



Cooperating to Disarm

**REGIONAL SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS MARKING WORKSHOP
AND REGIONAL DATABASE CREATION AND MANAGEMENT WORKSHOP**

Leopard Beach Resort, Mombasa

31st March – 4th April 2008

Opening Remarks

By

Mr. Francis K. Sang, CBS

(Executive Secretary, RECSA)

**Our Guest of Honour, Major General Hussein Ali, MGH, MBS;
Mr Sylvestre Kibeceri, the RECSA Technical Advisory Committee
Chairman and other National Focal Point Coordinators;
Senior Government Officials from RECSA States;
Members of the Media;
Distinguished Participants;
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Allow me, on behalf of the Secretariat of the Regional Centre on Small Arms (RECSA), and on my own behalf, to welcome you all to these regional workshops on Marking and Tracing, and Database Creation and Management. Particularly, I wish to thank our Chief Guest, Major Hussein Ali for finding time out of his very busy schedule to officially open this workshop.

It is important to note that from practical experience, one thing is clear that, unless we are able to collect and analyze accurate information on criminal use of firearms across our regions our effort on the effective enforcement tactics and the design of the new strategies to address the problem will be in vain.

However, with an efficient development of valuable and critical information, such improved work process will allow us to be more proactive in dealing with firearms trafficking and proper stock pile security and management. In addition, we will be able to better manage our resources because without timely information from which we can generate actionable intelligence, our plans and resources will always be misdirected.

This is a landmark gathering as RECSA is the first regional body on small arms and light weapons to hold such workshops in the ongoing efforts to address the menace of proliferation of illegal small arms and light weapons. The requirement of countries to mark arms in state possession and to keep

effective records is in line with the Nairobi Protocol, the United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons (UNPoA) and the International Tracing Instrument (ITI).

Discussions on the progress of implementation of the UNPoA and the ITI by UN Member Countries will be the centre of focus during the Third Biennial meeting of States in New York in July this year.

The Marking and Tracing workshop will review international, regional and national legislation on marking and tracing of small arms as well as the Best Practice Guidelines on elements of stockpile management.

The workshop is aimed at giving impetus to RECSA Member States to mark weapons in State possession with designated national codes by the deadline of December 2008 as provided in the Best Practice Guidelines of the Nairobi Protocol. These markings will enable easy tracing of arms and assist in identifying those in illegal hands.

Experts from the South Africa Police Services and Advanced Marking Systems Ltd from Pretoria will be on hand to share their experiences through practical demonstrations of marking techniques. RECSA wishes to thank the Kenya Police for providing firearms for use during this demonstration.

The Database Creation and Management workshop will serve as a forum for sharing experiences on effective record keeping from around the region. The establishment of databases is for purposes of easy tracing of firearms from manufacturer to the eventual owner. Tracing enables State authorities to detect illicit manufacture and trafficking of small arms and light weapons.

While other countries in the region have developed national databases on small arms, Tanzania and South Africa are among the few countries in the region that have advanced electronic databases on small arms. Their experiences will be valuable for other RECSA Member States that have committed themselves to create such databases for effective record keeping in an endeavour to control small arms within their borders. A representative from Interpol will highlight the organisation's global experience in Interpol Weapon Electronic Tracing System (IWETS).

The two workshops over this week are a contribution by RECSA towards building the capacity of National Focal Points and law enforcement officers in Member States to effectively implement the Nairobi Protocol for the Prevention, Control and Reduction of Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Great Lakes Region, the Horn of Africa and Bordering States.

A number of States have indicated a need for assistance in the areas of marking, record-keeping, weapons identification and tracing. RECSA is addressing this need by providing training for the police and other law

enforcement agencies, providing assistance in reviewing and adapting relevant national legislation and regulations on small arms, and by providing equipment for marking and efficient record-keeping.

RECSA has purchased one marking machine for each Member State to kick start the marking process in the various countries, and two computers for the creation of databases to store information on small arms.

You are requested, therefore, to ensure that the exercise of marking of weapons and database creation commences as soon as you are back in your respective countries.

These workshops are a demonstration by RECSA Member States of their commitment to implement the International Tracing Instrument that, among other things, emphasises on 'marking' and 'record keeping'.

Finally, it is important to emphasise that marking of small arms (at the time of manufacture or importation) and record keeping (preferably in electronic databases) should become part of the new regional culture in small arms control. It is RECSA's hope that these workshops will be the first step towards developing such a culture.

Finally, RECSA wishes to thank the Kenya Government for the continued support to RECSA, and to the US Government for supporting the Stockpile

Management programmes and the purchase of marking machines and computers.

I thank you.