



*Co-operating to Disarm*

## February 2009 Activity Report

### **RECSA to Coordinate Regional Disarmament Project**

RECSA has received funding from the Japanese Government to coordinate a regional disarmament project. The project titled ***Enhancing human security in the Great Lakes Region and Horn of Africa by preventing proliferation of illicit small arms through practical disarmament*** will run for two years. The funds are being channelled through the United Nations Development Programme-Kenya.

The initial core countries to be covered under the project are Kenya, Uganda and Ethiopia, with peripheral activities in Somalia. The project is expected to produce best practices in disarmament and provide an opportunity for lesson learning to inform future expansion of the project to other RECSA countries.

The Secretariat has held discussions with UNDP on the project concept.

The disarmament project is expected to contribute immensely to a reduction in the number of illegal small arms in the region in the ongoing endeavour to convert the region into a peaceful hub.

### **Updates on Development of National Action Plans – Rwanda and Burundi**

Under the **Implementation Plan of the Coordinated Agenda for Action on the Problem of the Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa** of November 2000, state parties agreed to *"Develop, implement and sustain a comprehensive strategy to combat the illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons, taking into account the linkages between arms proliferation and all aspects of human security and the long term objective of attaining peace, stability and development in the region"*.

In fulfilment of this agreement, RECSA is providing support to its Member States to develop national strategies in the form of action plans to guide small arms control and management. Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania have their plans in place.

The current focus is on Rwanda and Burundi which are at advanced stages in the process. During the month RECSA received a draft country report from the consultant leading the national survey process in Rwanda. Compilation of the NAP document will take place in early March. Burundi is expected to finalise its country report by mid March.

The Government of Netherlands is supporting the activities in the two countries.

### **Development of RECSA's Regional Strategy on Small Arms and Light Weapons**

During the month, the Secretariat held additional national stakeholders' workshops in Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda under the ongoing project of developing a strategy on small arms for the region. The first one was held in Seychelles in January. The meetings have presented an opportunity for the stakeholders to give their recommendations on the issues that should be covered by the national surveys.

The regional strategy will guide RECSA's interventions in the various countries by responding to their specific situations.

Researchers have been contracted in the Member States to undertake studies to shed light on various small arms issues in their countries. The studies are preceded by national workshops to sensitise various stakeholders whose support is required for the success of the project.

At the commencement of the project, RECSA brought together the lead national researchers from the 12 Member States. The aim was to agree on the research methodology and approaches.

The development of the regional strategy is being supported by the Government of Norway.

### **Collaboration with Stakeholders**

- *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 a one-day implementing partners' dialogue forum bringing together small arms stakeholders from around the region. The aim of the meeting was to harmonize plans and implementation for the next two years. This will go a long way in avoiding duplication of programmes and ensure achievement of results and build synergies. Partners in attendance were drawn from other regional bodies, UN agencies and civil society organisations.

RECSA got an opportunity to update partners on progress it has made in implementation of the Nairobi Protocol, and to present the draft five year strategy and a draft work plan drawn up to operationalise the strategy for the next two years. The two documents will be presented to the Council of Ministers meeting in April in Bujumbura for consideration and approval.

Participants presented their priority areas and projected interventions. These will be harmonised with the two year RECSA work plan to enhance synergies in the region.

The various organisations represented agreed to hold similar forums twice 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 is scheduled to take place in September 2009.

Organisations represented at the meeting were Africa Peace Forum, Eastern African Subregional Support Initiative for Advancement of Women (EASSI), Small Arms Survey, The Great Lakes Parliamentary Forum on Peace/AMANI Forum, United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa (UNREC), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Mines Advisory Group (MAG), Security Research and Information Centre (SRIC), Institute for Security Studies (ISS), Eastern Africa Action Network on Small Arms (EAANSA), Saferworld, FECCLAHA, IKV Pax Christi, East African Community, International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), and Fellowship of Christian Councils and Churches in the Great Lakes Area and the Horn of Africa (FECCLAHA).

- *RECSA at Regional Experts Meeting*

In recognition of its leading role in addressing small arms issues, RECSA was invited to participate at a three-day United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) meeting for regional experts for Eastern Africa. Twelve Countries attended the meeting. The purpose of the meeting was to feed into the proposed two year regional programme to address illicit drug trafficking and organized crime.

UNODC seeks to harness partnerships to pursue security and development, both of which are hampered by the proliferation of illegal small arms. RECSA is therefore an important partner in the two-year programme.

- *UNREC/RECSA/EAANSA Meeting*

On 5<sup>th</sup> February, RECSA hosted the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa (UNREC) and the Eastern Africa Action Network on Small Arms (EAANSA) in its offices in Nairobi.

Discussions centred around common areas of interest between the three organisations and possible areas of collaboration.

Database development for effective stockpile management and for increasing transparency and exchange of information in the RECSA region was identified as one of the areas for cooperation between UNREC and RECSA. This would build on other activities currently going on in the region to boost stockpile management and security, namely arms marking. Marking of arms goes hand in hand with record keeping, which is enhanced by electronic databases. UNREC has developed an advanced regional small arms database under the Small Arms Transparency and Control Regime in Africa (SATCRA) project.

Also proposed during the tripartite meeting was an 18-month project to provide training to civil society in the 12 RECSA Member States to strengthen their capacities to work in the field of peace and security in Eastern Africa. This would help them become instrumental in the fight for arms control and management, reduction, prevention and mitigation of conflict and peace-building. The proposed programme will be implemented jointly by the three organisations.

RECSA and UNREC are working on a Memorandum of Understanding which will formalize their relationship.

- *EAANSA Strategic Planning*

In the spirit of enhanced collaboration with its partners, including civil society, RECSA participated in the development of a strategic plan for the Eastern Africa Action Network on Small Arms (EAANSA).

The meeting held in Entebbe, Uganda, from 23<sup>rd</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> February, brought together EAANSA's working group, national chapters from Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi, DRC, Somalia and Seychelles, among other partners.

The engagement of RECSA in the strategic planning is in recognition of the organisation's lead position in the region in addressing small arms problems. In addition the process provided opportunity for cross-learning as RECSA has recently developed a five year strategic plan.

### **Capacity building for National Focal Points**

Among the key result areas under RECSA's draft five year strategy is Institutional Development. This is in recognition of the importance of sound institutions at the implementation level of the Nairobi Protocol.

Under this result area, RECSA's focus is to strengthen National Focal Points on Small Arms Management in its Member States. The Secretariat aims to build their capacity in order to increase the region's overall efficiency and effectiveness in implementing the Nairobi Protocol.

Officials from the Secretariat have visited nine Member States to provide support in the enhancement of financial management systems at the NFP offices. RECSA has further developed logistical guidelines on administrative practices at country level, especially in procurement. The establishment of sound systems and practices is expected to result in increased efficiency in the management of donor funds.

The remaining three countries (Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia and Somalia) will be covered in the next one to two months. The situation in Somalia may however, delay the process in that country to beyond that period.

This capacity building exercise is being supported by the Governments of USA and Netherlands.

## **Official Visit to Rwanda and Uganda**

Article 16 of the Nairobi Protocol emphasises transparency and information exchange between parties involved in the fight against the proliferation of illicit arms.

In accordance with this commitment, the Chairman of the Council of Ministers, Hon. Alain Bunyoni, and the Executive Secretary, Dr Francis Sang, undertook official visits to Rwanda and Uganda during the month.

The purpose of the visit was to brief officials of the two Governments on progress in the implementation of the Protocol in the region. Hon. Bunyoni and Dr Sang took the opportunity to follow up on the two Governments' commitment to fulfil their financial obligations to the Secretariat by way of yearly monetary contributions.

The two Governments re-affirmed their commitment to the Nairobi Protocol and to supporting RECSA financially.

Rwanda has since the visit submitted its full year contribution to RECSA; Uganda has promised to do the same in due course.

## **Project to Disarms Civilians and Former Combatants in Rwanda**

During Hon. Bunyoni and Executive Secretary of RECSA visit to Rwanda, it became apparent during discussions that an estimated 4000 former combatants and civilians have crossed back into the country as a result of joint security operations between Rwanda and DRC. Many combatants have not surrendered their weapons upon their return into the country.

The Rwanda National Focal Point has developed a six-month project to undertake disarmament among the returnees. The exercise will be undertaken using the trust-building strategy, specifically the blind surrender method where the identity of a person surrendering an illicit arm shall not be required. Where information leading to a recovery is available, it will not be used to follow up the own of the recovered arm. A similar strategy was used in Vietnam to mop up illicit guns after the Vietnam War and registered immense success.

The proposed project will entail trainings, and sensitization and public education through seminars and the media (print and electronic). Capacity building of officials undertaking the disarmament exercise from the Rwanda Defense Forces and the Rwanda National Police will be enhanced.

## **Highlights of Upcoming Events– March**

- Commemoration of Nairobi Declaration Day
- EAC small arms policy meeting – Mombasa, Kenya
- Finalising national action plans – Rwanda and Burundi
- Regional legislation harmonisation meeting- Khartoum, Sudan
- RECSA Participation at UN meeting on Arms Trade Treaty- New York
- National stakeholders forums – Kenya, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Burundi