

AFRICAN UNION

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AFRICAN UNION STRATEGY ON THE CONTROL OF ILLICIT PROLIFERATION, CIRCULATION AND TRAFFICKING OF SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS

Preamble

We, the Executive Council of the African Union;

Bearing in mind the Principles enshrined in the Constitutive Act of the African Union; and the Protocol establishing the Peace and Security Council;

Reiterating our commitment to observe international law and the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations;

Recalling the “Bamako Declaration on an African Common Position on the Illicit Proliferation, Circulation and Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons” (2000);

Reaffirming our commitments to implement the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, adopted in New York in July 2001;

Taking note of the substantial developments in the fight against proliferation of illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) in Africa through signing, ratifying and implementing legally binding protocols or conventions at the regional level, such as, the SADC Protocol on The Control of Firearms, Ammunition and Other Related Materials, 2001; the Nairobi Protocol on the Control, Prevention and Reduction of Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Great Lakes Region, the Horn of Africa and Bordering States, 2004; the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, their Ammunitions and Other Related Materials, 2006; and the Central Africa Convention for the Control of SALW, their Ammunition and Parts and Components that can be used for their Manufacture, Repair or Assembly, 2010;

Concerned that the illicit proliferation, circulation and trafficking of small arms and light weapons, as a global problem closely tied to terrorism and other forms of armed violence, the worldwide drug problem, trans-national organized crime, mercenary activities, the rise in social violence, promotion of corruption and other criminal behaviour constitute threats to peace, development, stability and post conflict reconstruction;

Aware that the problem of the illicit proliferation, circulation and trafficking of small arms and light weapons can only be resolved holistically and in an integrated manner through improving cooperation and coordination, and by reinforcing the capacity to regulate compliance with all aspects of the problem as expressed in existing international and regional instruments;

Bearing in mind the different situations, capacities and priorities regarding SALW in each region in Africa;

Taking into account the African Union Commission’s decision, in 2008, to create the ad hoc AU-Regions Steering Committee on Small Arms and Light Weapons to enhance the capacity and harmonize and coordinate the efforts of the AU, the RECs and Regional Bodies with a SALW

mandate, and Member States to implement their programmes and enhance cooperation and synergy across the regions in the implementation of agreed actions;

Hereby adopt the African Union Strategy on the Control of Illicit Proliferation, Circulation and Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons to strengthen coordination and cooperation between and among all implementing bodies with the objective of improving implementation at national, regional and continental levels.

1.0 Objectives

The overall objective of this Strategy is to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit proliferation, circulation and trafficking of small arms and light weapons in an integrated and holistic manner across all regions of Africa.

The specific objectives of the Strategy are to:

- 1.1 Promote a culture of peace by carrying out education and public awareness programmes on the problems of the illicit proliferation, circulation and trafficking of small arms and light weapons;
- 1.2 Address comprehensively the problem of the illicit proliferation, circulation and trafficking of SALW through mainstreaming SALW control as a cross-cutting and multidimensional issue in achieving peace, security, development, and stability in the Continent;
- 1.3 Strengthen the capacity of AU Member States, RECs and Regional Bodies, and the African Union Commission, to implement measures against the illicit proliferation, circulation and trafficking of SALW;
- 1.4 Promote cooperation, coordination and exchange of information between relevant stakeholders at national, regional, trans-regional and continental levels;
- 1.5 Enhance international cooperation and assistance in the fight against proliferation of SALW at the national, regional and continental levels.

2.0 Principles

In order to realize the objectives of this Strategy, the following principles, as applied in relevant AU policies and documents, shall be borne in mind:

- 2.1 *African Leadership and Ownership*: This principle is critical to ensure that the priorities, implementation and oversight of this Strategy remain the responsibility of African governments, and that activities are aligned to local, national and regional needs and aspirations.

- 2.2 *Inclusiveness*: This principle promotes the participation of all stakeholders in addressing the issue of SALW proliferation.
- 2.3 *Integrating Approaches*: This principle rests on the need to ensure cooperation and coherence among all relevant stakeholders of this Strategy to optimize the use of resources, increase effectiveness and efficiency, mutual accountability, transparency and sustainability of efforts across Africa, and between Africa and its international partners, in implementing this Strategy.
- 2.4 *Comprehensiveness*: This principle encompasses all aspects relating to the problem of the illicit proliferation; circulation and trafficking of SALW.
- 2.5 *Shared Responsibility*: This principle rests on the need for shared responsibility of all actors connected with this problem, and the joint search for solutions at the national, regional, continental and international arenas.
- 2.6 *Respect for International Law*: This principle recognizes the need to fully respect the principles and rules of international law.

3.0 Strategic orientation

To achieve the objectives of this Strategy, the AU will pursue the following strategic orientations:

- 3.1 *Institutional context*: The AU to reinforce the existing ad hoc AU-Regions Steering Committee on SALW and ensure that the Committee gradually attains the status of a standing committee, to be called the **AU-Regions Standing Committee on SALW (AU SALW Committee)**;
- 3.2 *Cooperation and coordination at regional and continental levels*:
 - 3.2.1 The AU to promote coordination among RECs in the implementation of regional and continental agreements on the control of illicit SALW.
 - 3.2.2 RECs to enhance inter-regional cooperation through, among others, exchange of information and experiences, and sharing of best practices.
- 3.3 *Gender dimension*: To promote and enhance the participation of all gender groupings, especially women, in the design and implementation of initiatives to fight proliferation of illicit small arms and light weapons at all levels.
- 3.4 *Partnerships*: To institute appropriate measures to engage and enhance the capacity of civil society to effectively participate in the design and implementation of initiatives to fight illicit proliferation of SALW at all levels.

3.5 *Resource mobilization:* The AU, in collaboration with RECs and regional bodies with a SALW mandate, to ensure availability of resources for the implementation of regional and continental agreements on illicit SALW.

4.0 Implementation Mechanisms

While Member States, RECs, and Regional Bodies with SALW mandate remain responsible for implementation at national and regional levels respectively the AUC, through the AU-Regions Steering Committee on SALW is responsible inter alia to:

- 4.1 coordinate and facilitate the implementation of continental agreements relating to the fight against the illicit proliferation, circulation and trafficking of SALW;
- 4.2 promote exchange of experiences, and organize courses to enhance the capabilities of officials and other key stakeholders from the Member States, RECs, Regional Bodies and civil society;
- 4.3 promote exchange of information and cooperate in all matters relating to illicit proliferation, circulation and trafficking of SALW;
- 4.4 promote research and data collection on illicit SALW in the regions, as well as engage in dialogue and cooperation between the governments, RECs, regional bodies and civil society in the fight against illicit SALW;
- 4.5 follow-up on the AU Strategy on the illicit proliferation, circulation and trafficking of SALW, and its Action Plan on the implementation of the Strategy;
- 4.6 report annually to the relevant AU organs and Member States on progress achieved in the implementation this Strategy in order to assess its impact.