed state, lack of control on the proliferation and use of arms, a tool for violence, being one of the most illustrative indicators of the state's failure. Ethno-territorial and political conflicts led to the drastic deterioration in the citizens' security and consequently to the rise of their motivation to ensure their own security with their own means.

The period starting 1994 has been marked with a relative stability and the strengthening of the state control, but the weakness of the state still remained an acute problem. The law-enforcement system failed to either establish effective control on arms proliferation or to create effective mechanisms for the protection of human security. Public trust in the law enforcing system and in the authorities in general remains very low. Added to this is an ethnic factor which is highly important in Kvemo Kartli. Ethnic minorities including Azeris, Armenians and Greeks doubt that the Georgian state will ensure their security. Their trust in the state is even less than that of ethnic Georgians.

The new Georgian authorities which stepped in following the 2003 Rose Revolution and subsequent presidential and parliamentary elections, have prioritized such areas as fighting corruption and crime in general, reforming the state, in particular the law-enforcement system, and increasing its effectiveness. However, the study at this stage has not revealed any kind of progress in the Kvemo Kartli region in terms of the control over SALW proliferation or the elimination of the causes of such proliferation.

Based on the present situation, the causes of SALW proliferation in Kvemo Kartli are as follows:

1. The 1989-93 ethnic and political armed conflicts have been the most important reason of the SALW proliferation in the whole of Georgia so far. This includes ethno-territorial wars in Abkhazia and South Ossetia between the central authorities and the separatist forces as well as the armed coup in January 1992 and a subsequent confrontation between the new government and the supporters of the ousted president.

During the military confrontation in Abkhazia and South Ossetia the armed forces under the central authorities were badly organized and were not fully controlled by the central authorities. The forceful change of government was followed by a general weakening of state institutions, a long spell of civil confrontation and emergence of private armed groups. As a result, arms became easily available to both criminals and civilians who acquired weapons for the purposes of self-defense.

The population of Kvemo Kartli believes that the arms transited to Gardabani and Marneuli from the conflict zones during the 1990s remain in large amounts to date.

2. The said political and territorial conflicts and the weakening of state institutions coincided with the disbanding of Soviet, and later on its heir Russia's, military units deployed on Georgian territory. In 1990-1993, Moscow's actual control on these units essentially weakened and their majority started leaving Georgian territory gradually. Large portions of arms owned by these bases were acquired by local armed groups or individuals by illegal means. It is obvious that the main customers for the vast majority of arms were paramilitary formations involved in the ethno-territorial conflicts. However, others too found it easy to acquire arms from the Russian bases. In particular, the arms from the Russian military bases located in the Kvemo Kartli region were easily available to any citizen irrespective of their ethnic background. Local population states that in the early 1990s "weapons were transported in trucks" from Russian military bases.

In 1994-1995, Georgia and Russia reached agreements on the deployment of Russian (formally CIS) peacekeeping forces in Abkhazia and the Russian bases (though this latter agreement was never ratified). Since then the presence and functioning of Russian armed forces in Georgia has become more structured. Despite this, according to the statements by Georgian diplomats and officials, the three Russian bases still present in Gudauta, Akhalkalaki and Batumi along with the Russian Peacekeeping Forces deployed in the Abkhaz and South Ossetian conflict zones remain to be the source of uncontrolled SALW proliferation in Georgia and in the whole of South Caucasus. Despite the fact that Russian bases are no longer present in Kvemo Kartli, arms sold illegally from the Russian bases can reach any part of Georgia, including Kvemo Kartli.

3. The developments of late 1980s and early 1990s contributed to the SALW proliferation in Kvemo Kartli in yet another way. During Gamsakhurdia's presidency, the central authorities' nationalistic rhetoric and policies instilled the sense of likely risk in the ethnic minorities. The concern was exacerbated by the fact that, as the eyewitnesses say, the central authorities then distributed arms to the Georgian population to enable them to take part in territorial conflicts. In the same period, ethnic minorities – Azeris, Greeks and Armenians, extensively purchased weapons as they considered weapons a necessary means for self-protection.

4. An additional factor contributing to the SALW proliferation in Georgia is the proximity of conflict regions to the border and the inadequate extent of cooperation between the neighbouring countries. In general, the border protection in Georgia is very problematic and is need for a serious improvement. Yet another factor triggering SALW proliferation, in particular among ethnic minorities, was a conflict in Nagorny Karabakh between the neighbouring Armenia and Azerbaijan. The local population admits that ethnic Azeri and Armenian citizens of Georgia had no difficulty acquiring arms from their neighbors across the border. The conflict underway in neighbouring Chechnya is one more factor contributing to arms proliferation.
5. The studies conducted in Kvemo Kartli have shown that despite the circulation of large amounts of SALW, there still are many people who retain interest in acquiring arms. The inhabitants of the region themselves explain this by the failure of local authorities to guarantee their security and by the inefficiency and ineffectiveness of the law enforcement agencies. The study also revealed that the large majority of the population accused the police of being complicit with criminals, violating human rights, protecting certain business interest and having stakes in businesses, as well as the low level of professionalism. Up to 90% of criminal cases remain unsolved. Respect for local authorities in general is low as the latter are accused of participating in corrupt deals and illegal businesses. All the above has contributed to the prevalence of the insecurity syndrome among the population.

A vicious circle is created that in the theory of international relations is called the security dilemma: when the state is weak or fails to enlist the population's trust, ordinary citizens decide to take care of their own security, that of their families and their business and acquire weapons. But the easy availability of arms and their wide proliferation in itself cause the rise in crime rates that cannot be tackled by the law-enforcement system's resources. The result is the decrease in human security and stability.

6. The ethnic factor still retains its significance. Under the present circumstances, ethnic minorities are no longer concerned about their possible discrimination as this was the case during the Gamsakhurdia era. However against the backdrop of the minorities' inadequate civil integration there still remains serious mistrust in Georgian society and the Georgian state. There is a fear that their rights, belief and cultural identity may be jeopardized by Georgian society or the Georgian state. Some representative of ethnic minorities view criminal activities by certain criminal groups as activities directed against them as an ethnic group. The above creates a general sense of insecurity which for its part triggers an additional motivation for the acquisition of weapons.
7. Another reason accounting for the presence of such a large amount of SALW in the region is the fact that the Kvemo Kartli population does not consider the SALW proliferation a problem as such. This was further confirmed in the survey when the majority of the population expressed readiness to acquire weapons and confirmed that they considered it necessary to own arms. An overwhelmingly large proportion of those who wished to acquire weapons were young people.
8. The population of Georgia and in particular that of the region has little knowledge of SALW proliferation related legal issues. They are not aware of the norms and laws governing the SALW storage, carrying and use, or of the legal measures against the misuse of weapons. Neither is the population aware as to what kind of moral and legal responsibility a SALW owner or a member of their family will carry for the unauthorized use of SALW.

The above said indicates that the interest in the ownership of SALW will remain high in the future and will be so until the population's attitudes change with regard to the problem and until the population's legal knowledge and the responsibility for SALW ownership increases.

9. The motivation for the acquisition of SALW is reinforced by the proximity of the region with the border. Interviews with the population revealed that the proximity with the Armenian and Azerbaijani borders and the inadequate protection of borders reinforce the sense of danger among the population, leading to the emergence of the demand for weapons. The Georgian population believes that if need be, Azeris will manage to get large amounts of weapons from Azerbaijan in no time. This is what happened in the early 1990s, when the relations between Georgians and Azeris grew tense. The Azeris were then even considering the possibility of bringing in armored vehicles. Fortunately, the tension eased pretty soon, though the precedent has had a negative effect on the multiethnic population's current attitudes.

Ways of Curbing SALW Proliferation

What are the steps that the Georgian government need to take in order to avert the risks posed by SALW proliferation in Kvemo Kartli?

First and foremost, there is a need to eliminate the causes that have led to the present situation. The causes as is visible from the previous chapter are heterogeneous and are not limited to the lack of administrative control measures. Global experience has shown that the state's fight against SALW proliferation involves the implementation of knowledge- and experience-based reform policies in legislative and law enforcement systems, local governments, social and economic spheres and the pursuit of good neighborly and collaborative policies with neighbouring countries. If the problem is addressed properly, it is likely that the country will develop peacefully, conflicts and confrontation will be prevented and additional security guarantees can be created for individual citizens.

These steps first of all need to be taken at the national level though there are significant tasks to be undertaken by regional and district administrations. Non-governmental organizations and the media have to do their share. The international community has acquired considerable experience in this respect and is ready to offer its resources both to the governmental and non-governmental actors. The problem needs to be addressed at all these levels through concerted action. Therefore, first of all there is a need to identify major tasks and problem areas which can be addressed by these actors and the addressing of which are critical for achieving results.

Problems include those that are of strategic significance to Georgia, including uncontrolled territories or the presence of Russian military bases on Georgian territory and their unclear status. The Georgian government and the international community are well aware of the significance of resolving these problems. However, as their resolution requires more than just the government's efforts, the report will not dwell on them.

Changes in the legislative sphere can also play an important role in addressing these problems. However, in the present situation whereby there are serious flaws in the implementation of laws in Georgia due to the inadequate functioning of state institutions, it is hard to speak about the ineffectiveness or failure of a law. Besides, the existing laws on weapons were written with western experts' participation and they have incorporated international standards for the production, export, import and transit of weapons and set forth the requirements for the national government. Consequently, it would be preferable that at this stage the public and the authorities focus their attention on improving means and forms of the implementation of the law than on the perfection of laws. It is also noteworthy that in order to carry out the recommendations presented in this paper there may be a need for making changes to some laws. However, that discussion is beyond the framework of this paper and thus will not be developed here.

Building Confidence and Improving Population's Legal Knowledge

In order to reduce the negative impact of SALW proliferation in Kvemo Kartli the state needs to take the steps that will reduce the citizens' motivation to acquire arms. This motivation has been triggered by the feelings of insecurity against the following risks:

- Local conflicts on the grounds of ethnic confrontation and lack of trust among different ethnic groups;
- Attacks on life and property by criminal groups – a consequence of the law-enforcers' ineffectiveness in maintaining order and the involvement of the police in illegal activities;
- External risks caused by the proximity of the border with Armenia and Azerbaijan.

With regard to the Kvemo Kartli region the priority of the state policy should be to free local residents from the sense of danger. To achieve this purpose, the state needs to fulfill the following tasks:

- Develop and implement ethnic policies based on democratic values that would encourage the full integration of ethnic minorities in the civil society;
- Enhance the population's legal knowledge so that the population better acknowledges the legal responsibility for illegal storage and use of weapons and the consequences of the uncontrolled SALW proliferation ;
- Step up substantially the efficiency of the local government and law enforcement bodies;
- Improve the effectiveness of border guard agencies.

Without achieving the above tasks it will be impossible to limit or reduce SALW proliferation among the population, say, through implementing a weapons collection programme. The study conducted in Kvemo Kartli showed that the population is not yet ready to voluntarily give up weapons until proper guarantees are received from the state. At the same time, citizens agree to hand in their weapons in exchange of monetary compensation if they are given guarantees of safety, immunity and anonymity. Various educational and public campaigns can result in a portion of population surrendering weapons in exchange of social investment projects such as the installation of irrigation channels, computerization of schools etc. However, if the above said tasks are not achieved, the citizens will retain the motivation to acquire weapons in order to take care of their own security. Consequently, one-off weapons collection initiatives are unlikely to stop the process of SALW proliferation in the region.

Thus, under the present circumstances the steps aimed directly at the collection of weapons shall not be urgent or priority. The most important task for the government is to regain the population's trust. First of all, local law-enforcement and administrative bodies need to prove to their citizens that they are ready to fulfill their constitutional obligations and provide individual citizens with high security. Only after that will it be possible to develop an action plan for weapons collection programmes.

Police Efficiency and Police-Community Relations

The security system reform first and foremost is aimed at reforming the police system which is tightly linked to building confidence between society and police. International experience shows that curbing the weapons proliferation does not bring about any results if there is no trust between the community and law enforcement agencies.

The reason accounting for such lack of trust is first of all the low public image of police: the police are often associated with corruption and criminal deals or the violations of citizens' rights. However there are other reasons that are linked to the lack of resources available to the police.

- Policemen lack adequate training and professionalism which makes it difficult for them to protect democratic values;
- Police are ill equipped and lack major communications and transport means due to the scarcity of resources.

Consequently, in order to successfully implement the ongoing police reform in Georgia it is important to attract more human, physical and material resources. Such assistance can be provided by donor organizations and individual developed countries. Georgia is getting assistance to undertake the police reform from the OSCE and the governments of the USA and the EU member states. However, many experts point out that the assistance provided by foreign donors is neither well coordinated nor being used effectively.

Coordination within Law-enforcement and Administrative Systems

Action for curbing the weapons proliferation requires that the Interior Ministry executes its police functions effectively and in accordance with the democratic norms. However, what is also needed is a concerted, coordinated action of the law-enforcement and administrative systems in order to set up a uniform system of marking, registration and control of weapons in state ownership. The unified state system of registration and control envisages setting up a data base - an arms cadastre - and identifying, certifying and storing weapons safely, as well as certifying weapons in civilian possession.

It is the government's responsibility to control the production of goods on the SALW list. Such control should ensure that no illegal and unmarked weapons are manufactured, and that all manufactured weapons are strictly recorded and the data about the certified weapons are recorded in the unified state control system.

From this point of view the UN Action Plan adopted in July 2001 is of high importance. The Action Plan recognizes the importance of the role of state institutions in implementing the activities aimed at curbing SALW proliferation. (Regretfully, the Georgian authorities have not reacted in any way to this document.) The UN document recommends that the government take active steps to identify, collect and destroy SALW in civilian possession. The UN Action Plan recommends that a coordination agency with an appropriate institutional infrastructure be set up within the executive responsible for policy guidance, research and monitoring of efforts to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects (Action Plan, section II, 4).

In addition to that, the documents passed by the UN and OSCE recommend that the national governments strictly define and protect the procedures for the control of import and export, transit and storage of weapons in order to deal with SALW-related problems. The documents also recommend to establish procedures necessary for documenting, marking and licensing of weapons and underscore the role of the state in the information exchange between the law enforcement bodies, the collection and storage of weapons and the destruction of surplus weapons. The interagency coordination body established within the executive should be responsible for coordination of all these tasks.

Effective Use of Resources Provided by the International Community

International donor organizations working on addressing SALW-related problems can provide significant assistance in fulfilling the above tasks. The state should use these resources more effectively. One of the major tasks of the coordination agency placed within the state administration system should be cooperation with international organizations.

The international community's concern over SALW-related problems rose sharply in the early 1990s, at a time when parallel to the end of the Cold War, the bipolar system of global confrontation collapsed. However, the period was also marked with the emergence of local armed conflicts in which SALW were used. Such conflict zones emerged in the post-communist world, namely in the Balkans and the Caucasus. Experience has shown that irrespective of how local by its nature a conflict is, the problems of SALW proliferation goes beyond the borders of one particular nation state. The exacerbation of the problem in one single country can harm considerably security in the neighbouring countries as well as stability of the international system, thus affecting inter-state relations.

Respectively, addressing the problem requires coordinated efforts at the international level. Such coordinated action can be guided by global institutions such as the UN, OSCE and NATO. Along with the latter, local and international NGOs can also play an important role in addressing SALW-related problems. Some of these organizations are united in an international action network on SALW called IANSA. Organizations such as Saferworld, Small Arms Survey and SEESAC are among those who make a significant contribution to the cause.

International organizations' major goal is to stimulate the national authorities and to provide expertise to the latter in order to deal with the problem. Often such assistance results in state institutions achieving effective results in terms of reducing the amounts of uncontrolled weapons.

International organizations provide extensive assistance to national governments in planning and implementing specific activities. For instance, the UN supported the weapons collection programmes in Croatia in 1996-1997, in Albania in 1997-2002 and in Cyprus in 2002, while similar programmes were implemented under the aegis of NATO in Kosovo in 1999, in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1999-2000 and Macedonia in 2001.

It is certain that the authorities have a decisive voice in all these areas. The international assistance will bring about real results if there are proper conditions on the ground. However, results will be much quicker and effective if there is support from the international community. Depending on what a specific task involves, such international assistance can be provided through cooperation with either the governments or local civil societies.

Recommendations for Specific Activities

In the framework of general activity areas and based on the study findings we offer the recommendations for specific activities in order to address SALW-related problems in Kvemo Kartli. Some of these recommendations refer to steps that need to be taken in the whole of Georgia, as working in a single region will not likely bring about results, while some recommendations envisage the specifics of Kvemo Kartli. The recommendations are grouped according to the major actors who need to take action. These actors are Georgian national authorities, regional and district authorities and international organizations.

National authorities need to:

- Set up a national coordination agency whose functions will include coordinating an action plan on SALW controls among the state institutions, as well as looking at these issues at an inter-governmental level;
- Reorganize the police, enhance the police efficiency and public trust in the police parallel to the establishment of the rule of law;
- Set up a national system for the registration and control of weapons by a collaborative action of the Interior Ministry (including the police and border guard agencies), Security Ministry, intelligence service and other agencies that possess weapons;
- Ensure a safe and strictly supervised storage of weapons owned by relevant state structures;
- Ensure state control on the certification of weapons manufactured by weapons-producing enterprises;
- Abide by the Law on Export and Import Control of Arms;
- Develop the documentation describing the procedures for the production, storage and transfer of weapons;
- Enhance the effectiveness of border guard services;
- Develop and implement ethnic policies compliant to democratic values that will encourage confidence-building between different ethnic groups and a full integration of minorities into the civic and political life;
- Enhance the population's legal understanding of the issues related to the negative impacts of illicit storage, production, sales and transit of SALW;
- Support the peaceful resolution of conflicts in the country;
- Support the closure of Russian military bases on Georgian territory.

Regional and district authorities and law-enforcement agencies of Kvemo Kartli need to:

- Ensure ethnic minorities' higher awareness of the major developments in Georgia's political, economic and cultural life and of the elite participating and leading these developments;
- Encourage the participation of ethnic minorities in Georgia's political, economic and cultural life and consider their needs and opinions in these processes;
- Encourage the participation of youth of different ethnic background in the implementation of educational, social and cultural programmes;
- Support the development of the region's civil society sector including local NGOs, media and private business;
- Raise the population's legal awareness in the regions that will lead to the acknowledgment by the population of the SALW proliferation problem.

International donor organizations

As was said before, international support can be effected through direct cooperation with the governmental organizations or through collaboration with local NGOs. Below we will first offer the recommendations that refer to the relations with the authorities. It should also be noted that the local civil society too can have its role in the implementation of the programmes which encompass providing expert technical assistance to state institutions and awareness raising of public officials. The international community can:

- Provide general technical assistance (expert advice) to various law enforcement bodies during the reform process;
- Provide technical assistance to law enforcement bodies in order for the latter to fulfill more effectively the function of weapons control;
- Provide technical assistance in planning and implementing weapons collection and destruction programmes;
- Provide training to high officials of customs and border control agencies in order to ensure better border and customs control;
- Provide training to the police in accordance with the best practices in democratic countries;
- Provide training to and build capacity of relevant officials in safe storage and management of weapons;
- Support the closure of Russian military bases in Georgia;
- Support the peaceful resolution of conflicts with the involvement of strong actors such as USA, Council of Europe, UN and OSCE in the negotiations;
- Support the establishment of a national focal point on SALW issues recommended by the UN Plan of Action, which will serve as a coordinating structure between law-enforcement bodies and address the issues of SALW proliferation.

At the same time, the international community can support the efforts of local NGOs and the media. It should be noted that over the past years the Georgian NGOs and media have gained considerable experience in curbing the illicit sales and proliferation of SALW. The civil sector can play an important role in the activities aimed at strengthening trust and informing society, improving communications between the authorities, international community and citizens. In particular, we recommend that the following activities be encouraged:

- Organizing international seminars on illicit SALW proliferation and encouraging capacity building in the governmental sector through involving civil servants in training programmes;
- Assisting donors in better understanding public concerns through organizing public meetings;
- Organizing public debates on SALW-related problems;
- Ensuring local media's involvement in the debates;
- Raising the awareness of the youth on SALW issues and encouraging their participation in the debates;

- Cooperating closely with local governments and MPs from constituencies to ensure that SALW-related issues get more attention;
- Initiating various activities to enhance the local population's legal knowledge;
- Carrying out activities aimed at building confidence among various ethnic groups;
- Encouraging the local population to learn the Georgian language through implementing language programmes;
- Providing ethnic minorities with access to Georgian media;
- Providing assistance from central NGOs to local organizations to ensure the development of civil society in the region.

