



Cooperating to Disarm

REGIONAL MANPADS SEMINAR

Nairobi Safari Club, Nairobi

1st – 2nd July 2008

Opening Remarks

By

Dr. Francis K. Sang, CBS (Executive Secretary, RECSA)

Our Guest of Honour, Hon. Mohammed Yusuf Haji, Minister for Defence, Government of Kenya;

Senior Government Officials from Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Defence and other Government officials from RECSA States;

Ambassadors/High Commissioners from RECSA Member States

Ambassador Michael E. Ranneberger USA, the United States ambassador to Kenya

Ambassador Lincoln P. Bloomfield Jr., the United States of America Special Envoy on MANPADS Threat Reduction;

Senior Officials from the US and UK Governments;

National Focal Point Coordinators;

Representatives from regional bodies in Africa;

Representatives from Regional Economic Communities in Africa;

Representatives from the UN;

Experts on MANPADS from the US and the UK;

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 this first regional workshop on MANPADS in Africa. Particularly, I wish to thank our Chief Guest, Hon. Mohammed Yusuf Haji, for finding time out of his very busy schedule to officially open this workshop.

RECSA wishes to commend the Government of the Republic of Kenya for hosting this workshop on Man Portable Air Defence Systems (MANPADS). The meeting is organized by the Regional Centre on Small Arms with funding from the Government of the United States of America.

Guest of Honour

Participants in this seminar will receive and discuss findings of a study carried out to establish the extent of the illicit proliferation and other aspects of MANPADS in the region and also chart the way forward for RECSA Member States to deal with the threat. The study was commissioned by the Regional Centre on Small Arms with funding from the UK Government.

Ladies and Gentlemen

The United Nations General Assembly on the “Prevention on the illicit transfer and unauthorized access to and use of man-portable air defence systems” adopted Resolution 59/90 in December 2004, which urged States to support current international, regional and national efforts to combat and prevent the illicit transfer and unauthorized access to the MANPADS and stressed the importance of effective and comprehensive national controls on production, stockpiling, transfer and brokering of MANPADS.

It is apparent from various studies in the region that MANPADS continue to proliferate among non-state actors. It is also significant to note that large quantity of MANPADS are in the hands of terrorists and other criminal groups, a situation that has caused global concern as this poses great danger to the aviation industry and national security. The need for States to adopt and maintain strict national controls and security measures of these weapons is therefore an essential component of the national security for every country. This Seminar will provide a forum for sharing of Best Practices and lessons learnt from other regions and opportunity to chart the way forward on the problem.

The attempted strike on an Israeli Airliner in Mombasa, Kenya in November, 2002 and similar incidents elsewhere bring home the reality of the danger posed by these weapons.

The need for RECSA Member States, therefore, to address the real and potential threats posed by the proliferation of illicit MANPADS in the wrong hands and the need for proper stockpile management and security of those in state possession cannot be gainsaid.

Stability and development cannot be attained in the absence of peace and security. The Great Lakes Region, the Horn of Africa and Bordering States are in the process of economic integration, hence

increased air travel between themselves and the rest of the world. In this regard, the establishment of safe and secure air space serves to create the confidence for more investment in the aviation and tourism industries.

It is encouraging to note that in the spirit of the Nairobi Declaration and the Nairobi Protocol, Member States have collected and destroyed over 100,000 illicit firearms and tens of thousands of ammunition and explosives, through coordination and support from the RECSA Secretariat. In this connection, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Burundi have destroyed large quantities of MANPADS. With the support of the US Government, Burundi, for example, destroyed 104 pieces in October 2007. Senior officials from the Ministries of Defence of the two countries will share their experiences in the course of this seminar.

Guest of Honour,

This seminar brings together senior officials from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Defence and law enforcement organs of the RECSA Member States, regional and international organizations and the civil society to consider and make recommendations on findings of a study on various dimensions of MANPADS in the Great Lakes Region, the Horn of Africa and Bordering States.

The aim of the seminar is to initiate regional dialogue between Member States on the management and control of MANPADS in the region, and to promote collaboration towards this end.

The countries represented here are Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kenya, Rwanda, Seychelles, Somalia, Sudan, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania.

RECSA appreciates the support and funding by the Governments of the United States of America and the United Kingdom and the goodwill from Member States towards the success of this important and first ever Seminar on MANPADS in the continent, committing itself to work even harder in its mandate to coordinate the eradication of illicit small arms and light weapons in the region.

Finally, RECSA wishes to thank the Government of Kenya for the continued support to RECSA, and to the US and UK Governments for supporting its various programmes on Small arms and light Weapons. RECSA also appreciates the support of its Member States to this workshop by sending high level Government officials. I also wish to thank H.E. Ambassador Lincoln P. Bloomfield Jr., the United States of America Special Envoy on MANPADS Threat Reduction, who will participate and make remarks during the occasion. I also wish to thank representatives of the civil society and the various resource persons attending this workshop.

Finally, Distinguished Participants, I take this opportunity to say "Welcome to Kenya" to those who have come from outside the country.

I thank you!