

PRESS RELEASE FROM COALITION OF EUROPEAN NGOS INCLUDING SAFERWORLD, OXFAM, PAX CHRISTI AND AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

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FLIMSY CONTROLS FAIL TO PREVENT EU COUNTRIES SELLING ARMS TO HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSERS

EU arms controls are not strong enough to prevent weapons from falling into the wrong hands, a coalition of 55 European NGOs warned today. They said there were major loopholes in the EU Code of Conduct on Arms Exports, which must be strengthened without delay.

The call comes as the NGOs launch a report called 'Taking Control: The Case for a More Effective EU Code of Conduct' (available on www.amnesty-eu.org from 00.01 GMT 30 September or contact the Amnesty International EU Office for advance copies).

"The EU Code is a first step, but clearly it is not meeting its objective of ensuring responsible export controls across Europe. EU states are still supplying arms to countries that abuse human rights and suffer internal instability," said Dick Oosting, Director of Amnesty International's EU Office.

"The EU talks a good game, but the fact is that its member states are still exporting defense equipment when they shouldn't. This report sets out what needs to happen to prevent these abuses." said Henry Smith of Saferworld.

Between 1994 & 2001 the EU exported nearly US \$ 10 billion of arms to developing countries: approximately one third of all the arms deliveries made to these countries. New research by the Control Arms campaign has highlighted a number of recent cases that show how EU arms export controls are being bypassed to allow European arms and components to end up in the hands of human rights abusers. These include:

- **German engines bypass EU embargoes to China and Myanmar/Burma :** The German government's export control system has not prevented Deutz AG diesel engines from being incorporated into Armoured Personnel Carriers in countries which are themselves subject to an EU arms embargo (China) or which have subsequently exported the vehicles to an embargoed destination (Ukraine to Myanmar/Burma).
- **EU components in helicopters in Nepal:** India manufactures attack helicopters in close cooperation with the French company Eurocopter. India has subsequently exported helicopters to Nepal, despite the misuse of helicopters against civilians and insurgents by Nepalese security forces. Components or subsystems from other EU countries have also been supplied for these helicopters.
- **Production of Austrian military small arms shifted to Malaysia:** Austrian gun maker Steyr-Mannlicher has signed an agreement with the Malaysian government to manufacture its military weapons. Malaysia has aggressive export plans for these arms which would not be subject to the EU Code.

These cases demonstrate that despite the adoption of the EU Code of Conduct on Arms Exports in 1998, export controls across the EU still contain many weaknesses and loopholes. A review of the Code, now underway, is due to be completed under the Dutch Presidency of the EU, but the NGOs say that there does not appear to be the political will to implement the changes needed to make a difference.

“For far too long the EU Code of Conduct has failed to stop arms from going where they shouldn’t be allowed. This new research illustrates the urgent need for the EU to control its arms trade in a responsible manner. Every year we see hundreds of thousands of people killed by arms. Europe should be a model for the rest of the world to follow”, said Justin Forsyth, Director of Policy at Oxfam.

The NGOs recommend strengthening the Code to include:

- **Tightening the Code criteria:** The present ambiguous wording of the Code criteria allows for widely differing interpretation by Member States. Tighter language would help prevent member states from making irresponsible export licensing decisions.
- **Regulating licensed production overseas (LPO):** All LPO agreements involving EU companies should be subjected, in their entirety, to export licensing procedures.
- **Applying the Code to weapons components:** The Code must be rigorously applied to the export of components and sub systems as well as complete weapons.
- **Strengthening arms embargoes:** EU arms and components must be prevented from finding their way to embargoed destinations, either directly or through third countries.
- **Ensuring all EU members publish annual reports on arms exports:** Enhanced transparency of EU arms export decisions would reduce the likelihood of member states exporting irresponsibly. All member states should produce public annual reports.

The Control Arms campaign, which uncovered these cases, is arguing for a legally binding International Arms Trade Treaty. Strengthening the EU Code of Conduct would represent a major step towards this goal.

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Notes for editors:

- The report ‘Taking Control: The case for a more effective EU Code of Conduct’ is being launched in The Hague at 10.30 am today, Wednesday 29 September, 2004.
- A conference between NGOs and EU officials on the review of the Code of Conduct will take place on Thursday 30 September. The event is hosted by the Dutch Presidency of the EU.
- Details of the case studies gathered by the Control Arms Campaign and the report itself are available on www.amnesty-eu.org