There are potentially significant security and safety risks posed by the presence of stockpiles of conventional ammunition and explosives in post-conflict environments, and also those that are surplus to the new national security requirements and therefore awaiting destruction in many developing States. These risks can adversely affect the local population and the environment, and hamper sustainable development. Additionally, and just as importantly, the possibility of illicit trafficking and uncontrolled spread, especially to terrorists and other criminal groups, can have a negative impact on armed violence within communities and the security of neighbouring States. Therefore the destruction of these stockpiles should be considered as a significant conflict prevention measure, a confidence and security building measure as well as being a post conflict human security issue. From the perspective of SALW control, the UN definition includes weapons and related ammunition natures of 100mm calibre and below. Yet the destruction factors and issues surrounding the destruction of calibers above 100 mm are similar, and it seems to make sense when planning destruction under the auspices of SALW control to ensure that systems developed are capable of supporting the destruction of the larger calibres, which present very similar risks and hazards.

To date, the demilitarisation and destruction of ammunition within developing and post-conflict countries has been based on a wide range of factors, including treaty obligations, CSBM and available funds. To date, few projects or priorities have been developed in terms of human security. Small Arms Ammunition often has priority as donors have budgets to support the destruction of these particular natures, whereas the larger calibre ammunition and bulk explosives that can present the greater explosive and security risks are afforded a lower priority. Whilst this is understandable from a political perspective due to the range of international and local agreements concerning Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW), it is may not the most effective, or efficient methodology for approaching the destruction of a national stockpile in a holistic manner. Donor support for the destruction of elements of ammunition stockpiles as part of confidence and security building measures is understandable, and should be supported, but there is also an argument to suggest that the impact on; 1) the reduction of risk to the civil population (human security task area); or 2) the physical security of SALW (proliferation of SALW task area) should also be considered. One problem is that the term SALW means different things to different stakeholders and there is
therefore a lack of consistency when responses are planned or funded. Additionally, in some commercial cases, ammunition has been selected purely for ease of destruction or the potential return on material recovery, and minimal consideration has been paid to the selection of ammunition on security or humanitarian grounds.

It is highly unlikely that the international donor community can fund the destruction of all surplus SALW and ammunition even within South Eastern Europe, let alone the much larger stockpiles within Central and Eastern Europe and the remainder of the world. The stockpiles stored within the wider Europe as a legacy of the Cold War probably present the largest challenge, but the impact of poorly controlled stockpiles at the community level are also a global issue. To the community living at risk from the ammunition stockpile next door, it doesn’t matter what proportion it is of the global problem! This unfortunate fact means that prioritization for future ammunition destruction is complicated as the hard priorities of available national and donor resources versus threat should be considered.

This paper will therefore illustrate the threat within South Eastern and Eastern Europe, identify progress to date and suggest future priorities.