



Co-operating to Disarm

April 2010 Activity Report

Regional media workshop

In recognition of the media's crucial role in reaching the public, RECSA collaborated with the Institute of Security Studies to bring together print and electronic journalists from the Member States for a two day media workshop in Mombasa, Kenya. The meeting was officially opened by Hon. Samuel Phogishio, Kenya's Minister for Communication and Information.

The meeting gave the two organisations an opportunity to raise awareness about their work in the region, issues of small arms and cattle rustling, the Nairobi Protocol on small arms, the Protocol on Cattle Rustling and other related issues. Journalists got an opportunity to exchange information on the challenges they face in reporting on matters of security.

Among other things, the meeting recommended convening of similar workshops at the national level in order to reach more journalists. RECSA and ISS were further encouraged to facilitate visits for journalists to communities affected by small arms and cattle rustling for better reporting of the problem. In addition, Governments in the region were called upon to freely avail security information to the media to enable them to report accurately to the public and to promote accountability.

Write to us for summary of workshop report.

Development of Small Arms and Light Weapons Software

RECSA is in the process of developing an integrated customised database for its member states to enhance the electronic management of SALW information for easier access and retrieval. The process is being undertaken under EU and Japan funded projects. The software will be expected to capture data generated during arms marking, and to also manage information about movement of arms

from Government armouries, manage records of civilians who own arms legally, and information on arms destruction/disposal.

The software will not only support the ongoing arms marking exercise in the region, but also enhance stockpile security and ease tracing of arms. This is in with Article 7 of the Nairobi Protocol on small arms.

Burundi arms destruction

The Executive Secretary, Dr. Francis K. Sang, represented RECSA at celebrations to commemorate the Africa Year of Peace in Bujumbura, Burundi. The highlight of the celebrations was the symbolic destruction of 1,000 illicit firearms collected during the recent disarmament exercise during which RECSA was given an opportunity to make a statement. This was preceded by a street march in Bujumbura to raise awareness about the Year of Peace and small arms.

The five East African Community (EAC) countries – Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda and Burundi – were represented at the celebrations. Also in attendance were representatives of the Africa Union, Common Markets of Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), and EAC.

Partners' Dialogue Forum

Under its draft five year strategy (July 2009 – 2014), RECSA envisages increased collaboration with its key partners at national and regional levels.

In line with this, the Secretariat hosted the second implementing partners' dialogue forum bringing together non-governmental and inter-governmental organisations implementing small arms work in the region. The aim of the meeting was to share information on the work going on under each organisation and to build synergies across organisations.

RECSA got an opportunity to update partners on its work since the last partners' meeting in February 2009. Participating organisations presented their priority areas and projected interventions.

The various organisations represented agreed to hold similar forums once a year and to regularly share information on the implementation of the Nairobi Protocol for easier identification of areas of mutual cooperation. The next meeting will be in 2011.

Regional Disarmament Project Launched

RECSA has received funding from the Japan Government through UNDP to implement a one-year regional disarmament project.

The project *Enhancing human security in the Great Lakes Region and Horn of Africa by preventing proliferation of illicit small arms through practical disarmament* is expected to produce best practices in disarmament to enhance cross-border cooperation between countries in disarming illegally armed groups. A baseline survey will be conducted in Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan and Ethiopia to inform the development of the guidelines. Under the project, RECSA will develop a small arms and light weapons information management software for its member states (see separate story on the software in this bulletin). Member States will also receive support to undertake destruction of obsolete/surplus Government stocks and recovered illegal arms.

The project was officially launched on April 20th in Mombasa, Kenya. The launch was followed by a two-day regional meeting to discuss practical disarmament. RECSA member states, inter-governmental bodies and the civil society shared experiences from their disarmament work. The discussions will inform the process of developing the regional disarmament best practice guidelines.

Uganda

The NFP conducted public awareness/sensitization and undertook formation of District Task Forces on SALW in five South Western Region Districts of Mbarara, Isingiro, Ibanda, Bushenyi and Kiruhura. In addition, arms marking is progressing with a total of 10,000 Police firearms marked to date. During the month, the exercise was concentrated in the Eastern Region Districts of Kapchorwa, Bukwo, Mbale, Sironko, Manafwa and Bududa.

Under the Conflict Early Warning and Early Response Programme, the Focal Point conducted an Assessment of Performance of District Peace Committees in the Karamoja Cluster Districts.

Country Updates

In May, Uganda destroyed 300 tonnes of obsolete ammunition and ordnances at the Nakasongola Military Base with financial and technical support from RECSA. The RECSA Executive Secretary, Dr Francis K. Sang, attended the arms destruction ceremony. He took the opportunity while in Uganda to pay a courtesy call on the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Internal Affairs, and the Hon. Minister of State for Foreign Affairs (Regional Cooperation) respectively, to brief them on current developments in the RECSA region.

Between 10th and 16th May, the Uganda National Focal Point on Small Arms collaborated with civil society in activities to mark "Global Week of Action Against Gun Violence". This year's theme was "Towards a Society Free of Gun Violence in Uganda". The Rt. Hon. Third Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Internal Affairs, Hon. Kirunda Kivejinja officiated the opening ceremony of the Week of Action at the Ministry Headquarters in Kampala. Activities carried out during the week included a Public Dialogue on gun violence with the Inspector General of Police being the Chief Discussant, a Seminar on the Arms Trade Treaty by two civil society organisations (EASSI and CECORE) and a visit to victims of gun-violence at Mulago Hospital.

In May, the Uganda NFP attended the IGAD/CEWARN meeting on the Rapid Response Fund in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

ENDS