



5TH REVIEW CONFERENCE OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS

Hotel Source du Nil

20 – 21 April 2009

Opening Remarks

By

DR. FRANCIS SANG, CBS

(Executive Secretary)

Our Guest of Honour, First Deputy President of the Republic, Dr Yves SAHINGUVU;

Honourable Alain BUNYONI, Minister of Public Security, Government of Burundi and Chairman of RECSA's Council of Ministers;

Honourable Yacin Elmi BOUH, the Djibouti Minister for Interior and Vice-Chairman, RECSA Council of Ministers;

Honourable Ministers and other Plenipotentiaries from RECSA Member States;

Mr Onesphore MBAZUMUTIMA, Burundi National Focal Point Coordinator and the Chair, RECSA Technical Advisory Committee;

National Focal Point Coordinators from other RECSA Member States;

Senior Government Officials;

Representatives from International and Inter-governmental organizations;

Representatives of Civil Society Organizations;

Members of the Media;

Distinguished Participants;

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me, on behalf of the Secretariat of the Regional Centre on Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Great Lakes Region, the Horn of Africa and Bordering States (RECSA), and on my own behalf, to express deep appreciation to the Government of Burundi for hosting the 5th RECSA Council of Ministers review meeting.

Let me also take this earliest opportunity to express sincere thanks to our esteemed Guest of Honour for sparing time out of his busy schedule to grace the opening ceremony of this occasion and to welcome all distinguished Participants to the meeting.

Allow me to further express my sincere appreciation and gratitude for the political and moral support that the Member States have continued to extend to RECSA. In particular I would like to thank Hon. Alain Bunyoni, the outgoing Chair of the Council of Ministers, who has worked very closely with the Secretariat. He has given advice to RECSA and been physically present during visits to 11 Member States to brief the respective Governments on the implementation of the Nairobi Protocol and to urge them to make their financial contributions to RECSA.

The Secretariat looks forward to receiving similar support from Djibouti as it takes over from Burundi the Chairmanship of the Council of Ministers and the Technical Advisory Committee. We look forward to work under the stewardship of the Djibouti Government.

The Council of Ministers is one of the 3 organs of RECSA, established in the agreement creating the Regional Centre on Small Arms in 2005. The Council has the important responsibility of making the overall policy decisions on the work of the RECSA Secretariat in the implementation of the Nairobi Declaration and the Nairobi Protocol.

**Guest of Honour,
Distinguished Participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen**

I must underscore that the issues to be considered by the Council of Ministers over the next two days are of particular importance. I have no doubt however that Ministers will give the relevant issues due attention.

To be considered by the Council of Ministers will be the report of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Chairman from the meeting held by the Committee on January 19 and 20th 2009. During this meeting, TAC considered various strategy documents that will dictate the implementation of the Nairobi Declaration and the Nairobi Protocol. The considered documents were the RECSA five year strategic plan (2009 – 2014); Information, Education and Communications Strategy; two year work plan and its budget; financial audit reports for the years 2006/2007 and 2007/2008; an update report on financial contributions to RECSA by Member States and mobilization of resources; and draft guidelines on arms marking.

Also to be considered by the Ministers will be the Executive Secretary's report on progress made in the implementation of the Nairobi Protocol since the 4th Ministerial Review Conference held in Kampala in April 17

2007 and the Extra- ordinary Council of Ministers' Meeting held in Nairobi on 15th October 2007.

**Our Guest of Honour,
Distinguished Participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen**

I would like to observe that since the Extraordinary Council of Ministers meeting in Nairobi in October 2007, the RECSA Secretariat has carried out implementation of various activities towards addressing the proliferation of illicit small arms and light weapons.

The modest success that RECSA has recorded so far is due to the political good will accorded the Secretariat by Member States across the region, the increasing number of Development partners willing to fund RECSA in the implementation of the Nairobi Protocol, and the large number of organizations willing to collaborate with us, convinced that the implementation process is on the right track.

At this juncture, it would be appropriate to mention that although the implementation is on course, the phase and tempo is not as uniform as may be desired. Several Member States are lagging far behind agreed time limits of putting in place certain measures. While this is understandably due to prevailing socio-economic and political dynamics in individual

States, continuation of this state of affairs hampers implementation which requires uniformity and simultaneous action for maximum gains.

This gathering will give participants an opportunity to analyze challenges to the implementation of the Nairobi Declaration and the Nairobi Protocol with a view to addressing these more effectively. The presence here of representatives of all RECSA Member States is a clear indication of the great importance and the priority our respective governments attach to the implementation of the Nairobi Protocol.

Let me assure you that whereas RECSA staff is prepared to continue working tirelessly to achieve the regional goals, Member States must fulfil their commitments to support the organisation by honouring their financial pledges.

RECSA looks forward to Member States taking responsibility for the sustainability of the Centre through express and practical commitment and support to the organisation's budget that will be presented during this meeting. In addition, National Focal Points need strengthening by their respective Governments so that the Region can benefit from effective implementation of projects on small arms and light weapons.

Lastly, on behalf of the Regional Centre on Small Arms I wish to thank the following donors for their support to the implementation of small arms

programmes: USA, Germany (through the EAC/GTZ collaboration), Norway, Netherlands, Japan and UK.

I also wish to appreciate our partners IC/GLR, UNDP, EAANSA, MAG, UNREC, Safer World, ISS, and others with whom we continue to collaborate on issues of small arms and light weapons in the region. IC/GLR through Memorandum of understanding signed has mandated RECSA to implement small arms project in four of its countries – Angola, Central African Republic, Zambia and Republic of Congo. We are pleased to have representatives from these countries with us here today.

With those few remarks I thank you