



Cooperating to Disarm

**STATEMENT BY THE REGIONAL CENTRE ON SMALL ARMS,
ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UNPoA DURING BMS4**

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By

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(Executive Secretary)

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, on behalf of the Regional Centre on Small Arms for giving me the floor to make this brief statement. Before I do, I wish to join others in congratulating you on your election as Chair of this meeting, and in thanking you and your team for the commendable work done in organizing this important gathering.

We wish to thank you for gracing the UN meeting organized with support from RECSA to strengthen the implementation of the UN Programme of Action on small arms and light weapons in the RECSA and Southern Africa sub-regions held in Kigali, Rwanda in July 2009.

In addition, RECSA associates itself with the statement by Nigeria on behalf of the Africa Group and RECSA Member States in this meeting.

Mr. Chairman,

Allow me to begin my statement by appreciating the initiative by the African Union in establishing a continental Steering Committee on small arms, which will go a long way in harmonizing small arms interventions within the African region.

Further, RECSA wishes to congratulate the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) on the entry into force of its Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons and welcomes the adoption by the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) of a legal instrument on small arms and light weapons in Central Africa.

Mr. Chairman,

RECSA continues to coordinate efforts of Member States in addressing the effective control of arms transfers within and outside the sub-region and also cooperates and collaborates with the African Union, the Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa (UNREC) and other regional and sub-regional organisations on the African continent and organised civil society.

Mr. Chairman,

Since the last BMS, four additional National Action Plans on Small Arms Control and Management to guide systematic national response to the challenge of small arms and light weapons were developed in 2009 in the Republic of Burundi, the State of Eritrea, the Republic of Rwanda (with financial support from the Government of Netherlands) and Republic of Djibouti with support from UNDP-BCPR.

In 2009, the Republic of Burundi and Republic of Rwanda adopted new SALW Legislation. The RECSA Secretariat is in the process of developing best practice guidelines on practical disarmament with financial assistance from the Government of Japan. The RECSA Secretariat continues to offer leadership and technical support to Member States and Regional bodies in these areas.

The RECSA Secretariat is pleased to report that a total of 31 arms marking units have been distributed to 12 RECSA Member States

in addition to the Republic of Zambia and Central African Republic.

The purchase of 26 of these arms marking units was made possible through the generous financial support of the Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement of the US Government and 5 machines were acquired through the East African Community/GTZ Small Arms and Light Weapons project.

The arms marking exercise is on-going in the RECSA Region. To date 72, 612 firearms have been marked in the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, Republics of Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda and Seychelles, and the United Republic of Tanzania. The marking of firearms results in improved identification, traceability, accountability and better stockpile inventory management.

Member States have also been active in ensuring that obsolete/surplus/collected SALW and ammunition are disposed appropriately. To date 309,735 SALW, 55,300 landmines and 6,371 tons of ammunition and UXOs have been disposed using various methods. This has in essence resulted into a reduced number of SALW in circulation and hence related risks associated with surplus stocks.

Mr. Chairman,

There has been increased awareness on the dangers of SALW and skills development in SALW research as a result of

awareness campaigns and national research trainings. This has resulted into voluntary surrender of SALW in selected Member States thus contributing to the enhancement of peace in the long run. A public awareness campaign held between August and October 2009 in the Republic of Burundi has resulted in the voluntary surrender of 2,594 firearms, 12,820 grenades, 540 bombs and 38 landmines as at 30th March 2010. A schools' essay writing competition held in Uganda sensitised the youth on the dangers of small arms. The winning student, a 14 year old girl, identified pertinent issues on the dangers of illegal small arms. These included their propagation of sexual abuse, cattle rustling, abductions, low levels of development, displacement of persons, among others.

Over all, the interventions undertaken have enhanced human security and development in the RECSA sub-region. There has been an improvement in human development within the RECSA Member States as indicated in the 2009 UNDP Human Development Report.

On this note I wish to thank the Governments of Netherlands, UK, Norway, US, Japan, Canada and Belgium, and UNDP-BCPR that have supported RECSA in the implementation of the Nairobi Protocol, and the European Commission through which RECSA is implementing the first pan-African continent-wide small arms project.

Despite the achievements, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons remains a monumental problem.

Finally, Mr Chairman,

RECSA notes the positive contribution of sub-regional instruments on small arms and light weapons in the implementation of the UNPoA and further notes the different standards therein. There is a need, therefore, Mr Chairman, for the international community to consider the establishment of minimum standards to guide sub-regional cooperation.

RECSA calls upon Member States, Development Partners and other stakeholders to join hands in the mobilization of resources required for the continued implementation of the UNPoA and sub-regional instruments.

I thank you.