



Co-operating to Disarm

**REMARKS DURING THE AfDB STUDY REPORTS
DISSEMINATION WORKSHOP AT CROWNE PLAZA HOTEL,
NAIROBI**

REPUBLIC OF KENYA

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BY

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Your Excellences, Ambassadors and High Commissioners present;

Senior Government Officials,

Representative of the African Development Bank,

Representative of the European Union,

National Focal Point Coordinators,

Representatives of Civil Society,

Representatives of the Media,

RECSA Colleagues;

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to first thank the chief guest and everyone present here for finding time to participate in this dissemination workshop. It is my belief that at the end of today, you shall be armed with expert information on the connection between the proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW), and fragility, poaching and cattle rustling.

And that you and will proceed to use the recommendations in your policy making and programmatic activities.

Second, I want to extend my gratitude to two of our development partners who have made this occasion possible. The African Development Bank which funded the studies we are discussing today as part of a *Technical Assistance and Capacity Building Project*; and the European Union which funded the translation of the studies into French and the organization of this workshop as part of a continent-wide project on “*The Fight Against the Illicit Accumulation and Trafficking of Firearms in Africa*”.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The proliferation and misuse of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) is ranked as one of the most pressing security threats in the world today.

It is estimated that there are over 100 million small arms in Africa alone. While most of these arms originate outside the continent; lawlessness, instability, and porous borders have made it easy for their trafficking and abuse. This leads to a vicious cycle in which Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) is both a cause and effect of violence.

In the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa Region, illegal arms fuel civil strife and instability which leads to fragility and impedes economic development.

To put into perspective the magnitude of the problem, eight of the 15 RECSA Member States appear in the top 20 of the 2017 Fragile States Index with Sudan, Somalia and the Central African Republic leading the ranks.

In the same breadth, illegal hunting and killing of wildlife is at a crisis level in Africa and may soon deplete our continent of this irreplaceable resource. Poaching is ranked as the fourth most lucrative illicit activity in the world, becoming a perfect source of income for rebel, terrorist and criminal groups. The *Al Shabaab*, *Lord's Resistance Army*, the *Mai Mai* and the *Seleka* in DRC and Central Africa Republic are among militias who poach elephants and rhinos to sustain their operations.

Another major security concern in the Horn region is Cattle Rustling. So lucrative is Cattle Rustling; that the local militias as well as the *Al Shabaab* rely on livestock theft as an income channel.

It is unfortunate that what began as a cultural practice has now turned into a political and commercial affair; owing to weak legislation and proliferation of firearms which easily cross through the porous borders. Cattle Rustling is predominant in the Kenya, Uganda, South Sudan, Ethiopia and Somalia border regions which are predominantly arid, and thus pastoralism is the main livelihood activity. Reasonably so, approaches to reduce Cattle Rustling must entail disarmament and economic reintegration.

I also wish to note that in all these themes: fragility, cattle rustling and poaching, rifles, specifically the AK47 and SMG, are prominently identified as the weapon of choice.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Peace, Security and Development are inseparable concepts and I am glad that this has received its due recognition in the global community.

Sustainable Development Goal No. 16 recognizes the problem of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) and commits to significantly reduce the proliferation of illegal arms by 2030.

I am confident that this will see complementarity of development and security interventions in addressing the spread of illicit arms.

We all agree that *where there is a will there is a way*.

By the end of this workshop, I hope it will be clear to each of us, which interventions we can take as institutions and jointly, to build resilience of our Member States from fragile situations and illegal accumulation and misuse of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW).

In this regard, I wish to highlight how RECSA's work is contributing towards this goal; hoping that you will be able to identify a niche to collaborate with us for coordinated action.

To begin with, RECSA derives its mandate to coordinate the joint efforts of its member states to counter the proliferation of illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) from the Nairobi Protocol which complements other international instruments including the United Nations Programme of Action, the International Tracing Instrument and the UN Firearms Protocol.

In line with our Strategic Plan 2016-2020, RECSA has identified four key intervention pillars:

The First Pillar is Institutional development and strengthening in which we: support the development, implementation and review of Action Plans (NAPS) for National Institutions on Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) management that have already been established in all 15 Member States, assist Member States to fast track the review of national legislation based on RECSA's model legislation on Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) and mobilize resources and partnerships to enhance the fight against illicit arms.

The Second Pillar is on Supporting Member States in Physical Security and Stockpile Management to enhance efficient administration and accountability of weapons and ammunition from acquisition to disposal.

Essentially, at the beginning of the arms lifecycle in our Member States, RECSA is facilitating Firearms marking and electronic record keeping to assist in identification and tracing. To date, RECSA has distributed at least 45 arms marking machines to Member States and offered customized record-

keeping software. We are also supporting the construction of armories and providing steel arms boxes; to ensure safe storage and curb diversion to illicit hands.

At the end of the arms lifespan, is the Destruction of obsolete, seized and/or surplus stocks. So far, RECSA has supported the destruction of over 400,000 firearms and more than 2000 tons of unexploded ordinances to prevent accidental explosion and illegal diversion and to also reduce the financial and human resource costs of managing stockpiles.

To cap on our extensive technical experience, I am proud to inform you that RECSA is an expert resource centre on training of Law Enforcement Agencies in International standards of Physical Security and Stockpile Management (PSSM). We have built a pool of regional instructors who are transferring this knowledge in a sustainable manner beyond the RECSA region.

Our third thematic approach is Adaptive Research, Public Education and Awareness which targets the *disarmament of the mind* and building the capacity of the media and Civil Society and to address issues of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW). We also

seek to generate knowledge that can guide policy-making. The studies we are discussing today are part of this intervention.

And finally, RECSA seeks to ensure Mainstreaming of Monitoring & Evaluation and Special Interest Groups in all SALW interventions.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As I finish, I urge all of us not to let these studies and recommendations gather dust in our offices. Let us use the findings to rejuvenate our actions and also explore and identify partners with whom you can harness and complement your institutional programs.

I call on the RECSA Member States to support the secretariat financially and politically to enable us to work proficiently.

In the same breadth, I urge for the accession of the East Africa Police Chiefs Cooperation Organization (EAPCCO) Protocol on the Prevention, Combating and Eradication of Cattle Rustling in Eastern Africa, which will provide a co-ordinated Law Enforcement Approach to the cross-border challenge of Cattle Rustling.

As well as the Arms Trade Treaty which will greatly address the supply and global flow of arms into our region.

To our National Focal Points, I urge you to rejuvenate your efforts to generate the political will within our Member States to prioritize action against the proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW).

RECSA also invites development agencies to partner with us in mobilizing resources to implement strategic interventions on Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) in order to create a safe environment for sustainable development.

I also call for more financial investment and programmatic efforts on poaching from our governments and non-state actors. There is a critical need to strengthen law enforcement to protect our wildlife, the economic and ecological benefits they bring, and to curtail the misuse of trophies to fund terrorist and criminal groups.

And finally, the Civil Society and media are crucial partners especially in advocacy and raising awareness. We urge you to exercise this intervention

that is critical for disarmament of the heart and mind.

On our part as RECSA, we are grateful that the AfDB has provided 2-Million Units of Account to implement the Recommendations of the Study reports. This is a clear acknowledgement by the Bank that there can be no meaningful human development without security.

As I conclude, I invite you to make the best use of these Study recommendations in subsequent Policy and Programming discussions.

Thank you for your kind attention.

ENDS