



PRESS RELEASE

REGIONAL SEMINAR ON MANPADS, NAIROBI, KENYA

Nairobi, June 27th, 2008 - The Government of Kenya will host the first ever regional African seminar on Man-Portable Air Defence Systems (MANPADS) on July 1st and 2nd, 2008. The meeting is organized by the Regional Centre on Small Arms (RECSA) with funding from the U.S. Department of State's Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement.

The purpose of this meeting is to discuss MANPADS proliferation in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa in light of a recent study sponsored by the Government of the United Kingdom. Participants will also take stock of the current MANPADS intervention initiatives by countries in the region, and initiate dialogue on the management and control of the weapons.

MANPADS, commonly described as shoulder-fired anti-aircraft missiles, are short-range surface-to-air weapons designed to be fired by an operator on the ground. Based on their ease of use and portability, they proliferate like small arms/light weapons and are therefore categorised as such. The failed attack on an Israeli airliner in Mombasa, Kenya in 2002, and successful attacks on international aviation elsewhere over the years illustrate the danger posed by the proliferation of illegal MANPADS.

The MANPADS seminar will take place at the Nairobi Safari Club Hotel in Nairobi and will be officially opened by Hon. Yusuf Haji, Minister for Defence, Government of Kenya at 9 a.m. on 1st July.

The closing ceremony will be addressed by Hon. Moses Wetang'ula, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Government of Kenya, and by H.E. Ambassador Lincoln P. Bloomfield Jr., the U.S. Department of State's Special Envoy on MANPADS Threat Reduction.

Participants will comprise senior officials from Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Departments of Defence from RECSA Member States, National Focal Point

Coordinators on Small Arms Management, representatives from regional bodies in Africa that address small arms issues, representatives from Regional Economic Communities from around Africa, the AU, and UN, and experts on MANPADS from the United States, Australia and the UK.

RECSA is an intergovernmental organization whose mandate is to coordinate regional efforts aimed at addressing the proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW) in the Great Lakes Region, the Horn of Africa and Bordering States. Its 12 Member States are Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kenya, Rwanda, Seychelles, Somalia, Sudan, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania.

NB: Further information on the seminar can be obtained from the Communications and PR Officer, RECSA, Email: awadeyua@recsasec.org; Tel: 3877456/3876203 Nairobi.