

Press release: New partnership aims to strengthen conventional arms control in the Commonwealth

The UK's Counter Proliferation and Arms Control Centre and the Commonwealth Secretariat have agreed a new partnership to strengthen cooperation, coordination and information-sharing on conventional arms control among Commonwealth countries. The Conventional Arms Control in the Commonwealth Initiative will provide unique tools to Commonwealth countries to support national and regional implementation of measures to tackle the illicit arms trade, in line with international obligations and standards.

The Secretary-General of the Commonwealth, Patricia Scotland, commented on the timeliness of the initiative:

Our member countries have expressed the need for assistance to help implement international obligations in relation to arms control, and the Conventional Arms Control in the Commonwealth Initiative will certainly be welcome. Member countries have stressed the devastating consequences of illegal arms trade on development, by prolonging violence and undermining human rights. Cooperation between Commonwealth countries can make an important difference in tackling illicit arms trade.

The Rt Hon Sir Alan Duncan, the Foreign Office Minister with responsibility for defence and international security said:

The effective control of arms is a goal that unites us all because the potential consequences of their misuse are so grave. The UK is committed to playing a leading role in global efforts to regulate the arms trade in order to stop these weapons from falling into the hands of terrorists and criminals, who use them to undermine international peace and security and drive the illegal wildlife trade.

We are delighted to provide nearly half a million pounds to fund this initiative and to join together with other Commonwealth countries in the fight against illicit arms trafficking.

This is in line with one of the four main goals for the Commonwealth Heads of Government summit taking place in the UK this week, to build a more secure future through increased multilateral

action and cooperation.

The Conventional Arms Control in the Commonwealth Initiative will be delivered by the Commonwealth Secretariat, in conjunction with the Small Arms Survey, a Geneva based global centre of excellence on small arms and armed violence. It will facilitate the exchange of knowledge and expertise on measures to address the illicit arms trade, take stock of progress achieved in implementing international and regional arms control instruments and provide assistance on legal reform and legislative drafting.