

WESTERN BALKANS SALW
CONTROL ROADMAP
MULTI-PARTNER TRUST FUND

ANNUAL REPORT 2024

NARRATIVE REPORT · FINANCIAL REPORT

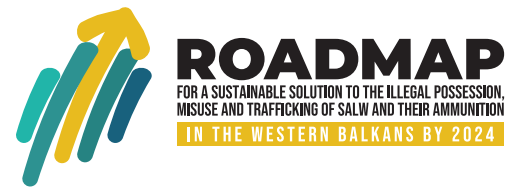


ROADMAP
FOR A SUSTAINABLE SOLUTION TO THE ILLEGAL POSSESSION,
MISUSE AND TRAFFICKING OF SALW AND THEIR AMMUNITION
IN THE WESTERN BALKANS BY 2024

**WESTERN BALKANS SALW CONTROL ROADMAP
MULTI-PARTNER TRUST FUND**

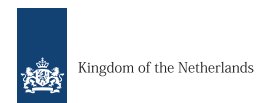
ANNUAL REPORT 2024

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The 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

Contributors:



Participating UN Organizations:



Administrative Agent:



Supported by:





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List of Abbreviations

AEA	Arms/Explosion/Accident
AEL	Arson and Explosives Laboratory
AF	Armed Forces
BiH	Bosnia and Herzegovina
BCP	Border Crossing Points
BP	Border Police
CEPOL	European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Training
CIAT	Countering Illicit Arms Trafficking/Trade
CL	Chemical Laboratory
CoE	Council of Europe
CoP	Community of Practitioners
CSI	Crime Scene Investigation
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CTST	Counter Terrorism Search Training
DPO	Designated Postal Operator
EMPACT	European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats
ENFSI	European Network of Forensic Science Institutes
EU	European Union
EUFOR	European Union Force in Bosnia and Herzegovina
EUROPOL	The European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation
FAE	Firearms, Ammunition and Explosives
FC	Forensic Centre

FFP	Firearms Focal Point
FRONTEX	European Border and Coast Guard Agency
GFP	Global Firearms Programme
GSR	Gun Shot Residue
iARMS	Illicit Arms Records and Tracing Management System
IBM	Integrated Border Management
ILP	Intelligence Led Policing
INTERPOL	International Criminal Police Organization
ITA	Indirect Taxation Authority of BiH / BiH Customs
JIT	Joint Investigation Team
LCMSMS	Liquid Chromatograph with Mass Spectrometer
LIMS	Laboratory Information Management System
MoD	Ministry of Defense
MoFTER	Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations of BiH
Moi	Ministry of the Interior
MoJ	Ministry of Justice
MoS	Ministry of Security of BiH
MoTC	Ministry of Transport and Communications of BiH
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MPTF	Multi-Partner Trust Fund
NABIS	UK's National Ballistics Intelligence Service
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization

OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PAD	Police Administrative Directorate
PUNO	Participating United Nations Organization
RPG	Rocket-Propelled Grenade
RS	Republika Srpska
SALW	Small Arms and Light Weapons
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SEESAC	South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of SALW
SHERLOC	Sharing Electronic Resources and Laws on Crime
SIMs	Special Investigative Measures
SIPA	State Investigation and Protection Agency of BiH
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
ToR	Terms of Reference
ToT	Training of Trainers
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNTOC	United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime
USA	United States of America
WB	Western Balkans

Foreword



It is my honour to present the sixth annual report of the **United Nations Multi-Partner Trust Fund in support of the [Roadmap for a sustainable solution to the illicit possession, misuse and trafficking of small arms and light weapons \(SALW\) and their ammunition in the Western Balkans by 2024](#)**. The report marks the sixth year of the Trust Fund's existence, going hand in hand with the Roadmap's implementation.

In 2024 the joint efforts of the Western Balkans authorities, partners and contributors to the Roadmap's implementation received valuable recognition. After six years of committed and continuous work in pursuing the Roadmap vision and goals, the overall **impact of the Roadmap** received well-deserved acknowledgement by the relevant authorities and partners at the [Berlin Process Summit](#) on 14 October 2024. The second phase of the Roadmap was endorsed at the European Union-Western Balkans [Ministerial Forum on Justice and Home Affairs](#) on 28-29 October 2024, thereby **extending the Roadmap's implementation until 2030**. Additionally, the relevance of the Roadmap for the further integration of the region into the European Union (EU) and its impact on regional cooperation and the fight against organized crime was acknowledged at the [EU-Western Balkans Summit](#) on 18 December 2024.



These regional efforts are strongly aligned with **global frameworks and international commitments** aimed at addressing the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. Let us recall that the United Nations (UN) [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) affirmed that sustainable development cannot be realized without peace and security and that illicit arms flows are amongst the factors which give rise to violence, insecurity and injustice. Under the [UN Programme of Action](#) to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, governments agreed to improve national small arms laws, import/export controls, and stockpile management – and to engage in cooperation and assistance. At the UN's [Fourth Review Conference](#) (RevCon4) in June 2024, the Member States renewed this commitment and highlighted the importance of regional and subregional cooperation, including through roadmaps. Particular focus was placed on the Western Balkans SALW Control Roadmap through [dedicated events](#), showcasing lead initiatives in SALW control to Member State delegates, UN entities, regional organizations and civil society organizations.

Over the years, the Western Balkans jurisdictions have remained steadfast in their commitment to achieving the Roadmap goals, as outlined in the [Roadmap progress reports](#). The extension of the Roadmap

to 2030 demonstrates the continued dedication of the authorities in the region to promoting peace and inclusiveness, supported by various local, regional, and international partners. Partnership remains a critical enabler for success to this end. The Trust Fund, its donors, contributors and the participating UN organizations, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Office on

Drugs and Crime (UNODC), ensure that the necessary support is in place to facilitate the progress of jurisdictions towards the Roadmap's implementation, yielding significant results in legislative, operational, procedural, and community engagement areas.

Nevertheless, the progress achieved thus far should not make us complacent. The complexity and scope of the challenge, alongside increased regional and global threats, urge us to stay alert as important work is still ahead.

The data trends on **firearm incidents in the Western Balkans** gathered by SEESAC's [Armed Violence Monitoring Platform](#) (AVMP) demonstrate that the increase in firearm incidents has not wavered. However, a positive indicator here is the fact that weapons seizures constitute the majority of these reported incidents. This encouraging trend in the data is no coincidence, as it reflects the targeted support the Trust Fund provides to enhance detection, seizure, and investigation capacities.

The Roadmap thus continues to serve as a guiding and consensual document developed and owned by the regional authorities towards achieving a sustainable solution to arms control.

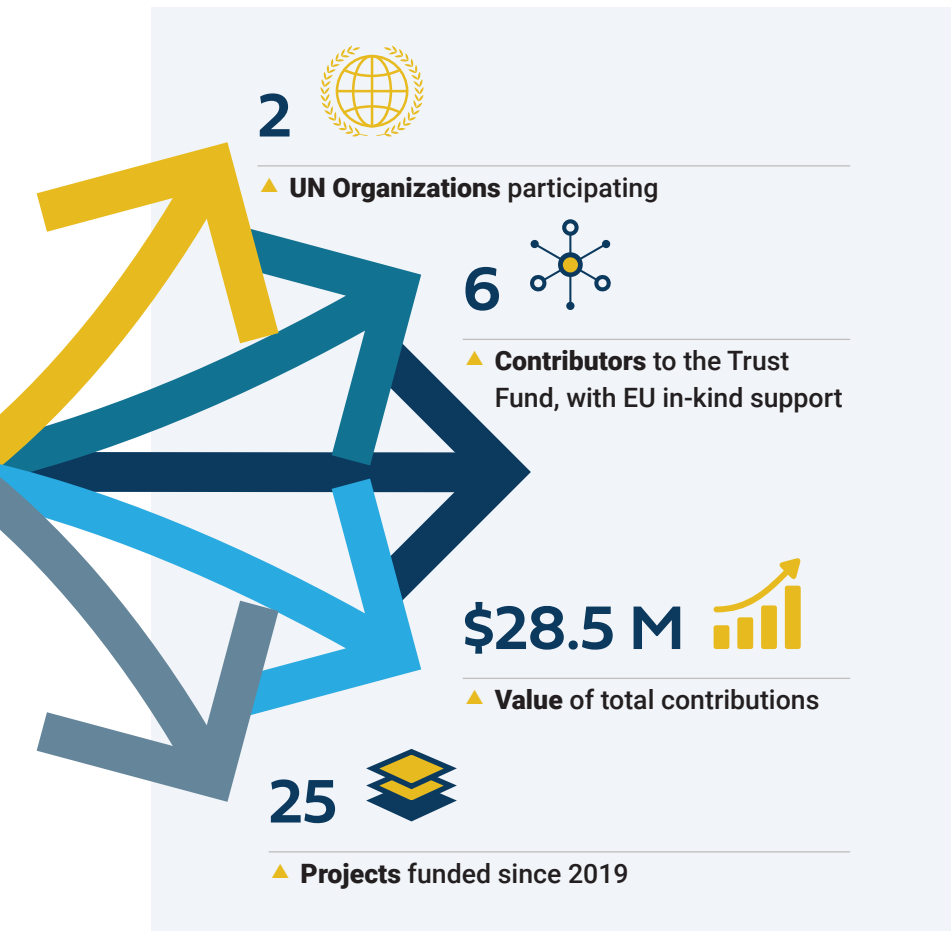
I invite you to delve into the Trust Fund's annual report at hand as an informative review detailing the Trust Fund's contribution to the achievement of the Roadmap goals. It highlights the specific activities conducted by the participating UN organizations in partnership with the authorities in the region, outlines the challenges encountered and lessons learned, and documents partnerships established and strengthened, as well as presents the work of the Trust Fund governance bodies in 2024.

Together, we remain committed to the Roadmap vision: *the Western Balkans as a safer region and exporter of security, where comprehensive and sustainable mechanisms, fully harmonized with the European Union and other international standards, are in place to identify, prevent, prosecute, and control the illegal possession, misuse and trafficking of firearms, ammunition and explosives.*

Together for a safer region and beyond.

Steliana Nedera
 Chairperson of the Steering Committee
 Western Balkans SALW Control Roadmap MPTF and
 Manager of the UNDP Istanbul Regional Hub

Executive Summary



In 2024, the Trust Fund and its two Participating UN Organizations, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), further solidified their comprehensive support to the authorities in the Western Balkans in addressing priority areas of the regional [SALW Control Roadmap](#) [the Roadmap]. The focus remained on the improvement of legislative, operational, and institutional frameworks, the advancement of human, technical, and digital resources towards SALW control, the upgrading of investigative and data collection methods and resources, the enhancing of gender-sensitive approaches, and the policy-making to tackle arms-related threats and risks, alongside the engagement of a diverse set of actors and communities towards these ends.

The Trust Fund remained steadfastly supported by its six principal contributors - the governments of Germany, Sweden, the Netherlands, France, the United Kingdom, and Norway, bolstered by the overall support of the European Union. In 2024, an additional US\$ 1 million was mobilized, bringing the total value of contributions to the Trust Fund to US\$ 28.5 million. Of the 12 projects ongoing at the year's beginning, four were successfully completed over the course of the year. The completed projects encompassed jurisdiction-level projects implemented by UNDP in Albania (2), Bosnia and Herzegovina (1) and North Macedonia (1).

The results of these projects span three Roadmap Goals (Goals 4, 5 and 7), encompassing the upgrading of weapons and ammunition storage facilities in Albania and North Macedonia, raised awareness on the dangers of firearms misuse in Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and improvement in data collection, management, and analytical capabilities of the Ministry of Interior in North Macedonia. In the last quarter of 2024, the Trust Fund launched one new project at a value of US\$ 1.28 million, which is to be implemented by UNODC and is to further solidify the progress made in countering the trafficking of firearms in postal shipments. This brought the total number of projects funded by the Trust Fund since its establishment to 25 projects at a total value of \$26.67 million.

With the ongoing portfolio of projects in 2024, the Trust Fund continued to provide support to the Western Balkans authorities in their dedicated efforts to achieve the Roadmap Goals, capitalizing on the previous work and investment, while strengthening local ownership and partnerships, knowledge tools and resources, community engagement, the integration of gender and human rights perspectives, and sustainability. The MPTF-funded projects individually and cumulatively have brought the Western Balkans jurisdictions closer to the commonly agreed vision for a safer region enshrined in the Roadmap.



Highlights from 2024



\$1 M

▲ Mobilized for SALW action

12

▲ Projects implemented

1

▲ New regional project approved

30

▲ Knowledge products developed

10

▲ Weapons storage facilities upgraded in Albania

\$5.5 M+

▲ People reached through awareness-raising campaigns

12

▲ Civil society organizations supported

620+

▲ Criminal justice practitioners engaged

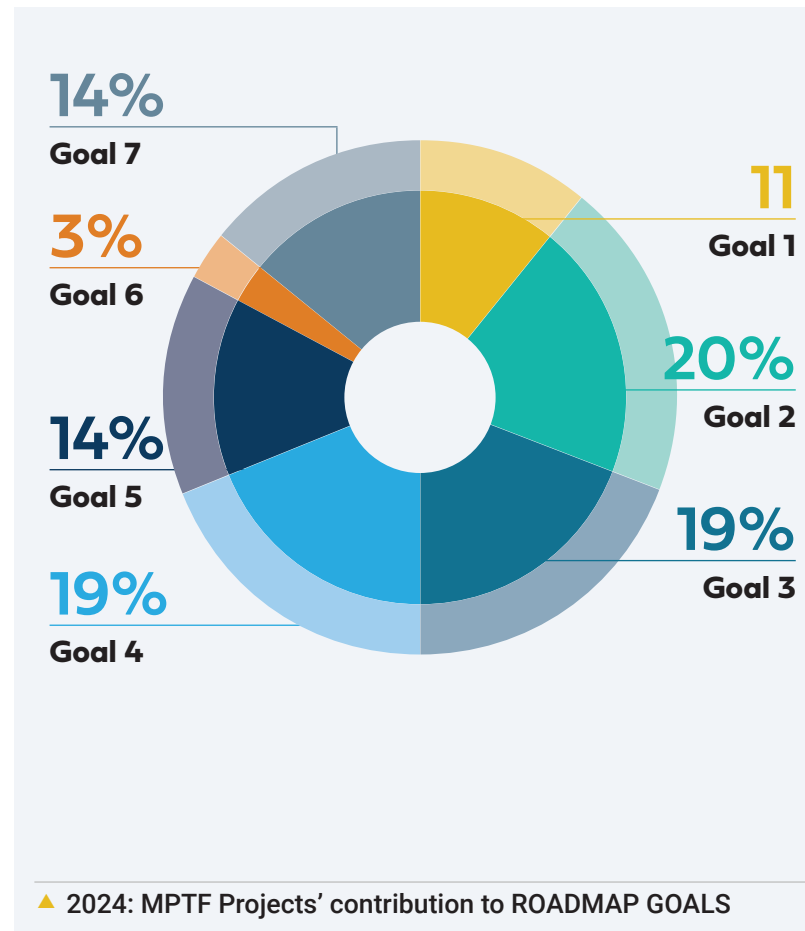
670+

▲ Police officers enhanced SALW control capacities



Progress towards the Roadmap Goals

The Trust Fund managed to deliver important results, supporting the Western Balkans authorities in continuing to advance towards achieving the Roadmap Goals. In 2024, **the Trust Fund contributed to all seven goals of the Roadmap**. 12 projects at a value of US\$ 14.2 million actively contributed to the Roadmap's implementation in a coordinated manner throughout the year, whereby each project supported multiple goals¹, with four projects contributing to the achievement of Goal 1, seven to each of Goal 2, Goal 3, and Goal 4, five to Goal 5, one to Goal 6, and five to Goal 7, as illustrated in the chart just below. The new project approved at a value of US\$1.28 million and launched in the last quarter of 2024 aims to contribute to Goals 3 and 5 of the Roadmap through the end of 2025.



¹ Reference is made to Annex 2 - Trust Fund Projects, where contribution to Roadmap Goals per project is specified.

GOAL

BY 2023

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 Trust Fund supported activities aimed at **harmonizing the criminal laws and criminal procedure laws** of the Western Balkan jurisdictions with the provisions of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) and the UN Firearms Protocol, thereby contributing to **Goal 1 of the Roadmap**. In 2024, with the Trust Fund's project support, amendments to criminal codes were finalized in **Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH)** and **Serbia** in accordance with the UN Firearms Protocol, pending adoption.

In line with Goal 1, progress was made in the **standardization of procedures and practices** in arms control and FAE investigations. Specifically, **Montenegro** and **Serbia** were supported in advancing six new forensic methods towards international accreditation (three per jurisdiction) in accordance with ISO 17025.

Additional support in advancing and standardizing crime scene and ballistic investigations was provided **across the region**. Relevant international and bilateral peer-exchanges were provided to all jurisdictions. Specialized equipment, infrastructural upgrades, and training towards these ends were provided to forensic institutions in **Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia**.

GOAL

BY 2024

2

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

In contributing to **Goal 2 of the Roadmap**, the Trust Fund resources enabled the authorities in the Western Balkans jurisdictions to further standardize and institutionalize data collection, increase analytical capacities and operational exchange, and better integrate gender concerns into policy-making. **Regional** exchange of good practices and challenges among law enforcement, prosecution, and judicial officials was enhanced through regional-level projects and cross-border initiatives supported by the Trust Fund. A comprehensive set of knowledge tools and resources was developed, enriching the platform for further evidence-based policy and practice.

In **BiH**, the jurisdiction continued to progress with its initiative to develop a new application for registering weapons in legal possession in the Federation of BiH. In **Albania, BiH, Kosovo², Montenegro, and Serbia**, forensic experts were supported in enhancing analytical methods and forensic practice for FAE evidence collection. In Montenegro, the jurisdiction upgraded its indoor shooting range at the Forensic Centre to ensure a safer and more efficient environment for conducting ballistic testing during forensic examinations of weapons and ammunition. In **North Macedonia**, the jurisdiction likewise upgraded the indoor shooting range at the Mol and it also progressed with the development of a Training and Simulation Facility for continuous advancement in crime scene investigation. Further options were considered for upgrading the jurisdiction's Police Information Management System.

Towards advancing the **gender-responsive policy making** and practice on SALW control, a gender-sensitive guideline for criminal justice practitioners in the region was developed by UNODC and will be integrated into the respective tailored training materials for law enforcement, prosecution, and judiciary in the upcoming period. In BiH and Serbia, respective associations of women police officers were supported by UNDP to network and promote women's stronger engagement and gender mainstreaming in SALW control policies. The BiH's Ministry of Security enrolled in the Gender Equality Seal (GES) for Public Institutions program, which will foster the institution's gender-responsive policy making on SALW and security matters. In Serbia, the Ministry of the Interior collaborated with UNDP to advance gender-sensitive data collection for better evidence-based actions to prevent firearm misuse.

² References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of the UN Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999).

GOAL

BY 2024

3

By 2024, significantly reduce illicit flows of firearms, ammunition, and explosives into, within and beyond the Western Balkans.

To support the achievement of **Goal 3 of the Roadmap**, the Trust Fund projects worked in three directions: i) supporting the advancement and implementation of legal, policy, and procedural frameworks on the trafficking of firearms, ammunition, and explosives (FAE); ii) contributing to improved technical and operational capacities through the provision of specialized equipment and the training of targeted law enforcement units to prevent and counter the trafficking of FAE; and iii) enabling the strengthening of local, regional, and international cooperation to counter illicit arms trafficking.

At the **regional level**, the Trust Fund initiated in October 2024 the second phase of the regional Hermes initiative, which will enable the jurisdictions to build upon and implement the previously developed regulatory framework on countering trafficking in firearms via postal parcels. Relevant training materials and online courses were translated into local languages to support further capacity development in detecting and countering trafficking in firearms via postal parcels. In addition, a guideline was developed by UNODC on the prosecution of firearms trafficking through postal parcels.

All jurisdictions received tailored guidelines on the use of Special Investigative Measures (SIMs) in firearms trafficking (cross-border) cases. The developed guidelines incorporate international standards and national case law, offering practical support for both domestic enforcement and transnational cooperation. A compilation of human rights related jurisprudence in firearms-related criminal cases was developed by UNODC, encompassing all jurisdictions, to balance security and human rights in the adjudication of firearms trafficking and organized crime.

In all jurisdictions, the technical capacities of the police were further enhanced through the provision of specialized equipment for detecting and countering FAE trafficking. Complementary to these efforts, in **BiH**, four domestic joint exercises and two cross-border exercises with Montenegro were supported by UNDP, bringing together the police, customs officers, and prosecutors in testing existing procedures in detecting and countering illicit SALW flows. In addition, UNDP developed draft guidelines on SALW-related investigations for police cadets, designed for use in police academies and law enforcement training institutions across BiH. With UNDP support and in collaboration with the Prosecutor's Office, BiH customs officials acquired additional knowledge on criminal code procedures on firearms-related crime, while prosecutors from across BiH were engaged to identify gaps in

SALW-related investigation from the prosecutor's angle and incorporate these findings into a SALW Investigation guidebook for police agencies. The guidebook is to be finalized in 2025, with the aim of guiding police officers on proper actions and collaboration with prosecutors in investigating SALW-related crimes, thus enhancing the prosecution of firearms-related crimes. In **Albania** and **Kosovo**, a comprehensive training programme for police officers was rolled out to strengthen the detection, countering, and investigation of firearms trafficking.

Forensic investigations and learning from good international practice to counter firearms trafficking and enhance cross-border collaboration towards this end were supported in several jurisdictions. In **North Macedonia**, MoI representatives were supported by UNDP to learn from the good practice applied by the National Forensic Police Service (SNPS) in Écully, France, and to strengthen bilateral collaboration with French authorities in advancing relevant investigations. In **BiH** and in **Serbia**, a series of peer exchanges of ballistic and arson and explosives experts took place with support from UNDP, exploring the capabilities of respective laboratories, exchanging experiences through an examination of cases and difficulties encountered, and strengthening working relations for future collaboration. In **Kosovo**, UNDP enabled ballistic experts to professionally exchange experience and good practice in advanced ballistic analysis with the Forensic Centre in Zagreb, Croatia.

GOAL

4

BY 2024

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

Towards reducing the misuse of firearms in line with **Goal 4 of the Roadmap**, a series of **awareness-raising, educational, outreach, and advocacy activities** took place in 2024 across several jurisdictions. In **Albania**, efforts supporting the general awareness raising campaign that UNDP supported in 2024 were joined with those of the OSCE Presence in Albania, which also bolstered the Ministry of the Interior and Albanian State Police in enhancing their public information on SALW matters and in raising awareness on SALW misuse and related risks and threats. The coordinated work reinforced outreach and enabled messaging multipliers and complementary action, thus ensuring that various dimensions of SALW control were comprehensively addressed. The public awareness campaign supported by the Trust Fund was rolled out in 2024 via social media and public outreach, aimed at SALW control and reducing firearms misuse and their illicit possession. The campaign was estimated to have reached around 1.5 million people. In addition, the campaign encompassed outreach to high schools as an integral component. The Albanian State Police and the school security officers were supported by UNDP in organizing meetings in high schools across the 12 regions of Albania, thereby raising awareness about the dangers and misuse of SALW among young women and men. The meetings engaged approximately 800 high school students.

In **BiH**, UNDP cooperated with police agencies to implement the third wave of the general awareness-raising campaign “Respect Life, Not Weapons.” The campaign addressed the voluntary surrender of (illicit) SALW, and encompassed TV, radio, digital channels, and out-of-home/billboard advertising. 13 outreach events were conducted in selected cities with the involvement of police agencies in the field. The campaign reached approximately 2.3 million individuals aged 18 and above.

In **Kosovo**, the jurisdiction with the support of UNDP developed tailored training curricula on SALW control, firearm misuse prevention, and the prevention of domestic violence and trained 516 community policing officers and members of Local Public Safety Committees and Municipal Community Safety Councils, thus building stronger and more informed partnerships between law enforcement and local communities. The “Celebrate with Your Heart, Not Your Gun” awareness raising campaign was supported by UNDP Kosovo office in the second half of 2024 through a diverse range of activities designed to engage and educate the community. Utilizing awareness-raising materials such as brochures, posters, radio jingles, video messages, social media posts, and a mural, the campaign effectively communicated its message on the dangers of celebratory gunfire and the importance of reporting firearm misuse during festivities. Additionally, it highlighted the risks and consequences associated with pyrotechnics and fireworks, particularly during year-end celebrations. Through multiple communication channels, the campaign reached a broad audience, estimated at more than 700,000 women and men. As reported by the Kosovo Police, an increase of 40% in the reporting of celebratory shootings was recorded by September 2024 as compared to 2023, coupled with a 28% increase in cases opened by the police.



In **Serbia**, UNDP supported the Ministry of Interior in implementing a national awareness and advocacy campaign during the 2024 “16 Days of Activism” global initiative, focused on bystander intervention and anonymous reporting of domestic violence. The campaign, featuring videos, audio clips, and visuals, was broadcast on television, radio, and digital platforms, reaching over 400,000 views on social media and 670,000 viewers via the national public broadcasting service (RTS).

Additionally, over 30 media reports were published, highlighting the consequences of domestic violence, including firearms misuse. A diverse set of actors were engaged to prevent the misuse of firearms. Police officers were engaged to exchange good practices in addressing complex domestic violence cases and successful community outreach strategies. The awareness of media photographers and photo-reporters was raised on the ethical visual depiction of the problems of violence against women and mass shootings, to support media reporting that contributes to prevention.

The Network of Women in the Police was supported by UNDP in organizing a high-level event, which enabled more than 130 participants to share best practices in preventing violence against women and firearm misuse in mass shootings and to strengthen collaboration among women in policing across various European jurisdictions on trauma recovery, violence prevention, and law enforcement responses. UNDP collaborated with the Institute of Public Health in Serbia to deliver training to more than 200 healthcare and legal professionals from 67 municipalities, improving their ability to identify risks of firearms misuse for violence and ensure victim safety. 31 representatives of the MoI Department of Psychological Activities, local police psychologists, heads of police stations and officers in charge of recruitment, were trained on reducing negative consequences of professional trauma, experienced by professionals involved in violent events with firearms. 31 mental health professionals were supported in strengthening their competencies and capacities in providing Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for children, adolescents, and families who are direct or indirect victims of mass shootings.

In BiH and Serbia, UNDP supported 12 civil society organizations (8 in BiH and 4 in Serbia) in implementing initiatives that raise awareness on, reinforce outreach in, and ensure message multipliers for preventing firearms misuse. It also supported bilateral networking between women police officers from the two jurisdictions, strengthening their role in SALW control policies and fostering cross-border collaboration.

GOAL

BY 2024

5

By 2024, substantially decrease the estimated number of firearms in illicit possession in the Western Balkans.

The Trust Fund's projects in **Albania, BiH, and Kosovo** cross-cuttingly contributed to **Goal 5 of the Roadmap**. The specialized capacity development and equipment that has been provided to law enforcement in the three jurisdictions is aimed at enhancing the detection of firearms and ammunition in illegal possession and their seizures (particularly at the border/boundary crossing points).

In addition, in Albania, the re-registration of firearms proceeded manually in 2024, using the IT equipment provided by UNDP; the issuance of digital cards for weapons owners is to take place at a later stage, after the reconstruction of the weapons registry system. Despite the difficulty of not being able to proceed with digital cards, noticeable progress in re-registration process has been documented, with about 94% of firearms manually re-registered by June 2024 (as compared to 55% of firearms re-registered in 2022).

In BiH, following the third wave of the general awareness-raising campaign supported by UNDP, police agencies reported voluntary surrender of 204 long barrels, 180 short barrels, 19,384 pieces of ammunition and 216 explosive ordnances.

GOAL

BY 2024

6

Systematically decrease the surplus and destroy seized small arms and light weapons and ammunition.

The Trust Fund contributed to **Goal 6 of the Roadmap** through the provision of support to the relevant authorities in **Kosovo**. Complementary to an awareness raising campaign on preventing the misuse of firearms, the jurisdiction had an official ceremony for the destruction of various illegal weapons and equipment, supported jointly by the UNDP office in Kosovo and SEESAC. 993 illegal firearms were destroyed in an environmentally safe manner on the occasion, whereby UNDP office supported the jurisdiction in destroying 680 confiscated firearms, while the remaining number was enabled by SEESAC. After being cut in half, firearms were placed in a specialized oven to be melted, producing manhole covers from the material which were then utilized across the jurisdiction.

GOAL

BY 2024

7

Significantly decrease the risk of proliferation and diversion of firearms, ammunition and explosives.

Finally, the Trust Fund contributed to **Goal 7 of the Roadmap** through its efforts in Albania, Kosovo, North Macedonia, and Serbia to ensure safe and secure SALW/firearms and ammunition storage facilities in accordance with international standards. In **Albania**, the reconstruction and refurbishment of 10 weapons and ammunition storage facilities (evidence rooms) was completed by UNDP and handed over to the Albanian State Police, along with additional equipment for the facilities. In **Kosovo**, Kosovo Police received 72 weapon storage metal cabinets from UNDP and these were installed in 7 police stations; in Prishtinë/Priština, Ferizaj/Uroševac, Gjilan/Gnjilane, Pejë/Peć, Vushtrri/Vučitrn, Glllogoc/Glllogovac, and Lipjan/Lipljan, thus further strengthening secure weapons storage practices across the jurisdiction. In **North Macedonia**, based on a developed needs-based analysis of the physical security of the weapons warehouses at the Gjorche Petrov Police Center, UNDP completed several interventions in line with the produced documentation, strengthening the security of the warehouses through improved electrical installations, new lighting, and a diesel generator for power outages. In **Serbia**, UNDP procured 130 metal lockers, 20 wooden storages, and 5 bullet traps to enhance the safety and security capacities of the MoI for storing firearms across the jurisdiction. Delivery of the equipment is to take place in 2025.

Trust Fund Governance

The Trust Fund's **Steering Committee** convened seven times during the year to: review and provide strategic guidance for the Trust Fund; review the progress of ongoing or completed projects; review and approve a new regional project; and discuss and decide on the future outlook of the Trust Fund.

The **Secretariat**, whose functions are ensured by SEESAC³, continued to provide support to the Steering Committee, facilitating the decision-making, coordination, monitoring, and reporting of the Trust Fund's results throughout the year. The Secretariat also reviewed project revisions and consolidated interim and annual progress reports submitted by the Participating Organizations, UNDP and UNODC.

The Secretariat regularly liaised with the **UN Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office**, as the administrative agent of the Trust Fund. The two worked together to ensure the accuracy of all processes and documents prepared, facilitate funds transfers as per Steering Committee decisions, and facilitate the new funding contributions to the Fund.

³ The Southeastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SEESAC), is a joint initiative of the governments in the region and UNDP, established in 2002 under the framework of the Stability Pact for Southeastern Europe, with the mandate to facilitate regional cooperation on SALW control, provide technical and advisory support to the governments, implement projects, monitor progress, and coordinate SALW control measures in Southeast and East Europe (www.seesac.org).

Cross-cutting themes, opportunities, and challenges in implementation

Dynamic project management was applied in realizing the projects to maintain the relevance of their actions, address priorities of project partners and beneficiaries, seize offered partnership opportunities, and adjust the timelines and courses of action to ensure local ownership, effective results, and sustainability. The projects pursued the respective project strategies and **theories of change** in 2024 with no major variations or challenges other than the slow pace of progress in some jurisdictions. Overall, the projects progressed in line with the established implementation framework, supported by a conducive political and operational environment. Despite the persistence of certain structural governance challenges in the Western Balkans, the authorities have continued to demonstrate their commitment to addressing SALW control in line with international obligations and commitments.

Efforts to **effectively engage with local authorities and a diverse set of actors** and **strengthen local ownership** were observed across jurisdictions. In general, coordination with SALW Commissions, law enforcement agencies, and Ministries of the Interior and Justice, including their active engagement in project activities and planning processes, was applied across the region. The UNODC and UNDP project teams took part in local and regional Roadmap coordination meetings supported by SEESAC, regularly shared information on project activities and progress achieved with relevant authorities and national and international partners and ensured the coordination of efforts as necessary.

Projects further expanded their **strategic partnerships**. In Albania and Montenegro, cooperation between the UNDP and OSCE ensured complementary action in the respective jurisdictions, on awareness-raising in Albania and on advancing the forensic work in Montenegro. UNDP in Serbia ensured synergetic action and support for trauma recovery and preventing mass shootings by engaging with the Ministry for Public Investment (tasked by the Government of Serbia to coordinate the post-May 2023 events healing and reconciliation process), the Ministry of Education, and the Norwegian Embassy in Belgrade to address the needs of survivors and affected communities following the May 2023 events. UNDP in North Macedonia forged a valuable partnership with the French forensic service, which brought cross-cutting benefits in advancing crime scene investigation in the jurisdiction. Regarding activities aimed at enhancing criminal justice responses, UNODC maintained its partnership with judicial and prosecutorial bodies and academia and strengthened its partnership with the Criminalistics Police University in Belgrade to enhance the capacity of the judiciary through specialized training in firearms identification. In support of awareness-raising efforts, cooperation was maintained with SEESAC and, as relevant, project teams took part in the Regional Awareness Raising Task Force (RAR TF) meetings. UNODC and UNDP also maintained communication with relevant initiatives of the European Union and/or bilateral agreements to ensure complementarity across the region, as applicable. In general, projects coordinated with SEESAC to avoid duplication of efforts with this regionally owned initiative, funded by the EU and representing the largest programme on SALW Control in Southeast and East Europe.

In addition to advocating for the participation of both women and men in all project activities, the promotion of **gender equality** and advocacy for stronger women's engagement in security and SALW matters and against gender-based violence was particularly noteworthy in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia. Progress was achieved through collaborations with the associations of women police officers, awareness-raising

activities, and the stronger engagement of civil society organizations. In Serbia, the relevant project activities placed a strong focus on gender-responsive policy making, with a broad range of stakeholders engaged in this respect to support the efforts. An added value towards gender mainstreaming was brought by UNODC's gender-sensitive guidance for criminal justice practitioners, which is to be integrated into the relevant tailored training materials for law enforcement, prosecution, and judiciary in the upcoming period.

The projects significantly expanded **knowledge tools and resources** for the regional authorities as related to the various aspects of SALW control and the prevention of firearms misuse.⁴ The **sustainability** aspects of the actions carried out across projects were considered during their implementation and progress reporting, and for project revision requests. The complexity of the upgrading of the Police Information Management System in North Macedonia and of the development of a digital solution for registering legal SALW in BiH required prolonged consultations and frequent adaptation of the project's plan. The project teams regularly consulted key beneficiaries and updated activities as per their needs, striving for continuous ownership and enhanced sustainability.

⁴ UNODC - 20: **Three** legal commentaries on criminal code provisions related to firearms offences in Skopje, Pristina, and Podgorica; **Four** specialized training courses with related material on the investigation and prosecution of firearms offences, tailored to local contexts in Belgrade, Podgorica, Sarajevo, and Skopje; **Six** jurisdiction-specific guidelines on the application of special investigative measures (SIMs) in firearms trafficking cases; **Five** case law collections (second editions) analyzing firearms, drug trafficking, and organized crime offences in Belgrade, Pristina, Skopje, Sarajevo, and Tirana; **One** guideline on the prosecution of firearms trafficking through postal parcels (linked to Project Hermes); **One** compilation of related human rights jurisprudence in all six WB jurisdictions relevant to the human rights of the accused. UNDP - 10: **One** PSSM Booklet in Albania; **One** Guideline on SALW-related investigations in BiH [pending validation]; **One** comprehensive training curriculum on SALW control in Kosovo; **Two** assessments on forensic work, one for Serbia and one for Montenegro; **One** comparative analysis on firearm-related femicides, in Serbia; **Four** knowledge products for joint training sessions for Kosovo and Albania.

A number of **challenges** were also observed. A tense **political environment** was reported in BiH and Serbia. In BiH, the fragile political situation coupled with a fragmented security sector and delays in some legislative developments continued to affect the pace of project implementation. In Serbia, following the Novi Sad city railway station canopy collapse on 1 November 2024, leaving 15 people dead and two severely injured, a series of mass protests began in Novi Sad. The protests have, since then, spread to numerous cities and towns throughout Serbia and remain ongoing, led by university students. The situation has resulted in social tensions. This has slowed down the progress of certain activities in the jurisdiction that involve the Ministry of the Interior, as well as those activities that entail cross-border collaboration between BiH and Serbia. Likewise, following the parliamentary elections in North Macedonia in May 2024, the resulting staff turnover and new political appointments in the Ministry of the Interior have impeded the progress in the jurisdiction for some activities. From the **operational aspect**, certain projects experienced delays or slow progress in the procurement of specialized equipment or expert services, in the development of IT/digital solutions (BiH and North Macedonia), or in the reconstruction and refurbishment of weapons storage facilities (Albania), all of which required adaptation of the project activity timelines, but with no other major impact on projects' implementation.

Contributions and transfers

In 2024, the Trust Funds' total value reached US \$29.1 million, with \$28.5 million in contributions from the donors and \$0.6 million from interest and investment income. About \$1 million was mobilized in 2024, from three principal donors: Germany (\$524,254), Sweden (\$363,361), and France (\$108,013). US \$26.7 million were transferred in total to the Participating UN Organizations by the end of 2024, out of which \$1.3 million was allocated in 2024 for a new regional project approved for funding in September 2024.

