

Western Balkans SALW Control Roadmap MPTF


United Nations Multi-Partner Trust Fund in support of the implementation of the Roadmap for a sustainable solution to the illegal possession, misuse and trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons and their ammunition in the Western Balkans



PROJECT DOCUMENT

Project title: Strengthening the Capacities of the Forensics and Crime Scene Investigation System to Improve Criminal Justice Response to SALW	
Targeted jurisdiction(s): North Macedonia	
Participating organizations: United Nations Development Programme	
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Implementing partners: Ministry of Interior of North Macedonia	
Project number from MPTF-O Gateway (if existing project): N/A	
Relevant SDG targets: SDG 16.1, 16.4, 16.6, 16.a; SDG 5.2.	
Project duration (in months): 21 Months	Total amount: US\$ 1,149,180
Anticipated start date: 01 January 2024	Sources of funding:
Anticipated end date: 30 September 2025	1. UN MPTF: US\$ 1,149,180
Actual start date: 18 December 2023	2. Other sources of funding N/A
Actual end date: 30 September 2025	• Government: US\$ ____
	• UN Organization: US\$ ____
Brief project overview:	
<p>The overall objective of the project is to modernize the forensic and crime scene investigation (CSI) units in North Macedonia to improve the quality of handling crime scenes and collecting of evidence thus leading to better investigations, strengthened bilateral/ international exchange of evidence and a more efficient criminal justice system. The project interventions will upgrade ballistic facilities and operations of MoI's Forensics Department, as well as enhance analytical, technical and investigative capacities of the CSI units. In addition, the project will contain a gender perspective dedicated to preventing gender-based violence, focusing in particular on gender sensitization of CSI staff, as well as improving the tracking of domestic violence cases that involve firearms through a separate module in the Police Information Management System (IMS) of North Macedonia.</p>	
Contribution to Roadmap Goals: 1, 2, 3, and 4	
Project Gender Marker Score (1, 2, 3 or N/A): 2	

Names and signatures of the Participating UN Organizations

Armen Grigoryan Resident Representative UNDP North Macedonia	Signature:  Date: 18-Oct-2024
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Description of the project

This project is part of broader effort to solve in a systemic and holistic approach to the most pertinent issues of improving SALW-related practices in North Macedonia and the region. The project activities build upon the implemented and ongoing SALW projects in the country to achieve synergies and to allow for more coherent and result-oriented investigations. The proposed project builds on already implemented activities and identified risks, needs and priorities of the country, as identified by the national authorities, national and international experts, as well as the National SALW Commission during a meeting held in March 2023, in facilitation with UNDP. This project was also specifically designed to complement the efforts of the national institutions to improve the capabilities of the forensic department in the Ministry of Interior through the “Improvement of Data and SALW Collection Practices and SALW Related Investigations” bridging project in North Macedonia, funded by the Western Balkans SALW Control Roadmap MPTF.

The project will improve the analytical and investigation capacities of the forensic authorities in North Macedonia in order to increase the speed and reliability of criminal investigations in firearms-related cases, with the final goal of improving the criminal justice response to SALW and creating more violence-resilient communities. The overall objective of the project is to modernize the forensic and Crime Scene Investigation (CSI) units within the Ministry of Interior with the aim of improving the quality of handling crime scenes and collecting of evidence that will lead to better investigation, provide the essentials to enable bilateral/international exchange of evidence and enabling a more efficient criminal justice system. The project interventions will help the processing, safeguarding and preventing contamination of evidence, i.e. as a result of the increased technological capacities of the forensic and CSI units, the investigations will be carried out in shorter timeframes and criminal proceedings will be completed with a higher success rate and lead to a well-established custody chain as well acceptable/reliable evidence that can be presented during court cases leading to efficient adjudication. In addition, the project will contain a gender perspective dedicated to preventing gender-based violence, focusing in particular on gender sensitization of CSI staff in cooperation with a local CSO, as well as improving the tracking of domestic violence cases that involve SALW through a separate module in the Police Information Management System (IMS). The development of the Police IMS was previously supported by the Funding Windows through the regional project coordinated by UNDP SEESAC, while its implementation and expansion have been supported by the Western Balkans MPTF through the Bridging project.

The project activities are embedded in the broader Roadmap for a sustainable solution to the illegal possession, misuse and trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW)/firearms and their ammunition in the Western Balkans and their implementation will contribute to fulfilment of its core vision, building a safer and more peaceful region. The rationale of the project strengthens the implementation of the National SALW Strategy 2022-2024 and was developed and agreed with the National SALW Commission. The project is in line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2021-2025 (UNSDCF) and UNDP North Macedonia Country Programme Document and the Republic of North Macedonia, namely the objectives under Outcome 4: Good Governance and outputs 4.1 and 4.3.

Contribution to the Roadmap Goals:

The project contributes to Roadmap goals 1, 2, 3 and 4.

Goal 1. *By 2023, ensure that arms control legislation is in place, fully harmonized with the EU regulatory framework and other related international obligations, and standardized across the region. The project will ensure standardization of procedures and practices in the area of FAE investigations. It will support exchange of good practices to this end, with a specific focus on the areas defined in the Roadmap.*

Goal 2. *By 2024, ensure that arms control policies and practices in the Western Balkans are evidence based and intelligence led. In this respect, the project will aim to strengthen capabilities for data collection, sharing and analysis, through envisaged support to the ballistic and CSI experts. Through improved analysis and evidence management, the project will aim to prevent or deter illicit arms trafficking. This will also be supported through improved institutional capacities, and provision of specialized equipment and training. In addition, the project will integrate the gender perspective in FAE-related evidence-based processing, specifically through raising gender awareness of CSI units, and through the integration of the GBV module within the Police information management system.*

Goal 3. *By 2024, significantly reduce illicit flows of firearms, ammunition and explosives (FAE) into, within and beyond the Western Balkans. To this end, the project will work towards preventing trafficking (smuggling, illicit trade and transit) of FAE through improved processes, equipment and training of targeted law enforcement units.*

Goal 4. *By 2024, significantly reduce the supply, demand and misuse of firearms through increased awareness, education, outreach and advocacy. The project's contribution to Goal 4 is seen through its activities that aim at strengthening partnerships for advocacy, outreach and messaging multipliers. In collaboration with a selected CSO, the project will educate CSI units on gender-based violence and gender sensitivities. It will also focus on tackling the misuses of firearms in violence against women, domestic violence and other forms of gender-based violence. This would then lead to increase in confidence in security institutions as providers of adequate and equal safety for all through community-society-regional outreach activities.*

1. Project Background (situation analysis)

The Western Balkans, including North Macedonia, remain a volatile region, where armed violence is still a regular occurrence. The recent crime trends, including the dynamics of trafficking in human beings, weapons, ammunition and explosives, the rapid advancement of technology, and the difficult history of armed violence in the region, as well as the war in Ukraine, have led to increased need to provide systematic and consistent approach to firearms-related security threats and to promote genuine partnership between citizens and the police. In this regard, well-coordinated interventions that directly contribute to strengthening the analytical and investigation capabilities of the forensic departments and improving criminal justice response are much needed and ensure an integrated and coherent approach in the fight against illegal SALW. Furthermore, UNDP has not previously supported North Macedonia with a specific project dedicated to forensics, therefore the system is in need of adequate modernization and standardization.

1. Gaps and challenges – Investigative capacities of the Forensic Department

The **Forensic Department in the Ministry of Interior** of the Republic of North Macedonia, previously known as Department for Criminal Technical Examinations and Forensics (OKTIV), plays a key role in the analysis and investigation of evidence related to the misuse of small arms and light weapons. The proper collection, documentation and analysis of firearms-related evidence is crucial for the success of criminal proceedings, and thus strengthening the capacities of this Department will directly improve the criminal justice response to SALW.

The Forensic Department reports on examination of firearms and ammunition, traces from firearms ignition, provides evidence used in criminal events within the territory of the Republic of North Macedonia. The skills of the forensic scientist along with the equipment/instruments they have at their disposal are paramount for effective firearm investigations. As such, forensics has a special role in firearm related investigations and is a major contributor in combating serious and organized crime as there is direct correlation between the quality of the forensic evidence and the adjudication of cases of illicit trafficking, possession, and misuse of SALW.

In forensics investigation of firearms and ballistics, it is important to use a suitable shooting range that will allow proper testing of the evidence. At the request of the Ministry of Interior, UNDP SEESAC developed an assessment of the ballistic laboratory in North Macedonia¹, which included the development of a ballistic and safety project for the **Indoor Shooting Range in the new forensic building**. As part of the new forensic building located in the MoI compound, a separate area was designated as an indoor shooting range that will replace the current facility for testing of ballistic evidence. As the project for construction of the new building involved only the construction activities and not the equipment of laboratory facilities, it is necessary to provide sufficient protective and functional equipment to ensure the full functioning of the shooting range. These interventions are necessary to enable testing of ballistic evidence, contributing to a faster and more reliable analysis and examination of forensic materials in criminal investigations, while at the same time providing the much-needed protection of the forensic staff involved in the testing. It must be noted that ballistic evidence plays a key role in criminal proceedings that involve SALW, therefore the forensic laboratory requires suitable conditions for testing and examination of this evidence. This will be achieved through a modern shooting range, which will enable faster and more reliable examination of ballistic evidence.

The ballistic laboratory is certified with the ISO/IEC 17025 certification and the interventions noted below will help maintain this accreditation in future, as well as to obtain accreditation for new testing methods, while providing a safe and secure working environment for the forensic staff.

¹ UNDP SEESAC (2023). Report on the Conducted Assessment of the Current Conditions, General Recommendations and Work Plan for the Ballistic Laboratory Project of the MoI of North Macedonia

The shooting range must have an almost ideal ballistic bullet trap, either mobile or fixed. A fixed firing line for firing firearms is located on the part of the shooting range facing the ballistic bullet trap. The free space on the existing firing line outside the firing point should be secured in terms of preventing the passage and access of people to the firing zone during shooting, the main and side entrances should be locked before the start of test firing with live ammunition.



Figure 1. Example of safety baffles in an indoor shooting range

A special focus must be placed on the safety and security of employees during work in the new ballistic laboratory since this is the most important part of the ballistic laboratory's technical and safety study. Indoor shooting ranges must be equipped with safety baffles that serve as protection of the ceiling and installations in the event of a projectile or its parts flying out or ricocheting.

In order to ensure the safety and security of forensic staff, it is necessary to install a ballistic side door for entrance to the room, as well as ballistic doors and windows for the control rooms inside the shooting range. This can be accomplished through ballistic protection (armoured panels, armoured rubber or construction partitions made of hard material) that will protect against ricocheting of projectiles or a malfunction/explosion of the firearm being tested.

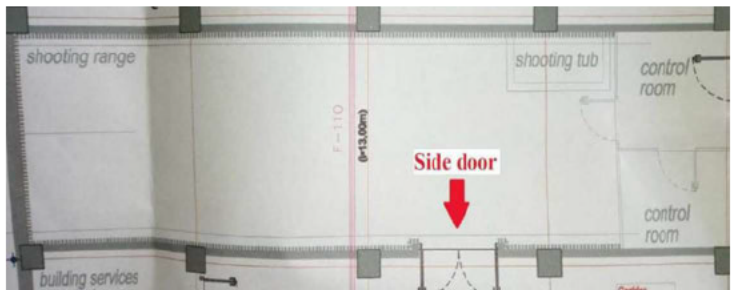


Figure 2. Plan of the shooting range with the view of the side door

The proposed project aims to address these identified gaps in order to ensure full functioning of the indoor shooting range in the testing of ballistic evidence. The proposed interventions will contribute to a strengthened criminal justice response to cases of possession, misuse and trafficking of SALW, but will also ensure the safety and security of forensic staff, in accordance with Goals 1, 2 and 3 of the Roadmap.

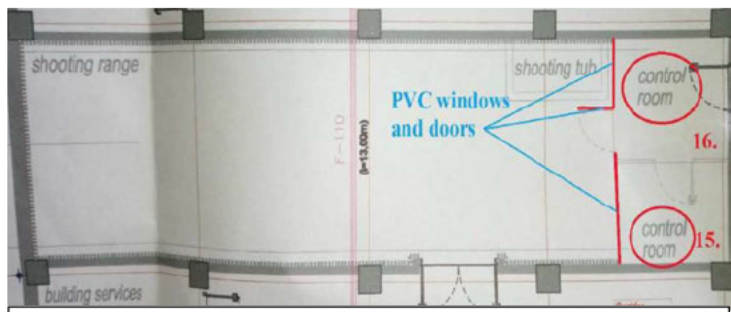


Figure 3. Plan of the area behind the firing line

The equipment provided will also enable the continued improvement, as well as further accreditation of the ballistic laboratory of the Ministry of Interior. While the ballistic laboratory is currently certified with the ISO/IEC 17025 accreditation for two methods used in ballistic testing, the interventions under this project will contribute to further accreditation for new testing methods, such as the testing of viability of firearms and ammunition.

Further to the gaps outlined above, the shooting range has the necessary ventilation systems only for extraction of the air, i.e. gunpowder gases and gunpowder dust. It is necessary to upgrade the ventilation system and install a system for the supply of clean air into the premises of the shooting range.

In addition, the indoor shooting range is located in the new building of the Mol of North Macedonia on Dimche Mircev Street, where the surroundings of the indoor shooting range include a residential building (1) and two houses (2 and 3). With the existing sound insulation and the distance of the indoor shooting range from the mentioned buildings, the noise levels will be within the permitted limits.

To improve the sound insulation, it is possible to add sound-damping panels on top of the existing insulation, which will reduce the noise to an even lower level. The ventilation system is such that, by its construction, it always transmits sound along the length of the ventilation system, so the rooms that are connected to the indoor shooting range on the same ventilation line will have higher noise levels compared to other rooms.

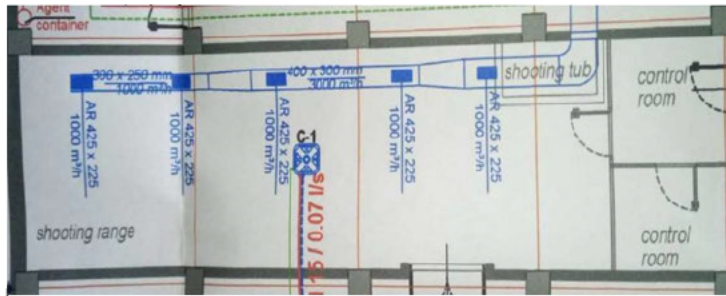


Figure 4. Plan of the shooting range with the view of the ventilation system



Figure 5. View of the shooting range location and its surroundings

2. Gaps and challenges – Investigative capacities of the Crime Scene Investigation (CSI) system

On the other hand, the Crime Scene Investigation (CSI) system of the Public Security Bureau of North Macedonia needs to be improved, in order to obtain accreditation of CSI in line with the international ISO/IEC 17020 standard, which includes requirements for various types of bodies that conduct inspections, surveys, and risk assessments, as well to operate with specialized equipment for a higher-quality and more efficient work. The ISO/IEC 17020 standard should be implemented as the standard used to achieve accreditation for activities other than the testing part of the forensic process, e.g., work at the crime scene. In this regard, UNDP SEESAC has prepared a Needs Assessment Report on Capacities for Crime Scene Investigation of the Public Security Bureau², which includes concrete recommendations for improvement. The proposed project aims to address the most urgent recommendations in order to strengthen the investigative capacities of the CSI system, as listed below.

The Mol’s CSI system currently employs around 260 staff members in 28 CSI units. From an organizational point of view, the 28 CSI units at the regional and local levels fall under the Sectors of Interior (SVR), and the control over their operations and human resource management is under the competence of SVRs. In the Headquarters (Public Security Bureau), no organizational unit is responsible exclusively for CSI, but even Forensic Department employees in Public Security Bureau do not carry out CSI activities, they provide expert-advisory support in specific (exceptional) cases at the prosecutor’s request. Employees of the Forensic Department are in close cooperation with CSI colleagues, especially when it comes to mentoring and

² SEESAC (2023). Needs Assessment Report on Capacities for Crime Scene Investigation of the Public Security Bureau of North Macedonia.

consultation in the area of their expertise, evidence collection and adequate protection against contamination of the samples provided on the crime investigation sites.

The implemented organizational structure provides the focus for the Forensic Department employees, to be on analysis and expert examination of the evidentiary material submitted by the competent services.

The physical resources currently in place for CSI training purposes should be improved to meet the needs for an advanced CSI training program, that will take advantage of modern training solutions, such as a **training and simulation facility** where CSI staff can practice their work. It is necessary to equip a simulation facility in the Police Training Center in Idrizovo with the same equipment that is used by the operational CSI Unit, in order to ensure adequate and timely preparation of all CSI staff around North Macedonia. Such facilities exist in the Republic of Serbia, which can be used to exchange experiences and knowledge between the two countries. Additional training should be provided to CSI staff on the benefits and use of the facility in different types of crimes where firearms have been used and for different criminal offences.



Figure 6. An example of training in a CSI simulation facility

The forensic education of newly recruited staff currently relies on mentoring and ad-hoc training courses, without the suitable space for practicing of methods in a controlled environment. The personnel of an ISO/IEC 17020 accredited inspection body need to be trained to carry out inspection activities defined in their job description and to apply concrete methods in the appropriate inspection field.

The establishment of the training and simulation facility will provide the adequate space and modern equipment that would facilitate training activities for CSI staff. The proposed project aims to prepare and equip a training and simulation facility within the Ministry of Interior, which will serve as the primary training ground for current and future CSI officers for investigating SALW-related crime scenes. The training and simulation facility will be embedded in the training system of the MoI and will help CSI officers with practicing the use of investigation methods and tools in the field.



Figure 7. An example of the contents of a typical CSI kit

The CSI units lack the necessary specialized modern **CSI kits and other CSI equipment**, necessary for applying advanced CSI methods, as well as Gun Shot Residue kits. The universal CSI kit consists of a wide variety of tools and consumables that are used in the daily work of a CSI technician for obtaining and preserving evidence. The ballistic and other evidence used in criminal proceedings for possession, misuse and trafficking of SALW are collected with the use of these tools and materials. In order to avoid possible contamination of evidence and jeopardizing of criminal processes, the tools must be regularly maintained and cleaned. It is therefore optimal that every CSI technician has their

own kit, however at the moment there is a significant lack of such equipment. The project proposal aims to bridge this gap and provide sufficient CSI kits for unimpeded functioning of crime scene investigations that involve firearms. Strengthening the investigation capacities for cases involving firearms, which will be achieved through procuring this much needed equipment, is one of the main objectives of the proposed project.

IT equipment is on an average low level, and there are not enough personal computers (including scanners and printers) in place nor laptops (for terrain use). The existing computers are old and outdated, thereby jeopardizing adequate documenting of crime scenes. No specialized software packages for processing the CSI documentation (photos, diagrams, videos) are used. The proposed project will aim to address this gap by providing necessary IT equipment to the CSI system.

The identified gaps and challenges in the functioning of the Crime Scene Investigation (CSI) system significantly impair the ability of the CSI teams around the country to properly investigate and analyse cases involving SALW. Without the proper and timely collection, preservation and analysis of firearms-related evidence, the investigations and activities conducted by other units in the law enforcement system may result futile. This is especially true in regards of criminal proceedings that involve SALW, where forensic evidence is often presented as the only or the main means for determining guilt or innocence. As such, forensic evidence is highly regarded by judicial panels and is often subject to intense scrutiny throughout the judicial proceedings. Illicit Arms Trafficking will by nature require bilateral or regional cooperation and might include exchange of evidence.

Hence, addressing these gaps in the process of crime scene investigations will be exceptionally beneficial as it will directly aid adjudication of cases of illicit trafficking, possession, and misuse of SALW and improve criminal justice response. These activities will complement the strengthening of the organizational capacities and human resources of the CSI Units, as well as the preparation of the necessary SOPs and training curricula, planned by UNDP SEESAC. The equipment of a simulation and training facility, in combination with the developed training curricula, will provide extensive training opportunities for improving the technical skills of current and future CSI officers. The provision of relevant CSI kits and IT equipment is expected to strengthen the investigative capacities of the CSI system, and together with the developed SOPs will ensure a faster and more reliable criminal response to cases involving small arms and light weapons.

These interventions are fully aligned with Goals 1, 2 3 and 4 of the Roadmap and directly aid in achieving the set objectives of the National SALW Strategy 2022 – 2024³, in particular goals 1.4, 2.3, 3.1 and 3.2. The activities outlined in this project proposal were highlighted as key priorities at the latest meeting of the Commission on SALW held on 31 March 2023, accepted by the President and members of the Commission. The goal of the Ministry of Interior to fulfil accreditation of the CSI system in accordance with the ISO/IEC 17020 standard will facilitate international exchange and effective utilization of forensic evidence retrieved in one country in a criminal investigation and a legal proceeding within another country. In addition, in accordance with the experience from other countries in the region, an enhanced forensic and crime scene investigation system will be a key priority of Chapter 24 – Justice, Freedom and Security of the EU acquis.

3. Gaps and challenges – Use of firearms in the perpetration of gender-based violence

Unfortunately, cases of gender-based violence, including domestic violence and sexual violence, are often committed with the use and threat of firearms. A prior analysis⁴ by UNDP MK on the cases of femicides in the Republic of North Macedonia, prepared as part of the regional Funding Windows project for support of the implementation of the Roadmap, has shown that 53.5% of murders of women between the period 2008 – 2016 were performed with firearms. The study notes that most of the women killed were previously exposed to more than one form of gender-based violence. Therefore, a determined and unequivocal approach is needed to combat gender-based violence committed with firearms.

³ The National Strategy for Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons is available on the following link:
https://mvr.gov.mk/Upload/Editor_Upload/Стратегија%20за%20МЛО%20и%20АП%202022-2024%20МК.pdf

⁴ UNDP North Macedonia (2021). Analysis of Cases of Femicides - Murders of Women in the Republic of North Macedonia

As reported by UNDP SEESAC⁵, the misuse of SALW is not only restricted to fatal events, since it is frequently used as a tool to inflict psychological violence, emotional harm, intimidation, rape, sexual abuse, coercion and other forms of violence which can have severe consequences on victims, but which are usually both under-reported and under researched. Furthermore, while men are more often at risk of firearm misuse by their non-intimate acquaintances or persons they may not know, women are more at risk in a domestic context, from their intimate partners.

There is a need for a systematic solution for collection and sharing of data related to cases of domestic violence that involve firearms. The project proposal will develop a specific module to the previously implemented Police Information Management System (IMS) in the Ministry of Interior, that will focus on collection and analysis of data related to cases of domestic violence where firearms have been used.

The objective of these interventions is to strengthen the criminal justice response to the prevalence of domestic violence and sexual violence with the use of firearms in North Macedonia. These activities are in line with Goal 4 of the Roadmap, namely the target *Increase awareness and reduce the misuses of firearms in violence against women, domestic violence and other forms of gender based violence*.

4. Complementarity with previous projects

The proposed project builds upon the previous and ongoing projects that support the implementation of the Roadmap in North Macedonia, funded through the Western Balkans SALW Control Roadmap MPTF and the Funding Windows.

The Bridging project “Improvement of Data and SALW Collection Practices and SALW Related Investigations”, funded by the Western Balkans MPTF. This project started in January 2023 with a duration until December 2023. The objective of this project is to further improve data collection, analysis, and dissemination of information on SALW, to increase the speed and reliability of forensic investigations and procure the necessary equipment, thus contributing to the fight against illegal arms trafficking (IAT) and illegal possession of SALW.

One of the main outputs of the Bridging project is the procurement of a scanning electronic microscope with an energy-dispersion detector (SEM-EDD), which will aid in the analysis of micro-traces of firearms ignition by the Forensics Department in the Ministry of Interior. This device has been delivered to the Ministry of Interior, with training planned for August 2023.

The objectives of the proposed project entirely complement the activities on strengthening the capacities of the Forensics Department of the abovementioned bridging project, thereby ensuring sustainability of the results achieved through this project. The provision of the Desktop SEM-EDD is the first contribution to the Forensic Department of North Macedonia within the Western Balkans MPTF, and it tackles the most urgent issue of improving the analysis of gunshot residue by the ballistic laboratory. The upgrade of the Shooting Range and improvement of the analytical capacities of the Crime Scene Investigations (CSI) Units will complement this contribution, thereby significantly strengthening the investigative and analytical capacities of the forensic and CSI system in the Ministry of Interior on all levels, thus ensuring a better and more sustainable criminal justice response in the cases of illicit trafficking, possession, and misuse of SALW. Having in mind the scope and duration of the project proposal, it is estimated that some of the identified gaps will remain unaddressed with this project proposal, such as providing an enhanced ventilation system and installing heating in the shooting range, as well as the procurement of necessary laboratory furniture for the ballistic laboratory and video surveillance for the evidence rooms, as well as mobile CSI laboratories. Considering the Ministry’s commitment to enhance the forensic capacities, it may be expected that further actions and investments will be taken in this regard in the near future, either with direct investment by the Ministry or with interventions by other donors

The project “Cross-Border Integrated Institutional Approach Towards Combatting IAT and SALW” was implemented jointly by the UNDP offices in North Macedonia and Kosovo* within the Western Balkans MPTF in the period April 2021 to March 2023. This project strengthened the capacities of over 800 police officers in

⁵ UNDP SEESAC (2016). Gender and SALW in South-East Europe, Main Concerns and Policy Response.

the areas of information gathering and sharing, weapons categorization, converted firearms and cybercrime investigations, 400 of which from North Macedonia (36 women and 364 men). As part of the trainings on combatting converted firearms, key personnel from the Forensic Department were trained by forensic and organised crime experts from both jurisdictions on the converted firearms trends in the Western Balkans, the identification of converted firearms and tools for their conversion, as well as the investigation methods necessary for tackling the prevalence and proliferation of converted firearms in the region. The proposed project will complement these efforts of the joint project by further strengthening the capacities of the Forensic Department.

The project “Improving National SALW related practices and building resilient communities” was implemented within the Funding Windows programme in the period November 2019 to July 2022. As part of this project, a Police Information Management System (IRDAM – Incident Recording, Documents and Activities Module) was developed for the police in North Macedonia. The system has been designed to support all police activities across the country, especially focusing on firearm related incidents, while enabling higher-commanding officers to easily and quickly access data from all police jurisdictions in the country. The IRDAM system is a tool for reliable and quick decision making, based on real data collected from everyday police work in the field, accessible on fingertip for higher-commanding officers, but also for police-analysts; achieved by implementing ad-hoc reporting, dashboards, and possibility to extract data from the system for more complex analysis. The integration with other systems, databases for persons, vehicles, and classification of firearms, gives the user immediate, relevant, and unified information.

The aforementioned Bridging project dedicated a separate activity to preparing a needs-based analysis for the addition of a new module on domestic violence to the Police Information Management System. A recent Study on Femicides in North Macedonia performed as part of the Funding Windows project showed that 53.5% of murders of women between the period 2008 – 2016 were performed with firearms. Having a systematic, digital module on domestic violence will considerably assist in keeping track of first-time offenders, repeat offenders, victims of domestic violence and actions taken by the police officers. Following the completion of the needs-based analysis for the separate module on domestic violence, this module would be developed as part of the proposed project in cooperation with the Ministry of Interior, so that it can assist in keeping track of first-time offenders, repeat offenders, victims of domestic violence and actions taken by the police officers, while gathering gender-related data, especially in regards to domestic violence and firearms. Therefore, this output in the proposed project complements the successful efforts of both the Funding Windows project implemented until July 2022, as well as the bridging project currently implemented during 2023.

5. Coordination with other implementing partners on SALW control

The objective of the project has been coordinated with other implementing partners working on SALW control in the country. To ensure synchronization of efforts, UNDP North Macedonia is in continuous contact with UNDP SEESAC, which is providing, since 2002, comprehensive support to the efforts to advance SALW control both at policy and operational level. Such support includes: strengthening of the capacities of the SALW Commission in North Macedonia through targeted training, capacity building and provision of required tools for the work of the Commission; technical assistance in development of national policies on arms control based on evidence, including the SALW Strategy and Action Plan; support in mainstreaming of gender perspective through data collection, analysis and training; expert support in harmonizing the arms control legislation with the EU Acquis. Support for awareness raising efforts has been provided through assistance to the MoI in their campaigns, and most recently through the establishment of a regional Task Force through which North Macedonian representatives will be able to expand their knowledge and gain direct assistance. Countering illicit arms possession and trafficking is an area of particular concern to both UNDP SEESAC and UNDP North Macedonia. In addition to organizing regular meetings of the South East Europe Firearms Experts Network and other regional trainings and workshops attended by representatives of North Macedonia, UNDP SEESAC has provided active support for the establishment and currently for the operationalization of the Firearms Focal Point in North Macedonia, through expert technical support, tailor-made trainings, provision of equipment etc. More recently, UNDP SEESAC has been providing support to border and criminal police services of North Macedonia in strengthening their capacities for countering illicit trafficking of firearms

through development of SOPs, training and equipment. UNDP SEESAC has also paid special attention to integrate the topics of gender and security, through the initiatives on gender-sensitive licensing of firearms, gender analysis and evaluation of SALW-relevant legislation and policies, as well as combatting the misuse of firearms in gender-based violence. UNDP SEESAC has also provided practical tools for mainstreaming gender in SALW control measures and training for relevant institutions. Given the diverse scope of work in SALW control, UNDP SEESAC represents a key partner and source of information. Close cooperation and information exchange by the project will be ensured in particular in view of the ongoing comprehensive support by UNDP SEESAC to the Firearms Focal Point and the criminal police to ensure most efficient synergy of the efforts.

UNDP has also been in regular communication with OSCE in the country to prevent the possibility of duplication and to ensure complementarity and sustainability of implemented activities of SALW control. UNDP has had regular and active presence at the local and regional Roadmap coordination meetings organized by UNDP SEESAC. The UNDP CO team in Skopje also has additional local meetings with colleagues from OSCE and UNODC to discuss ongoing and future efforts in the area of SALW control. To ensure that activities implemented by OSCE and UNDP are carefully coordinated and streamlined, there has been regular communication between the two organizations. The cooperation with OSCE will be strengthened through the project activity dedicated to adaptation of online learning courses for the e-learning platform of the Ministry of Interior, developed by OSCE. The goal of this project proposal is to adapt for e-learning previously developed training materials on the use of the new Police Information Management System, as well as materials from the trainings on information gathering and sharing, weapons categorization, converted firearms and cybercrime investigation. These materials, as online courses, will be made available through the e-learning platform to police officers and trainees in the Training Centre of the Ministry of Interior, a result of the strong and productive cooperation with OSCE.

UNDP also has regular coordination with UNODC. UNODC has been implementing activities in the Republic of North Macedonia mostly within the scope of three regional projects funded through the Western Balkans SALW Control Roadmap MPTF, dedicated to improving criminal justice response against arms trafficking, increased international cooperation in criminal matters and detection of firearms their parts and components and explosives in postal parcels. UNODC is working primarily with the Ministry of Justice, the Prosecution, the Judiciary, the Academy on judges and prosecutors, the court experts, the Customs and the Police. The objective of these activities is, among others, to achieve harmonization of the criminal law and establishing a baseline on the changes required for implementation of the UN Firearms Protocol criminalization provisions. During consultations with UNDP, colleagues from UNODC have advised that they plan to continue these efforts and continue to work on enhancing criminal justice response throughout the Western Balkans region and on increasing the capacity for customs officials to detect firearms and illegal parts or components during inspection of postal and fast parcels.

It is important to note that all implementing partners have advised that they are *not* working on the improvements of the Forensics Department and the Crime Scene Investigation (Units) that are part of the proposed project, thus there will be no duplication of efforts. However, colleagues from the implementing partner agencies have all stressed the importance of strengthening the capacities for analysis and investigation of SALW-related evidence, to ensure that SALW-related practices are evidence based and complement efforts by other implementing partners.

Further coordination and complementarity of activities and objectives will be ensured via regular cooperation and communication with the National SALW Commission and other implementing partners on SALW control, including through the regional platforms run by UNDP SEESAC and the regular local coordination meetings.

These activities linked together show a comprehensive approach in the fight against illegal arms trafficking and towards achieving increased criminal justice response.

2. National Ownership

The proposal has been developed in close consultations with relevant Departments within the Ministry of Interior in North Macedonia:

- Forensic Department in the Ministry of Interior – main partner for Outputs 1.1 and 1.2.
- Training Center of the Ministry of Interior – partner for Output 1.2., activity 1.2.
- Bureau for Public Security – main partner for Output 1.3.

Additionally, UNDP North Macedonia Country Office has received an endorsement letter of the project and agreed activities from the Head of the SALW Commission (attached as Annex 6 to this document).

The project is designed around the idea of determining priorities for further intervention and implementation within the framework and goals of the Roadmap, as well as building on already implemented activities. During this process, the main partners were consulted from the onset of the proposal preparation in order to ensure that the stakeholders understand and agree to the process in which they will collectively be involved through the project's actions. This created a sense of ownership and it is an ongoing practice that will continue throughout the implementation of the project. The partnership already created with the Mol of North Macedonia through the current and completed projects will allow for more sustained results in the framework of this proposed project and within the framework of the Roadmap.

The SALW Commission in North Macedonia will play a pivotal role in coordination and monitoring of project activities. This project proposal has been developed with contributions received from both the SALW commission in North Macedonia as well as specific departments, subject-matter experts and Managers from the Ministry of Interior with substantial working knowledge and experience in the field of SALW control. During the process of developing this project proposal numerous consultations were held with senior and expert representatives from the Ministry of Interior. They clearly emphasized the need to strengthening prevention, detection, information sharing and investigations of SALW in all forms of serious and organized crime. Police departments in North Macedonia underlined that to prohibit access to illegal weapons there is pressing need to have a long-term, systematic approach that is aligned with efforts in the area of SALW made to date in order to ensure sustainability of results. Aligning and addressing the needs of different departments in regard to SALW would ensure a more comprehensive and coordinated response toward illegal arms trafficking and improved criminal justice response.

UNDP North Macedonia meetings/consultations organized with local stakeholders:

- 31.03.2023 – Meeting of the SALW Commission, the Minutes of which are attached as Annex 7 to this document.
- 31.03.2023 – Monitoring mission to Valandovo Police and consultation with Bureau for Public Security and local police officers.
- 31.03.2023 – Consultation with the President of SALW Commission.
- 04.04.2023 – Consultation with Bureau for Public Security.
- 07.04.2023 – Consultation with the Forensic Department.
- 07.04.2023 – Consultation with the Training Center of the Ministry of Interior.
- 11.04.2023 – Consultation with the Department for International Cooperation in the Ministry of Interior and OSCE Representatives
- 12.04.2023 – Consultation with the Forensic Department.
- 10.05.2023 – Consultation with the Forensic Department.

UNDP North Macedonia also held several consultative meetings in the period 15.03.2023 to 15.05.2023 to adjust the approach and develop this project proposal.

The project builds upon a direct request from the Ministry of Interior and adheres to the Strategic Plan of the Police 2022-2024 and the Development Strategy of the Forensic Department, that confirms the Ministry's

determination and interest for its implementation. This will ensure national ownership and sustainability of the project results after its completion. The project will be co-created and implemented through continuous exchange and cooperation between the UNDP and the Ministry of Interior. The Ministry will nominate coordinators for the outputs of the project. Regular meetings with selected expert staff and managers on the project beneficiary from the Departments directly involved in the implementation of the project will be held on regular basis. The project coordinators will closely work with UNDP North Macedonia CO and will be directly involved and responsible for implementation of activities. The project will also meet with the Head and representatives from the National SALW Commission regularly to update them on progress of activities and ensure their commitment to planned results.

The activities that will be undertaken in order to achieve the objectives of the proposed project directly correlate to the needs of the Departments in the Ministry of Interior, which have been stated explicitly during the various consultations mentioned above, as well as during the Meeting of the SALW Commission.

The Roadmap goals have been translated into the National SALW Strategy 2022-2024 and national action plans. Therefore, the project will contribute directly to achieving the Roadmap goals and meeting the commitment of the Government of North Macedonia. The project specifically targets the following goals:

Goal 1. By 2023, ensure that arms control legislation is in place, fully harmonized with the EU regulatory framework and other related international obligations, and standardized across the region

- Ensure standardization of procedures and practices in the area of arms control and FAE investigations.
- Exchange good practices with a specific focus on the areas defined in the Roadmap.

Goal 2. By 2024, ensure that arms control policies and practices in the Western Balkans are evidence based and intelligence led.

- Strengthen capabilities for data collection, sharing and analysis.
- Prevent IAT through analysis and improvement of processes.
- Prevent IAT through improved institutional capacities, provision of specialised equipment and training.
- Integrate the gender perspective in SALW/firearms control measures.

Goal 3. By 2024, significantly reduce illicit flows of firearms, ammunition and explosives (FAE) into, within and beyond the Western Balkans

- Prevent trafficking (smuggling, illicit trade and transit) of FAE through improved processes, equipment and training of targeted law enforcement units.

Goal 4. By 2024, significantly reduce the supply, demand and misuse of firearms through increased awareness, education, outreach and advocacy.

- Develop sustainable partnerships to strengthen advocacy, reinforce outreach and reach messaging multipliers.
- Increase awareness and reduce the misuses of firearms in violence against women, domestic violence and other forms of gender-based violence.
- Increase confidence in security institutions as providers of adequate and equal safety for all through community-society-regional outreach activities.

The project will directly support and complement the implementation of the National Strategy for Control of Small Arms and Light weapons 2022-2024. This SALW Strategy and related Action Plan have been designed in strict correlation with the Goals of the Roadmap. Project results will also have a wider positive effect on other relevant security-related strategies and plans.

3. Project Objective and Theory of Change

The objective of the project is to modernize the forensic and Crime Scene Investigation (CSI) system in the Republic of North Macedonia, with the aim of improving the quality of investigation and enabling a more

efficient criminal justice response to SALW. The project will improve the operational capacities of the forensic authorities through a series of coordinated activities that are in line with four of the seven Roadmap goals (namely, Goal 1, Goal 2, Goal 3 and Goal 4). The project will also complement the previously established Police Information Management System, through its upgrade with a new module on domestic violence, in line with Goal 2 of the Roadmap.

The project's theory of change is the following:

Problem analysis:

Forensics and crime scene investigation are vital for processing criminal acts that involve small arms and light weapons. Through analysis of ballistics, trace evidence and toolmark among others, forensic scientists can provide crucial information to law enforcement agencies to help solve crimes and prevent future violence. The project identified some of the key issues in the current functioning of the forensic and crime scene investigation system in North Macedonia. On one hand, the shooting range used for ballistic examinations in the Ministry of Interior lacks significant safety and security standards for proper functioning. On the other hand, the CSI system does not have sufficient capacities in order to execute investigations efficiently and in accordance with international standards. Furthermore, the CSI system is in need of important upgrades to the current equipment, including procurement of CSI kits and equipment of a simulation facility for training. The project also identified specific needs in the response to gender-based violence that involves the use of firearms, where victims do not feel comfortable to report cases or cooperate adequately in their processing as a result of the inappropriate approach of officials. This will be addressed through relevant gender sensitisation of CSI staff and the development of a module on domestic violence for the Police Information Management System, that will help collect data and intelligence and act more effectively on cases of domestic violence, in particular domestic violence cases committed with firearms.

If

- The actual needs of the forensic and crime scene investigation units are correctly identified, and necessary tools and equipment are provided,
- The current state of the forensic examination facilities is improved and the capacities of the CSI units are strengthened,
- The capabilities for processing and analysing firearms-related data are enhanced,
- Crime Scene Investigation (CSI) officers are trained to improve their capability to collect, process and analyse firearms data and evidence, in a gender-sensitive manner.
- The capacities for recording and investigation of cases of gender-based violence committed with SALW are strengthened through the upgrade of the Police Information System with a module on domestic violence that will collect and provide much needed intelligence and data for cases committed with firearms,

Then

- The forensic and investigation units will be modernized, leading to increased reliability of forensic investigations in criminal proceedings related to SALW.
- There will be sufficient institutional and human capacities within the police and CSI departments to process forensic investigations effectively and efficiently.
- Law enforcement officers will have increased understanding of gender issues contributing to the safety and security of women and girls and decrease the risks of gender-based violence, as well as further knowledge of the role of firearms in committing acts of gender-based violence.
- The safety and the modus operandi of the law enforcement officers, particularly the first responders in the cases of domestic violence will be intelligence led, for cases of repetitive violence and/or perpetrators that are firearm holders.
- The forensic and investigation system in the country will be enhanced and justice particularly related to the SALW will be served in a timely and accurate manner.

The key assumptions that underline the change process include:

- Continued collaboration with the MoI, CSI departments and other relevant stakeholders, continues.
- Regular participation of police/CSI officers in the trainings.
- Collaboration with the NGOs working on gender-based violence prevention and protection.
- Sufficient resources are available to carry out the planned activities.

The achievement of the expected results under this project will bring about straightforward change and improvement to the examination and investigation work of the forensic and crime scene investigation authorities, which will be able to examine firearms-related evidence in a faster, more reliable and credible manner, thereby strengthening the criminal justice response to SALW-related incidents. This is in line with the recommendations of the **Mid-Term Review of the Roadmap Implementation**⁶, which clearly state the need for translating the previous strengthening of capabilities, achieved through past and ongoing projects, into practical operational activities of the project beneficiaries. The Mid-Term Review also recommends identifying practical areas for driving towards progress on gender, which is implemented through the project activities dedicated to addressing gender-based violence.

On the other hand, the objective of the project builds upon and complements the achievements of the other projects currently and previously implemented by UNDP SEESAC and UNDP North Macedonia in the country, with the aim of contributing to a more sustainable solution to the illegal possession, misuse and trafficking of SALW and their ammunition in North Macedonia and the Western Balkans.

To achieve the project's objective, the following results will be fulfilled by implementing several activities.

At the outcome level, the project will result in enhanced police operations and improved criminal justice response in the field of possession, misuse and trafficking of small arms and light weapons through improved technology and strengthened analytical and investigation capacities of the forensics and crime investigation system of the Republic of North Macedonia.

Output 1.1 - Ballistic facilities and operations of MoI's Forensics Department are upgraded

The Forensic Department in the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of North Macedonia plays a key role in the analysis and investigation of evidence related to the misuse of small arms and light weapons. In order to assist with efforts in firearms-related criminal investigations, the Ministry of Interior has approached UNDP with an official request to provide refurbishment and equipment of the Indoor Shooting Range, that will be used for testing of ballistic evidence. In forensics investigation of firearms and ballistics, it is important to use a suitable shooting range that will allow proper testing of the evidence. It is estimated that the technicians shoot around 2,000 rounds per year in the shooting range.

The ballistic evidence tested and examined by the forensic staff is crucial for conducting of criminal proceedings that involve possession, misuse and trafficking of SALW. The interventions outlined in the project proposal will ensure modernization of the forensic practices by providing the necessary equipment for full functioning and safety of the indoor shooting range, which will enable it to play its important role in the criminal justice system when it comes to SALW. Due to their specificity, criminal proceedings that involve firearms are often adjudicated on the basis of the ballistic evidence provided, and it is crucial to ensure the proper testing and examination by the forensic staff.

The ballistic laboratory is currently certified with the ISO/IEC 17025 certification for two methods used in ballistic testing. The proposed interventions will help maintain this accreditation in future, and will contribute to further accreditation for new testing methods, such as the testing of viability of firearms and ammunition.

These interventions will ensure safe and secure performance of the necessary testing of ballistic evidence, contributing to a faster and more reliable analysis and examination of forensic materials in criminal investigations. The Forensic Department is composed of highly professional and dedicated staff members, and

⁶ First Call Partners (2023). Mid-Term Review of the Western Balkans Roadmap Implementation Final Report.

it is crucial to provide safe and secure working conditions for their unimpeded functioning as a crucial link in the criminal justice system as regards firearms-related investigations. The satisfactory implementation of this output will increase the speed, reliability and effectiveness of the forensic examinations, thus aiding the criminal justice response to SALW. These activities will be started in January 2024 and will be expected to finalize by March 2025.

The activities aimed at upgrading and equipping the indoor shooting range are entirely dedicated to strengthening the forensic examination of ballistic evidence in the Ministry of Interior. Forensic staff use indoor shooting ranges to perform test shootings that are intended to examine evidence from criminal cases, as well as to confirm the viability of firearms and ammunition. Such test ranges are also used for examining seized firearms that have not been fired during the commission of a crime, thus not leaving bullet casings to analyse. As mentioned above, the technicians shoot around 2,000 rounds per year in the current shooting range.

The proposed interventions in the indoor shooting range will ensure that all SALW-related forensic examinations of ballistic evidence are conducted in a safe and secure environment in accordance with international standards. Once completed, the new indoor shooting range will be used as the main laboratory for forensic examination through shooting and it is expected that this number may be increased as a result of the improved functionalities. The forensic evidence collected and examined through the use of the shooting range will be instrumental for the resolution of criminal proceedings that involve firearms, therefore strengthening the criminal justice response to small arms and light weapons in North Macedonia.

The activities under this output are in line with **Goal 2 of the Roadmap**, namely the targets *Prevent IAT through analysis and improvement of processes* and *Prevent IAT through improved institutional capacities, provision of specialised equipment and training*, as well as **Goal 3 of the Roadmap**, in particular the target *Prevent trafficking (smuggling, illicit trade and transit) of FAE through improved processes, equipment and training of targeted law enforcement units*. These targets will be achieved through the improvement and upgrade of the indoor shooting range, which will contribute to strengthening the ballistic testing capabilities of the forensic department and enhancing the criminal proceedings in firearms-related cases.

As a result of the activities undertaken in this output, the project will strengthen the prevention of illicit arms trafficking by providing the necessary equipment and improving the processes of the examinations conducted by the forensics department. The direct benefit from the interventions in this output is increased safety and security of the forensic staff while using the shooting range, thereby increasing the reliability of ballistic evidence.

Activities:

Activity 1.1.1. Preparation of technical specifications for interventions and upgrades in the indoor shooting range – An international consultant with experience in forensic and ballistic examinations will prepare technical specifications that will detail the necessary interventions in the indoor shooting range. A civil engineer will be contracted as a local consultant to provide his/her expertise to the preparation of the technical specification for securing the electrical, plumbing, sewage and heating installations in order to protect them against damage by projectiles.

The technical specifications will be prepared in close cooperation with the Forensics Department in the Ministry of Interior, ensuring their direct involvement in the process.

Activity 1.1.2. Interventions and upgrades in the indoor shooting range – The project team will liaise closely with the Forensic Department and the selected suppliers in order to ensure proper execution of the necessary interventions and upgrades in accordance with the technical specifications. The international consultant (ballistic and forensic expert) will provide his/her expertise and the necessary assistance to the selected supplier, as well as examine the finalised shooting range to guarantee its conformity with the necessary standards.

Amongst the planned interventions and upgrades to overcome the identified gaps are the following:

- ❖ Installed modern and adequate **ballistic bullet trap**, that can capture and stop projectiles of up to 5,000, 7,000 or 10,000 joules.
- ❖ Secured **side door** with the necessary ballistic level of protection (armoured panels or armoured rubber, ballistic glass), so that it cannot allow passage of projectiles outside the shooting range.
- ❖ Secured **ceiling with armoured plates** in order to protect the staff against ricochet projectiles.
- ❖ Secured **windows and door** of the control room with the necessary ballistic level of protection (armoured panels or armoured rubber, ballistic glass).

After the completion of the abovementioned project interventions, the following remaining gaps will be left to be addressed:

- ❖ Enhanced **ventilation system** to contain a system for supply of fresh air into the premises and secured electric motor to avoid dangers of fire hazard, as well as installed **heating system** in the indoor shooting range.
- ❖ Adequate **floors** to ensure protection and absorption of projectiles hitting the ground.
- ❖ Improved **noise insulation** as the building is close to a residential area and other administrative buildings in the Ministry of Interior.
- ❖ Procurement of necessary **laboratory furniture**.

Output 1.2 - Analytical, technical and investigative capacities of the Crime Scene Investigation (CSI) units are enhanced

The role of the Crime Scene Investigation (CSI) units around the country is complementary to the role played by the Forensic Department in the examination of forensic evidence that is crucial for successful criminal proceedings related to possession, trafficking and misuse of SALW. Crime scene investigation in North Macedonia is carried out by CSI technicians organizationally positioned in eight Sectors of Interior on the regional level and in 20 (out of 39) subordinated Police Stations on the local level.

Having in mind the importance of CSI units to the criminal justice response to SALW, it is necessary to conduct several improvements of the CSI system of North Macedonia in line with the international ISO/IEC 17020 standard, which includes requirements for various types of bodies that conduct inspections, surveys, and risk assessments.

Besides improving the quality of forensic evidence, implementation of the same overall recognized international standards in providing forensic evidence facilitates their international exchange and transparent application in judicial systems of different countries. The main benefit and reason for harmonization of standardization policy in the area of forensics on the global, and particularly on the EU level, is the possibility of immediate and effective utilization of a forensic result/evidence retrieved in one country in a criminal investigation and a legal proceeding within another country.

When it comes, for example, to bullets and cartridge cases originating from ammunition fired during crimes, this means that two offences committed in different countries by the same firearm can be easily interlinked and evidence provided, contributing significantly to an efficient fight against criminality. Moreover, forensic databases, particularly those containing biometric evidence (fingerprints, DNA profiles) and ballistic databases, can be transparently exchanged among countries that apply the same international standards in providing the evidence and creating databases.

This output will focus on improving the functioning and strengthening the analytical, technical and investigative capacities of the CSI system in accordance with the recommendations of the Needs Assessment conducted by SEESAC, by the provision of a training and simulation facility, IT equipment and CSI kits. This output has a specific gender perspective that will focus on strengthening gender awareness of CSI and Forensic staff related to cases of gender-based violence committed with firearms. By having the necessary training and

equipment, CSI units around the country will provide more reliable and credible evidence for the criminal proceedings that involve small arms and light weapons.

As a result of the proposed project activities in this Output, significant contributions will be made towards fulfilling the criteria needed for ISO/IEC 17020 accreditation of the CSI system, which is currently not certified with this certification. The activities will contribute to the ISO/IEC 17020 accreditation by supplying a training and simulation facility, providing the necessary equipment and training CSI staff for proper conducting of evidence collection in SALW-related criminal proceedings, including the investigations of homicides, armed assaults, armed robberies, sexual assaults, domestic violence etc. when a firearm has been used. The proposed interventions aim to improve the efficiency, effectiveness and reliability of the work conducted by the CSI teams, thereby ensuring continuous sustainability of the previous and current efforts for control of SALW in North Macedonia. These activities will be started in February 2024 and are expected to finalize by September 2025.

The activities under this output are directly in line with **Goal 1 of the Roadmap**, namely the target *Ensure standardization of procedures and practices in the area of arms control and FAE investigations* through the activities leading to ISO/IEC 17020 accreditation of crime scene investigation in the country, as well as the target *Exchange good practices with a specific focus on the areas defined in the Roadmap* through the exchange of experiences with the peers from the region.

The activities under this output correspond to **Goal 2 of the Roadmap**, namely the targets *Prevent IAT through analysis and improvement of processes*, *Prevent IAT through improved institutional capacities, provision of specialised equipment and training* and *Fully integrate gender and age concerns in SALW control measures*. This output contributes to **Goal 3 of the Roadmap**, in particular the target *Prevent trafficking (smuggling, illicit trade and transit) of FAE through improved processes, equipment and training of targeted law enforcement units*. These targets will be achieved through the provision of specialised equipment, training and improvement of the processes for crime scene investigation in firearms-related cases.

This output also contributes to **Goal 4 of the Roadmap**, in particular through the educational efforts in Activity 1.2.2 that aims to provide a training and simulation facility that will serve for preparation of current and future CSI officers for their work in handling evidence from cases related to firearms. This is in line with the targets *Develop sustainable partnerships to strengthen advocacy, reinforce outreach and reach messaging multipliers* and *Increase confidence in security institutions as providers of adequate and equal safety for all through community-society-regional outreach activities*. The project will further contribute to realisation of the target *Increase awareness and reduce the misuses of firearms in violence against women, domestic violence and other forms of gender based violence* of this goal, as a result of the efforts for strengthening gender awareness of CSI and Forensic staff related to cases of gender-based violence that have been committed with firearms.

As a result of the activities undertaken in this output, the project will ensure a further standardisation of procedures and practices in the work of the CSI units, while strengthening the prevention of illicit arms trafficking and improving the processes, equipment and training of CSI units. The CSI system will be significantly upgraded through the procurement of necessary modern equipment for timely and reliable analysis of SALW-related evidence.

Activities:

Activity 1.2.1. Preparation of a detailed needs-based analysis for necessary improvements to the CSI system – UNDP SEESAC has prepared a Needs Assessment Report on Capacities for Crime Scene Investigation of the Public Security Bureau of North Macedonia. The findings and recommendations from this report will be used for preparation of a detailed needs-based analysis and technical documentation focused on the areas of improvement that will be covered by this output, including the provision of an indoor simulation room, IT equipment and CSI kits. For this purpose, an international consultant with experience in CSI and forensic examinations will be contracted, who will work in close cooperation with the Bureau of Public Security and the Forensic Department in the Ministry of Interior.

Activity 1.2.2. Training and simulation facility for continuous learning on CSI – One of the main recommendations from the Needs Assessment Report conducted by UNDP SEESAC is the establishment and equipping of a training and simulation facility, that will provide the adequate space and modern equipment for the facilitation of training activities for CSI staff, with an accent on providing simulations of crime scene investigation in firearms-related cases. The recommendation provided in the SEESAC Report suggests that the training and simulation facility should be located in the Training Center of the Ministry of Interior in Idrizovo, where existing premises can be converted for this purpose. The CSI training and simulation facility will be used by CSI staff to practice their work in the field and exchange relevant knowledge and experience. The training and simulation facility must be equipped with the same equipment that is used by the operational CSI Units, so that they are trained and prepared for the conditions and equipment in practice. A training on the use of the facility will be provided to relevant CSI staff.

Once completed, the training and simulation facility will be the main training ground for preparation of current and future CSI staff, that will be used for continuous learning and familiarisation with modern methods for examination of ballistic evidence. Simulation facilities are regularly used for CSI training in other countries, as they enable practical teaching methods for crime scene investigation and preservation of evidence. As mentioned above, material and ballistic evidence is crucial for proper conducting and adjudication of criminal proceedings that involve SALW, and it is therefore important to provide a proper facility for training of CSI staff that collect and analyse this evidence. The proposed activity is aimed at building a long-lasting and sustainable solution to the training gaps for CSI staff, which currently inhibit the capacities for faster and more reliable processing of evidence. As a result of this activity, the capacities for conducting criminal proceedings related to SALW will be greatly enhanced.

Activity 1.2.3. Provision of equipment for enhanced connectivity and access to databases of CSI technicians – The IT equipment of the CSI units will be improved and upgraded through the procurement of personal computers, scanners, printers and laptops for use in the field. The newly procured equipment will enable the necessary connectivity and access of CSI technicians to police databases, including the Police Information System developed as part of the project “Improving National SALW-related Practices and Building Violence-Resilient Communities”, implemented by UNDP North Macedonia within the Funding Windows programme. A specific software package for processing the CSI documentation (photos, diagrams, videos) will be purchased.

Activity 1.2.4. Advancing CSI evidence collection methods through provision of specialized kits and strengthening gender awareness – The Needs Assessment Report prepared by UNDP SEESAC has noted a serious lack of universal and specialized CSI kits for all units in the country. As part of this activity, CSI kits necessary for applying advanced methods will be procured and training will be provided to CSI staff on the use of this equipment. The procurement of sufficient kits for the collection, documentation and analysis of evidence will prevent the cross-contamination of evidence and will provide for faster and more reliable criminal proceedings in SALW-related cases. The CSI kits contain the necessary tools and consumables for collection of evidence in cases of homicides, armed assault, armed robbery, sexual assault, threat of firearms etc. This activity will also focus on strengthening gender awareness of CSI and Forensic staff related to cases of gender-based violence committed with firearms.

Activity 1.2.5. Exchanging experience on CSI – This activity will focus on exchanging experiences with peers, in particular countries that already have at their disposal the CSI equipment mentioned above, such as training and simulation facilities and mobile CSI laboratories. A field visit will be organized with experts and relevant Ministry of Interior staff, in order to exchange knowledge and experiences regarding the use and benefits of this equipment. Consultations will be organised with the project beneficiary in order to determine the visit location.

This activity will have as an objective to enable peer-learning of CSI staff from North Macedonia on the various equipment used for collecting, documenting and analysing evidence related to SALW cases and further strengthen their capacities for crime scene investigation. The field visit will also aim to intensify the bilateral

cooperation and sharing of best practices and evidence, as well as regional exchange of information within SALW-related cases, as part of the efforts for standardisation in accordance with ISO/IEC 17020.

Output 1.3 - Police Information Management System (IMS) and data management, inclusive of firearms-related cases, are advanced through implementation of a gender-sensitive approach

This important incident management tool has been designed with focus on firearm incidents within the project “Improving National SALW related practices and building violence-resilient communities” implemented by UNDP North Macedonia within the Funding Windows programme. As part of this project, a new Police IMS was developed. The system was developed in accordance with current legal and operational requirements, tested and installed on the premises of project beneficiary. Furthermore, 250 police officers have been trained to use the Police IMS on the ‘train the trainer’ basis. It is anticipated that the system will have over 3,500 users, making it the largest system ever used by law enforcement authorities.

The proposed project will focus on how the information system can better identify and record gender related incidents. Despite the recent legislative changes, the high share of women killed with firearms within the domestic context in Macedonia is persistent. The data shows that murder by intimate partner is the most common form of femicide in North Macedonia. Firearms are used not only in the cases of femicides, but also other types of gender-based violence which remain heavily underreported, such as psychological violence, sexual violence and economic violence. The national institutions have faced an increased scrutiny over cases of domestic violence and therefore see addressing this particular criminality as a priority and as a risk to safety, especially in the sense of gender-based violence.

The increased ability to collect and share data regarding gender-based violence and the role of firearms in such violence, will contribute significantly to the safety and the modus operandi of the law enforcement officers, particularly the first responders in the cases of repetitive domestic violence where perpetrators are registered firearm holders. The collection of the structured data contributes to intelligence led policing, more efficient management, as well as lowering the numbers of possession and misuse of firearms.

The activities under this output correspond to **Goal 2 of the Roadmap**, namely the targets *Strengthen capabilities for data collection, sharing and analysis* and *Fully integrate gender and age concerns in SALW control*, through the development of a new module on domestic violence, that will collect, share and analyse relevant data on cases of domestic violence and the misuse of firearms in their perpetration. They also complement the activities under Output 1.2 of the project proposal in relation to strengthening the systematic approach towards combatting gender-based violence in North Macedonia.

The results achieved by this output will ensure a strengthened system for data collection, sharing and analysis through the improved functioning of the Police Information Management System and the development of a module on domestic violence, thus improving the data collection and criminal justice response in relation to cases of gender-based violence and the use of SALW.

This output will commence in April 2024 and will continue until September 2025.

Activities:

Activity 1.3.1. Development of a module on domestic violence and related technical and expert support for the Police IMS use – In accordance with the needs-based analysis developed during the Bridging project Improvement of Data and SALW Collection Practices and SALW Related Investigations, the project proposal will develop a module dedicated to domestic violence investigations, specifically those involving firearms. The Needs-based analysis on domestic violence will be used as an input for the software-development team. The analysis includes documents that the police officers fill out in the field, during the interviews with the victims, with each one separately, as well as with the members of the household and possible witnesses, but also with the perpetrator, when feasible. Based on this, a risk assessment is conducted, and the following activities are planned. It is especially important for police officers to know in advance whether there are firearms in the household or whether there is a history of using firearms among the household-members in the past.

The software development of the new module for domestic violence is planned in two phases, where in the first phase the software module for data collection will be developed, and in the second phase the reporting and alert system will be implemented in the existing Police IMS. The police officers will be provided related technical support to this end.

The aim of this activity is not only to develop a new module of the Police IMS, but also to improve its functionalities by implementing alert system for known firearm license holders, and enrich the gender related statistics, especially in regard to domestic violence and in correlation to firearms. In regard to this activity the project management will maintain close cooperation and collaboration with the Ministry of Interior as project beneficiary, to ensure continuous and adequate use and support for the upgraded Police IMS. This will contribute to strengthened sustainability to already achieved results within previous projects in the area of digitalisation of the services provided by the Ministry of Interior in cases that involve small arms and light weapons.

Overview - Outcome, Outputs and Activities

Outcome 1: Enhanced police operations and improved criminal justice response in the field of possession, misuse and trafficking of small arms and light weapons through improved technology and strengthened analytical and investigation capacities of the forensics and crime investigation system of the Republic of North Macedonia		
Output 1.1 - Ballistic facilities and operations of Mol's Forensics Department are upgraded		
Act 1.1.1	Preparation of technical specifications for interventions and upgrades in the indoor shooting range	
Act 1.1.2	Interventions and upgrades in the indoor shooting range	
Output 1.2 - Analytical, technical and investigative capacities of the Crime Scene Investigation (CSI) units are enhanced		
Act 1.2.1	Preparation of a detailed needs-based analysis for necessary improvements to the CSI system	
Act 1.2.2	Training and simulation facility for continuous learning on CSI	
Act 1.2.3	Provision of equipment for enhanced connectivity and access to databases of CSI technicians	
Act 1.2.4	Advancing CSI evidence collection methods through provision of specialized kits and strengthening gender awareness	
Act 1.2.5	Exchanging experiences on CSI	
Output 1.3 - Police Information Management System (IMS) and data management, inclusive of firearms-related cases, are advanced through implementation of a gender-sensitive approach		
Act 1.3.1	Development of a module on domestic violence and related technical and expert support for the Police IMS use	

5. Sustainability of Results

The project is designed to ensure that the capacities, knowledge and products created in all of the project phases and in all the outputs are retained after the project ends. The project has been developed based on the needs of North Macedonia's guiding policy and legal frameworks. As such, the project development is also based on extensive consultations with main beneficiaries and stakeholders, which ensures institutional and national buy-in in all outputs and activities. The capacity development element and equipment throughout interventions will contribute to the sustainability of results due to its people – processes – technology approach. In addition, the following will also support the sustainability of results:

- ❖ Work methodologies are based on best international practices.
- ❖ The equipment and finished construction works will be officially handed over to the beneficiary and according to the donation agreement that will be signed, the beneficiary agrees to bear future maintenance and upgrade costs upon completion of the project.
- ❖ Maintaining regular consultations with partners and stakeholders to identify any changes and risks that may affect the sustainability measures.
- ❖ Capitalize on the strong interest and dedication of the MoI and the National SALW Commission on SALW control in the country and Western Balkans region and ensure institutionalisation of the new products, practices, and knowledge products in the MoI departments through close coordination and monitoring of achieved results.

As shown above, the Project is designed with sustainability in mind and aims to ensure institutionalisation and broader dissemination of evidence-based and prevention practices through identification and creation of knowledge, competences, and products at a national level. The intervention will thus introduce a comprehensive approach in the country which is expected to create synergies with other related interventions towards closer monitoring and control of SALW and an improved decision-making process. As specified, UNDP is in regular contact with other implementing partners, ensuring complementarity and sustainability of efforts in the area of control of SALW.

In terms of sustainability and maintenance of the equipment and refurbishment provided under activities 1.1.2, 1.2.2, 1.2.3 and 1.2.4, the project management and assurance structure will maintain close cooperation and collaboration with the Ministry of Interior as project beneficiary, to ensure continuous use and maintenance of the provided goods. An Agreement for Donation will be signed for each donated equipment/refurbishment in a previously used template, that stipulates the beneficiary's obligations for maintenance, repair and upkeep of the received donation following the end of the project.

The project efforts will lead to overall improved data collection and analysis on firearms-related crime, including through the module on domestic violence, which will help track perpetrators of this crime which disproportionately targets women.

The final objective of the project is to significantly improve the functioning of the forensics and crime scene investigation system in the Republic of North Macedonia, aiding in their crucial role in the criminal justice response to SALW. The successful completion of the project and its activities will be reflected in the enhanced work conducted by criminal justice professionals, especially forensic and CSI staff, as well as in the positive increase in the percentage of resolved and adjudicated cases of possession, trafficking and misuse of SALW by the law enforcement and judicial authorities of North Macedonia.

The project will ultimately contribute to strengthening the control of small arms and light weapons in the country and broader region, in light of the intentions of the Roadmap.

6. Risk Identification and Management

The following risks have been identified and the mitigation measures proposed in regard to the implementation of the project “Strengthening the Analytical and Investigation Capacities of the Forensics and Crime Scene Investigation System to Improve Criminal Justice Response to SALW”:

- **Risk 1 – Country-level political instability, causing decision delays and/or lack of commitment to project objectives**
 - Project activities have been designed in close cooperation with representatives from the relevant institutions to obtain strategic compliance and commitment and create sense of ownership. The initial political support was secured through an official request letter submitted by the President of the SALW Commission, as well as a meeting of the SALW Commission dedicated to discussing the needs for improvement of the SALW control system of the country. With the establishment of a Project Board and in close consultation and regular coordination with Project Board members, this risk will be reviewed and actions to mitigate impact will be implemented.
 - UNDP’s preferential access to the government and long-standing partnership with public sector stakeholders will guarantee high level political commitment and endorsement of the project.
 - The project interventions are in line with the international commitments as related to Roadmap implementation and UN policy framework, including strategic objectives of the MoI as well as the MKD Government vis-a-vis- EU accession. This should ensure continuous commitment and engagement of the project beneficiary, despite possible political changes.

- **Risk 2 – Continuation of political and global crisis, causing delays in production and distribution of equipment and in conducting construction activities, as well as price fluctuations**
 - This risk is across project activities but is most relevant for Output 1.1 and Output 1.2, where the project deals with a large number of technical procurements and construction works. The crisis in Ukraine so far effected many aspects in energy, production, and distribution of the goods in Europe. The global crisis can affect production, distribution and import, as well as price fluctuations, of special equipment and construction materials that are planned to be procured as part of the project.
 - The political and global crisis has caused an economic crisis in Europe, where prices frequently fluctuate and are subject to increase. The prices of some of the equipment or construction works that are planned as part of this project may increase, causing additional burdens to the project budget.
 - To mitigate the risk, UNDP will proactively reach out and inform a wide network of relevant vendors of ongoing tenders for the purchase of equipment.
 - UNDP will closely follow the pricing changes and fluctuations of the relevant equipment, materials and works, and will timely conduct the necessary budget revisions in order to allocate sufficient funds for completion of planned activities.
 - UNDP will closely liaise with the Ministry of Interior representatives in order to jointly manage this risk, as well as use their contacts and stakeholders in the risk mitigation activities.
 - UNDP will also liaise with other COs in the region which have worked on similar upgrades and activities, in order to relay experience, advice and resources that will help avoid delays and mitigate risks in the procurement procedures. The potential prolonged procurement processes for planned activities have been taken into account in the project's work plan, although unforeseen delays may occur.

- **Risk 3 - Ineffective coordination and weak management and operational capacities between departments within the project beneficiary**
 - The project will establish coordination with designated staff and managers who already have experience in project management, expertise in SALW and are familiar with the work and objectives of the National SALW Commission or are part thereof.

- UNDP North Macedonia maintains an excellent cooperation with the Forensic Department in the Ministry of Interior, which have proven to be reliable partners in the implementation of three past and ongoing projects in the country. This cooperation will continue in order to successfully manage the risks on both sides.
- UNDP North Macedonia will continue the regular exchange with the Minister of Interior, and will strengthen the coordination and cooperation with the management in the Ministry of Interior, including the President of the SALW Commission and the Director of the Bureau of Public Security in order to timely identify and mitigate any possible delays in implementation. Regular meetings will be held with the Minister of Interior to brief him on the progress and the encountered challenges.
- UNDP will coordinate with senior staff in the Ministry of Interior to ensure active engagement of all staff for timely implementation of project activities. In previous cases, the active and committed support from MoI senior management has helped in preventing delays and tackling encountered issues.
- When considered appropriate, UNDP will put forward some of the encountered risks or proposed solutions to the Project Board as part of the project management structure.

7. Cross-cutting Issues

The project responds to development of inclusive and effective practices in SALW-related data collection and analysis, organisational improvement and mechanisms for better prevention and control of misuse and proliferation of firearms, while adhering to **social and environmental standards**. Moreover, these efforts will increase the transparency and accountability across the Ministry of Interior as the main project beneficiary. By fulfilling its objective, the project will address people's safety and quality-of-life whilst addressing the current challenges in terms of improved criminal justice response, and the wider goals of gender, good governance, and a more just and inclusive society for all.

The project goals will be achieved through provision of technical assistance, conducting of necessary construction works and procurement of specialised equipment based on innovative approaches, so there will be negligible impact to the environment.

Furthermore, the implementation of activities will considerably reduce the impact on the environment in the future. The project aims to further strengthen the capacity of the project beneficiary for improved digitalization of processes.

The project has a thorough **human rights perspective** employed through its direct impact to increasing safety and security of citizens by improving the criminal justice response to possession, trafficking and misuse of SALW in the country. The prevalence of gun violence threatens several basic human rights, such as the right to life, right to liberty and security, the physical integrity of citizens, the right of free movement, property rights etc. Through strengthening the operational capacities of the forensic and crime scene investigation services in the fight against misuse of SALW, this project will contribute to safeguarding these fundamental human rights.

Throughout the project, special accent will be given to recognition of linkages between **gender and SALW**, especially in the prevention of gender-based violence in the country. The second Output of the project focuses on strengthening gender awareness of CSI and Forensic staff related to cases of gender-based violence committed with firearms. On the other hand, the third Output will focus on developing a module for domestic violence for the Police Information Management System, that will keep track of first-time offenders, repeat offenders, victims of domestic violence and actions taken by the police officers. The project will build upon the previous successful cooperation with civil-society organisations that work in the area of gender-based violence, in order to strengthen the national response to gender-based violence. In addition to that, the gender perspective will be mainstreamed throughout the implementation of the rest of the activities, in close coordination with the CO Gender Specialist.

These activities will ensure gender mainstreaming throughout the entire course of the project with the project team and supported by the Gender Specialist. The project will have a gender marker score of 2.

8. Communication and Visibility

By capturing activities, results and lessons learnt, this communication and visibility plan aims to support the project in its efforts to secure long-term commitment from national partners to work towards achieving synergies and commitment in implementing comprehensive knowledge-based approach in preventing gun violence.

This communication and visibility overview aims to support the “Strengthening the Capacities of the Forensics and Crime Scene Investigation System to Improve Criminal Justice Response to SALW” project throughout the project period.

The Western Balkans SALW Control Roadmap MPTF Visibility Guidelines will be the main guidance reference in the implementation of communications and visibility activities.

Overall communication objectives of the plan, developed in cooperation with the SALW Commission, are as follows:

- ❖ To ensure that project beneficiary and the public see this project as part of the regional initiative for sustainable solution to the illegal possession, misuse and trafficking of SALW with UNDP SEESAC support and direct support from MPTF;
- ❖ To provide timely and accurate information on the activities and progress of the project;
- ❖ To inform decision and policy makers about the progress of the project in order to motivate their support and action;
- ❖ To demonstrate the benefits and advantages of having evidence-based approach to SALW control, with measures ranging from provision of equipment and strengthening of operational capacities to mainstreaming gender;; this approach will be implemented in accordance with the 10 principles of gender-responsive communications for development⁷;
- ❖ To inform the general public of the key achievements of the project and their direct contribution to strengthening SALW control and increasing safety and security in the country;
- ❖ To increase visibility of MPTF.

Primary target group is the direct beneficiary – The Ministry of Interior (Mol), Senior and Middle Management, expert staff and police officers from the Ministry of Interior and the Bureau for Public Safety, as well as the general public (where appropriate). The Ministry of Interior and the SALW Commission will act as key partners in the implementation of the communication and visibility plan by providing the necessary support and involvement in all communication activities.

The communication activities will aim to ensure that the target audience are aware of the activities and results that need to be achieved as part of the project, as well as all ongoing initiatives within the Roadmap for control of SALW. UNDP project staff in cooperation with main designated project coordinators from the Mol will present the results and impact to motivate staff and secure their active involvement and ongoing commitment to the project. Also, the decision-makers will be provided with timely information on the project progress and ensure their continuous support during project implementation and beyond.

The secondary target group will be the general public with the aim of raising awareness of the national and regional efforts to provide sustainable solution to the firearms issues and develop priorities in line with citizens’ needs. The public will be regularly informed of the project progress and results/impact, highlighting the focus on the beneficiary and wider context of the benefits for the society and the wider region. The Ministry of Interior is a well-renowned institution with a higher visibility recognition from the general public compared to UNDP, therefore cooperating with the Ministry in the implementation of the communication and

⁷ UNDP (2018). Let’s Speak Gender: 10 principles of gender-responsive communications.

visibility activities will ensure higher reach of the disseminated information among the general public in the country. In order to send clear messages in understandable manner to the general public, the project’s activities and results will be communicate through creating appealing content such as videos, testimonials, PR articles, stories, etc.

Finally, the third target group include the international community, civil society and the private sector. The plan is to inform Embassies, NGOs and private-sector associations and other entities by sharing information of their interest related to the project activities and the progress achieved. The goal will be to raise interest for possible partnerships and support of similar projects in the future that would magnify the impact of this initiative/project. Project activities, results and impact will be communicated clearly to the rest of the donor community.

The main message is that supporting MoI to create relevant evidence-based SALW policies goes a long way in creating an improved criminal justice response and ultimately towards peace and more just, safe and violence-resilient communities.

The communication channels and tools will include mass and social media, digital communication, audio-visuals, promotional materials, and events. Information on the activities completed under the project will be properly distributed through official social media accounts. Promotional materials bearing the donor, Roadmap and UNDP logos and insignia will be distributed to event attendees. The appropriate events and official activities will be covered by mass media (journalists invited, press releases sent to media).

All communication, information and press statements will be in line with MPTF Visibility Guidelines. UNDP North Macedonia will regularly report on the implementation of the communication and visibility plan.

Activity	Timeframe
Preparation phase Project branding (preparation of roll-up banner and training materials branded with logos of donors, project beneficiary and UNDP) Preparing detailed communication plan for the project	First month of the project implementation
Short promotional animated videos explaining the achievements of the project	Following completion of activities
Promoting the project activities on the social media channels of UNDP and the MoI	During the whole implementation period
Preparing interviews with the key stakeholders, PR articles and stories	During the whole implementation period
Organizing promotional events	Following completion of activities
Final event	Last month of project implementation

9. Knowledge Management

The project “Strengthening the Capacities of the Forensics and Crime Scene Investigation System to Improve Criminal Justice Response to SALW” aims to further improve the analytical and investigation operational capacities of the Ministry of Interior and law enforcement authorities in North Macedonia in order to increase the speed and reliability of firearm investigations, as well as related data analysis and management, through a series of coordinated activities.

Within the activities of the project, a detailed needs-based analysis focused on the areas of improvement to crime scene investigation (CSI) will be produced. The needs-based analysis will be complementary to the already developed UNDP SEESAC’s Needs Assessment Report on Capacities for Crime Scene Investigation, and it will involve technical specifications for the necessary interventions, that will be prepared in close cooperation with the Bureau of Public Security and the Forensic Department in the Ministry of Interior.

The project will provide the training materials and necessary training relating to the use of the simulation rooms and specialized CSI kits, including gender awareness training to CSI staff.

Regular experience and lessons learned throughout implementation of activities will be an integral part of the networking with the purpose of ensuring information flow. Feedback mechanisms will also be established to ensure that project stakeholders have the opportunity to provide feedback on project activities and outcomes, thereby strengthening the co-creation processes. Furthermore, to increase the impact of the project, close synergies will be ensured with other UNDP-implemented interventions in the field of democratic governance. Knowledge, good practices and lessons will be captured regularly, as well as actively sourced from other projects and partners and integrated back into the project.

10. Project Management Structure

UNDP North Macedonia will be responsible for the overall management of the Project, including monitoring and evaluation of interventions, achieving of the objectives and specified results, and the efficient and effective use of resources. The MPTF Secretariat will ensure second level monitoring and evaluation, as well as coordination and coherence for all projects funded under the Western Balkans Multi-Partner Trust Fund.

UNDP North Macedonia will implement activities in close collaboration with the project beneficiary, the Ministry of Interior (Moi), for the achievement of immediate objectives as well as for the administration of financial and human resources. UNDP North Macedonia has had prior fruitful collaboration with the Moi on three previous projects, which were successfully implemented as a result of the strong commitment of the project beneficiary. The management of allocated funds will be carried out in accordance with UNDP financial rules and regulations, based on a work plan with a detailed budget. UNDP Macedonia manages overall implementation, while reporting back to donors is done with coordination assistance from the MPTF Secretariat.

The daily management of the project will be carried out by the UNDP team in North Macedonia under a Direct Implementation Modality (DIM). UNDP shall be responsible for the overall management and administration of the project, primarily regarding the responsibility for the achievement of the outputs and the stated outcome.

The **Project Board Members** are going to be the President of National SALW Commission and the Heads of Moi Departments, beneficiaries of the project activities. The Project Board members will be consulted by the Project Manager for decisions when the project exceeds tolerances, normally in terms of time and budget; reviews will also be conducted at designated decision points during implementation. Similarly, UNDP will be accountable to the Project Board and the MPTF Steering Committee for the use of project resources.

The Project Board will hold meetings annually, or more frequently if deemed necessary. The Board will monitor programme progress, decide on strategic decisions to ensure continued coherence between implementation and goals and objectives, decide on respective annual work plans and budgets, and revise annual plans, and requests for funds presented by UNDP.

UNDP will delegate managerial duties for the day-to-day running of the Project to the Project Manager whose prime responsibility is to ensure that the project produces the results specified in the project document, to the required standard of quality and within the specified constraints of time and cost. The Project Manager will report directly to the Programme Officer, Head of the Democratic Governance Unit. The role of the Project Board as part of the Quality Assurance process, will be to monitor the project's progress, risk management, lessons learnt, and decide on the way forward.

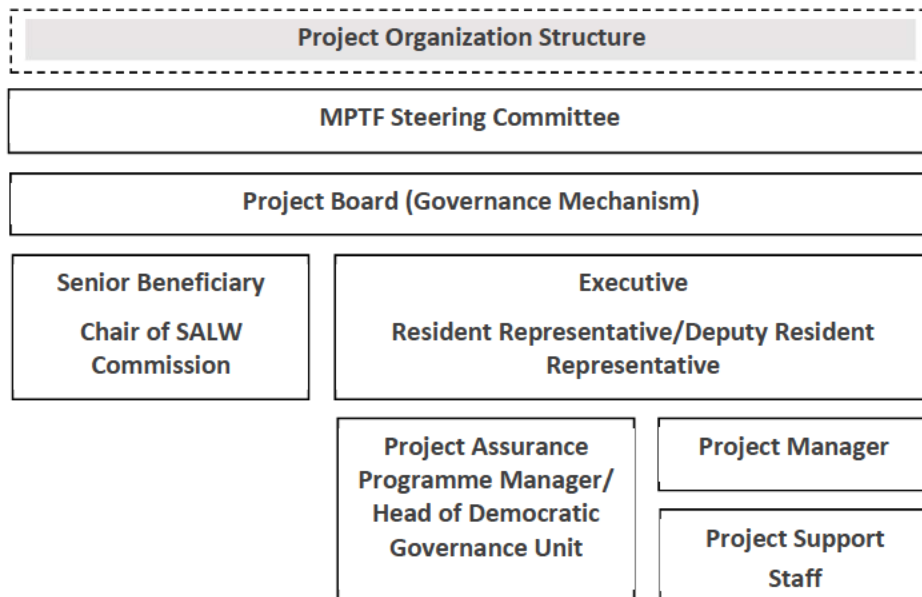
Project Assurance: The Project Assurance role carries out objective and independent project oversight and monitoring functions, ensuring that appropriate project management milestones are managed and completed. The UNDP Programme Officer is responsible for this function.

Project Team: Implementation of the project will be carried out by the project team.

The Project Manager is responsible for managing the capacity development of and ties with institutions/partners at the national level, achieving the overall project outputs and day-to-day management of the project implementation.

The Project Assistant is responsible for the overall administrative and financial/budgetary matters related to the project implementation, prudent use of funds, regular and accurate reporting, and general support to the project coordination and project manager in achievement of **project's output**.

The Project Specialist/IT and Digitalization Analyst is responsible for analysis of processes and procedures as they relate to the specific work of the project beneficiary, with emphasis on the processes that are going to be revised and/or are related to this project. Furthermore, the Project Specialist acts as an IT and Digitalization Analyst in relation to all activities relating to improvement of IT infrastructure.



Annex 1: Project Detailed Budget

Project Proposal Budget	
Title of Project Proposal: Strengthening the Capacities of the Forensics and Crime Scene Investigation System to Improve Criminal Justice Response to SALW	
Implementing entity:	UNDP North Macedonia
Project implementation period:	21 months (January 2024 - September 2025)

		Activities	Description of expense (please include details related the exact types of goods and services to be procured, including the number of units required)	Original Total budget	Revised Total budget	Variance
Outcome 1: Enhanced police operations and improved criminal justice response in the field of possession, misuse and trafficking of small arms and light weapons through improved technology and strengthened analytical and investigation capacities of the forensics and crime investigation system of the Republic of North Macedonia.	Output 1.1. Ballistic facilities and operations of MoI's Forensics Department are upgraded	Activity 1.1.1. Preparation of technical specifications for interventions and upgrades in the indoor shooting range	International consultant - forensic expert (30 working days)	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$0
			Local consultant - civil engineer (20 working days)	\$4,000	\$4,000	\$0
			Travel (international travel of expert, local travel as necessary)	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$0
		Total Activity 1.1.1	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$0	
		Activity 1.1.2. Interventions and upgrades in the indoor shooting range	Construction works and procurement of equipment - the identified interventions will be conducted by a construction company, while the relevant equipment will be procured	\$190,000	\$195,000	\$5,000
	Communication activities (promotion event, visibility materials, social media costs)		\$5,000	\$5,000	\$0	
	Total Activity 1.1.2	\$195,000	\$200,000	\$5,000		
	Total Output 1.1		\$210,000	\$215,000	\$5,000	
	Output 1.2. Analytical, technical and investigative	Activity 1.2.1. Preparation of a detailed needs-based analysis for necessary improvements to the CSI system	International consultant - CSI and forensic expert (20 working days)	\$10,000	\$6,000	-\$4,000
			Local consultant (20 working days)	\$0	\$5,000	\$5,000
Travel (international travel of expert, local travel as necessary)			\$1,000	\$1,000	\$0	
Total Activity 1.2.1		\$11,000	\$12,000	\$1,000		

	Activity 1.2.2. Training and simulation facility for continuous learning on CSI	Construction works and equipment for training and simulation facility - the identified interventions will be conducted by a construction company, while the relevant equipment will be procured	\$290,000	\$224,000	-\$66,000
		International consultant for training (10 working days)	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$0
		Training (venue, equipment, refreshments)	\$9,000	\$4,000	-\$5,000
		Communication activities (promotion event, visibility materials, social media costs)	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$0
	Total Activity 1.2.2		\$309,000	\$238,000	-\$71,000
	Activity 1.2.3. Provision of equipment for enhanced connectivity and access to databases of CSI technicians	Local consultant - hardware expert (20 working days)	\$4,000	\$4,000	\$0
		Personal computers, hardware, scanners, printers, laptops for 28 units	\$50,000	\$70,000	\$20,000
		Software for processing CSI documentation (license) and training for its use	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$0
	Total Activity 1.2.3		\$64,000	\$84,000	\$20,000
	Activity 1.2.4. Advancing CSI evidence collection through provision of specialized kits and strengthening gender awareness	Specialized CSI kits (individual equipment kits for CSI officers in the country)	\$100,000	\$125,000	\$25,000
		International consultant for training (10 working days)	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$0
		Strengthening gender awareness (contracting of local CSO that works in the field of gender-based violence)	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$0
		Training facilities (venue, equipment, refreshments)	\$8,800	\$8,800	\$0
		Communication activities and final event (visibility materials, event costs, social media costs)	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$0
	Total Activity 1.2.4		\$133,800	\$158,800	\$25,000
Activity 1.2.5. Exchanging experience on CSI	Travel (international travel for 10 MoI and UNDP project staff)	\$10,000	\$30,000	\$20,000	
Total Activity 1.2.5		\$10,000	\$30,000	\$20,000	
Total Output 1.2		\$527,800	\$522,800	-\$5,000	

	Output 1.3. Police Information Management System (IMS) and data	Activity 1.3.1. Development of a module on domestic violence and related technical and expert support for the Police IMS use	Software development - a software company will be engaged to develop the module (phase 1, 2024) and the reporting/alert system (phase 2, 2025) in the existing Police IMS.	\$110,000	\$110,000	\$0	
			IT and Digitalization Analyst (75%, 21 months)	\$47,200	\$47,200	\$0	
			Total Activity 1.3.1		\$157,200	\$157,200	\$0
			Total Output 1.3		\$157,200	\$157,200	\$0
			Total Outcome 1		\$895,000	\$895,000	
Project Management	Project management costs	Project Manager (100%, 21 months)		\$63,000	\$63,000	\$0	
		IT and Digitalization Analyst (20%, 21 months)		\$12,600	\$12,600	\$0	
		Project Assistant (100%, 21 months)		\$48,300	\$48,300	\$0	
		Programme Officer (15%, 21 months)		\$25,200	\$25,200	\$0	
		Communications Specialist (20%, 21 months)		\$12,600	\$12,600	\$0	
		Laptops and accessories (3 computers for full-time project staff)		\$300	\$300	\$0	
		Networking and security (security costs for full-time project staff)		\$600	\$600	\$0	
		Communication services (mobile phone subscription for 21 months for full-time project staff)		\$1,400	\$1,400	\$0	
		E-mail subscription (for 21 months for full-time project staff)		\$1,000	\$1,000	\$0	
		Office rent & maintenance (for 21 months for full-time project staff)		\$13,200	\$13,200	\$0	
		Office supplies (for 21 months for full-time project staff)		\$800	\$800	\$0	
			Total PM:		\$179,000	\$179,000	\$0
		TOTAL costs of activities & PM				\$1,074,000	\$1,074,000
GMS 7%				\$75,180	\$75,180	\$0	
TOTAL Budget (GMS included)				\$1,149,180	\$1,149,180	\$0	

Annex 2: Project Budget by UNDG categories

Budget per UNDG categories									
Title of Project Proposal: Strengthening the Capacities of the Forensics and Crime Scene Investigation System to Improve Criminal Justice Response to SALW									
Implementing entity: UNDP North Macedonia									
Project implementation period: 21 months (January 2024 - September 2025)									
UNDG Budget Category	2024	Revised 2024	2025	Revised 2025	TOTAL	Revised TOTAL	Variation (USD)	Variation (%)	
1. Staff and other personnel costs	\$ 14,400	\$ 11,800	\$ 10,800	\$ 13,400	\$ 25,200	\$ 25,200	\$ -	0%	
2. Supplies, Commodities, Materials	\$ -	\$ 50,000	\$ 100,000	\$ 75,000	\$ 100,000	\$ 125,000	\$ 25,000	25%	
3. Equipment, Vehicles and Furniture including Depreciation	\$ 260,000	\$ 244,000	\$ 280,000	\$ 245,000	\$ 540,000	\$ 489,000	\$ (51,000)	-9%	
4. Contractual Services	\$ 205,000	\$ 153,600	\$ 174,500	\$ 231,900	\$ 379,500	\$ 385,500	\$ 6,000	2%	
5. Travel	\$ 11,000	\$ 31,000	\$ 1,000	\$ 1,000	\$ 12,000	\$ 32,000	\$ 20,000	167%	
6. Transfers and Grants to Counterparts	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	0%	
7. General Operating and Other Direct Costs	\$ 9,700	\$ 9,700	\$ 7,600	\$ 7,600	\$ 17,300	\$ 17,300	\$ -	0%	
Total Direct Costs	\$ 500,100	\$ 500,100	\$ 573,900	\$ 573,900	\$ 1,074,000	\$ 1,074,000	\$ -	0%	
Indirect Support Costs	\$ 35,007	\$ 35,007	\$ 40,173	\$ 40,173	\$ 75,180	\$ 75,180	\$ -	0%	
GRAND TOTAL	\$ 535,107	\$ 535,107	\$ 614,073	\$ 614,073	\$ 1,149,180	\$ 1,149,180	\$ -	0%	

Annex 3: Project Results Framework

Objective⁸: The objective of the project is to modernize the forensic and Crime Scene Investigation (CSI) system in the Republic of North Macedonia, with the aim of improving the quality of investigation and establishing a more efficient criminal justice response to SALW in line with four of the seven Roadmap goals (1, 2, 3 and 4). The project will also enhance gender-sensitive data collection and management through upgrade of the Police Information Management System with a new module on domestic violence, in line with Goal 2 of the Roadmap.				
Result⁹	Indicators¹⁰	Baseline	Target	Means of verification (MoV)
Outcome 1: Enhanced police operations and improved criminal justice response in the field of possession, misuse and trafficking of small arms and light weapons through improved technology and strengthened analytical and investigation capacities of the forensics and crime investigation system of the Republic of North Macedonia.				
Output 1.1: Ballistic facilities and operations of Mol's Forensics Department are upgraded.	1.1.1. Technical specifications on the necessary interventions and upgrades to the ballistic facilities of Mol's Forensic Department prepared.	1.1.1. No A needs-based assessment is in place, but no detailed technical specifications for the upgrades .	1.1.1. Yes Completed technical specifications that will serve as basis for necessary upgrades.	Technical specifications document / expert report.
	1.1.2. Indoor shooting range upgraded in line with international safety and security requirements for forensic examination of ballistic evidence.	1.1.2. No The present shooting range does not fulfill international safety and security requirements for forensic examination of ballistic evidence (0).	1.1.2. Yes Upgraded shooting range fully meets international safety and security requirements for forensic examination of ballistic evidence.	Construction/equipment documentation. Mol/official records and statements. Handover documentation. Official ceremony records.
Output 1.2: Analytical, technical and investigative capacities of the Crime Scene Investigation (CSI) units are enhanced	1.2.1. Availability of needs-based analysis for necessary technical improvements to the CSI system.	1.2.1. No A general needs assessment report on the gaps in the CSI system has been developed, but no detailed needs-based analysis for the necessary technical improvements (0).	1.2.1. Yes Completed needs-based analysis and technical specifications that will serve as basis for improvements to the CSI system.	Technical specifications document. Expert report.
	1.2.2. Training and simulation facility for Mol's CSI system in place.	1.2.2. No No CSI training and simulation facility exists in the country (0).	1.2.2. Yes CSI training and simulation facility equipped and in use	Handover document. Mol statements/records. Training and simulation facility technical documentation.
	1.2.3. Level of technical capacities of CSI system upgraded based on baseline assessment/specification (rating scale: Low, Moderate, High).	1.2.3. Low Expert assessment/specification. [Lack of adequate IT equipment software solutions, insufficient specialized CSI kits]	1.2.3. High [CSI system operates with modern IT equipment and software solutions. The CSI system has at its disposal individual CSI kits for its staff members]	Donation agreements. Official statements/documentation. Mol records.

⁸ As per the project proposal.

⁹ Please add or delete outcome or outputs, as per the project proposal.

¹⁰ Please add or delete indicators. Limited number of key indicators is recommended per output.

	1.2.4. Number of operational peer exchanges on modern CSI tools, equipment and practices with CSI staff from the Ministry of Interior.	1.2.3. 0 No specific exchange of experiences on modern CSI tools, equipment and practices has been implemented.	1.2.3. 1 Successfully completed exchange of experiences and knowledge, that helps acquaint the CSI units in North Macedonia with the benefits and uses of modern CSI tools, equipment and practices.	Exchange visit report(s)
Output 1.3: Police Information Management System (IMS) and data management, inclusive of firearms-related cases, are advanced through implementation of a gender-sensitive approach	1.3.1. Module on domestic violence developed and integrated in IMS.	1.3.1. No Baseline assessment for the DV module developed.	1.3.1. Yes DV module developed and integrated in the existing Police IMS.	Module plan and administrative/technical documentation Contractual service contract. Mol IMS records.

Annex 4: Project Risk Matrix

#	Description	Category	Impact & Likelihood	Risk Treatment/ Management measures	Risk Owner	Current status [September 2024]
1	Risk 1 Country-level political instability, causing decision delays and/or lack of commitment to project objectives	Political, Strategic	If the long-standing political instability in the country, as a result of frequent elections and political changes continues, delays may occur in overall project implementation, causing decreased delivery in the first year of the project. I = 4 P = 3	Project activities have been designed in close cooperation with representatives from the relevant institutions to obtain strategic compliance and commitment and create sense of ownership. The initial political support was secured through an official request letter submitted by the President of the SALW Commission, as well as a meeting of the SALW Commission dedicated to discussing the needs for improvement of the SALW control system of the country. With the establishment of the Project Board and in close consultation and regular coordination with Project Board members, this risk will be reviewed and actions to mitigate impact will be implemented. The project interventions are in line with the international commitments as related to Roadmap implementation and UN policy framework, including strategic objectives of the MoI as well as the MKD Government vis-a-vis- EU accession. This should ensure continuous commitment and engagement of the project beneficiary, despite possible political changes. UNDP will coordinate with senior staff in the Ministry of Interior to ensure active engagement of all staff for timely implementation of project activities. UNDP's preferential access to the government and long-standing partnership with public sector stakeholders will guarantee high level political commitment and endorsement of the project.	RR, Programme Officer, Project Manager	Ongoing The risk materialized with the changes in the government following the parliamentary elections. The project has faced delays in decision-making, due to change among the interlocutors. Nevertheless, the project and its activities have been reconfirmed with newly appointed officials and are proceeding with no changes in substance. The project team maintains regular communication with key interlocutors to ensure continuous ownership and sustainability of results.
2	Risk 2 Continuation of political and global crisis, causing delays in	Political, Organizational, Operational	The crisis in Ukraine so far affected many aspects in energy, production, and distribution of the goods in Europe. The global crisis	To mitigate the risk, UNDP will proactively reach out and inform a wide network of relevant vendors of ongoing tenders for the purchase of equipment.	RR, Programme Officer, Project Manager	Ongoing

production and distribution of equipment, in conducting construction activities, as well as price fluctuations

can affect production, distribution and import, as well as price fluctuations of special equipment and construction materials that are planned to be procured as part of this project, in particular under Output 1.1 and Output 1.2, which cover 64% of the total project budget.

I = 4
P = 3

UNDP will closely liaise with the Ministry of Interior representatives in order to jointly manage this risk, as well as use their contacts and stakeholders in the risk mitigation activities.

UNDP will closely follow the pricing changes and fluctuations of the relevant equipment, materials and works, and will timely conduct the necessary budget revisions in order to allocate sufficient funds for completion of planned activities.

UNDP will also liaise with other COs in the region which have worked on similar upgrades and activities, in order to relay experience, advice and resources that will help avoid delays and mitigate risks in the procurement procedures. The potential prolonged procurement processes for planned activities have been taken into account in the project's work plan, although unforeseen delays may occur.

3 Risk 3

Ineffective coordination and weak management and operational capacities between departments within the project beneficiary undermines expected results

Operational, Organizational

Lack of management and operational capacities for efficient coordination of project activities affects the timelines, delivery, engagement and ownership of project results.

I = 3
P = 3

The project will establish coordination with designated staff and managers who already have experience in project management, expertise in SALW and are familiar with the work and objectives of the National SALW Commission or are part thereof.

UNDP North Macedonia maintains an excellent cooperation with the Forensics Department in the Ministry of Interior, which have proven to be reliable partners in the implementation of three pas and ongoing projects in the country. This cooperation will continue in order to successfully manage the risks on both sides.

UNDP will coordinate with senior staff (members of the Project Board) in the Ministry of Interior to ensure active engagement of all staff for timely implementation of project activities.

When considered appropriate, UNDP will put forward some of the encountered risks or proposed solutions to the Project Board as part of the project management structure.

RR, Programme Officer, Project Manager

Ongoing
The project has faced delays in the communication with the Mol's IT department, which has affected the timeline of the activity for the development of a new module for the Police Information System. The difficulties are being resolved, ensuring the ownership of results by the beneficiary.

