Arms: code of conduct on exports. 1st annual report

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PURPOSE : To present an annual report as required by the provisions of the European Union Code of Conduct on Arms Exports of 1998. CONTENT : The report is structured in four parts. First reviewed are issues surrounding the practical application of the Code. These are followed by the guidelines that have been adopted by the Conventional Arms Exports Working Group (COARM) to enhance the application of the Code. Priorities for co-ordinated action in the future are then identified. The Report concludes by providing statistics on Member States' conventional arms exports. - The adoption of the Code ushered in a new phase in the EU development of a common approach to arms exports, as a component of the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy. The Code sets high minimum standards for the management of, and restraint in, conventional arms transfers by all Member States. The review covers all aspects of the Code, and identifies improvements that may be needed. -Member States' experiences have been positive. The Code has increased mutual understanding of conventional arms both directly through the circulation of denial notifications and consultations, and indirectly through contributing to a culture of greater openness. Member States have engaged in active consultations on specific export licensing issues. This practical co-operation contributes to a convergence of arms exports policies and procedures. Non-Member countries have declared support for the principles of the Code. -Member States have exchanged views on a number of matters relating to practical implementation, including the Code's legal status, the possibility that the denial notification system could be overloaded if appropriate thresholds are not set, particularly when end-users are private persons, and interpretation of arms exports embargoes. A Working Group under COARM has discussed the finalisation of a common European list of military Equipment. -The Working Group has adopted guidelines on a number of matters, including the practical workings of denial notifications. -Key areas have been identified for consideration and action in the new term. These include the finalisation of the common European List of military equipment, which is a top priority. Also included is the development of a common definition of "essentially identical transaction".