

Executive Summary

The Arms and Ammunition Management Validation System (AAMVS) project stemmed from the realisation that multiple stakeholders would benefit from having information and assurances about the stockpile management practices of a state or end user in another country. This is particularly relevant to the field of arms transfer control: export control authorities conduct diversion risk assessments aimed at understanding the potential risks associated with an export, but many states lack the capability or motivation to effectively assess and communicate their abilities and shortcomings to stakeholders. The AAMVS project aimed to consider the possibility of adopting the use of conformity assessments – widely used in international commerce – to address this shortcoming.

The European Union (EU) tasked the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining's Ammunition Management Advisory Team (GICHD-AMAT) with exploring the feasibility of, and identifying a potential path for, developing a system to validate arms and ammunition management practices. The mandate provided through the two EU Council Decisions¹ allowed for the concept, as well as the potential end output, to be interpreted broadly. The first phase examined the feasibility of developing an AAMVS. It determined that there were no insurmountable obstacles to prevent its development, but that a clearer picture of the AAMVS would be needed to assess political will. The second phase, and the focus of the following paper, sought to provide clarity on the AAMVS and develop a pathway forward.

The development of a self-assessment tool was an important step towards creating the AAMVS. The tool provides a standardised approach to analysing the capability of a state's armed forces to effectively manage their stockpiles. It also enables this to be achieved without the resources and levels of cooperation needed to allow requesting stakeholders to conduct on-site assessments – a key lesson learned during the implementation phase. The tool, which received positive reviews during the project validation phase, will serve as a key feature of the AAMVS, but can also be used separately in bilateral information exchanges; it therefore already provides the community with a means to support diversion risk assessment processes.

In addition, this phase of the project saw the development of a path for creating the 'system' component of the AAMVS (see Chapter 1). The path adopts a measured approach that seeks to tailor and pilot a regional AAMVS while promoting the system not only to other regions but also globally. This approach takes into account key findings learned while implementing the project. Firstly, the AAMVS's value lies most clearly, though not exclusively, in export control.² The diversion risk assessments required by the Arms Trade Treaty and other regional agreements constitute the most significant gap for the AAMVS to fill. Secondly, despite interest, the political will to create a global validation system is currently lacking. Instead, regional systems can demonstrate the value of a validation system and prove to be the best way of promoting its benefits. Thirdly, a number of validation and system options (outlined in Chapter 2) need to be considered. Greater feedback from key stakeholders will therefore be required to ensure it fits their needs and processes.

This solution acknowledges the challenges that lay ahead and recommends an approach that takes both small and manageable steps towards the development of a global system. It is important to demonstrate the useability of the tool and process; the more accepted the tool becomes, the more potential it has – particularly as increased efficiency can ease the burden on exporting and importing states. A more realistic approach is therefore to try to develop a validation system within the working practices of a smaller group of like-minded states – subject to legally binding requirements – and, ideally, to have that group push for a globally recognised system.

This phase, and the outputs detailed in the following three chapters, moved the AAMVS concept from theory into practice. The tool can now be utilised and, once tested, will be ready to support national efforts to examine stockpile management capabilities as part of their diversion risk assessments. It can therefore already serve as a valuable tool for states wishing to incorporate it into their export licensing processes. This phase also offers a clear possible pathway for creating a multinational AAMVS – one that has already demonstrated its potential to achieve greater efficiencies in the transfer processes of both importing and exporting states. A number of challenges remain before an AAMVS system becomes feasible; however, the path forward has become clearer, and – with increased participation from key stakeholders – the creation of a voluntary validation system of arms and ammunition management practices is a possibility.

¹ Council of the European Union, Council Decision (CFSP) 2020/979 of 7 July 2020 in Support of the Development of an Internationally Recognized System for the Validation of Arms and Ammunition Management According to Open International Standards (July 8, 2020) and CFSP 2021/2075, Council Decision (CFSP) 2021/2075 of 25 November 2021 amending Decision (CFSP) 2020/979 in support of the development of an internationally recognised system for the validation of arms and ammunition management according to open international standards

² The system's relevance to export control was intentionally minimised in the study so as not to affect feedback from stakeholders in other fields.