PRESS RELEASE

The fifth meeting of the African Union-Regions Steering Committee on Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) held in Gaborone

Addis Ababa, 20 January 2012: The African Union-Regions Steering Committee on Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) opened its fifth meeting, hosted by the Secretariat of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in Gaborone, Botswana, on 18 January 2012. The meeting concluded on 19 January 2012.

The meeting was attended by members of the AU Regions Steering Committee on Small Arms and Light Weapons, including the Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), SADC, International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), and the Regional Centre on Small Arms (RECSA). The European Union Delegation to the AU, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa (UNREC) were also represented at the meeting.

The main objective of the meeting was to discuss and agree on action areas for the implementation of the AU Strategy SALW, bearing in mind the new trend of threats to peace and security on the continent, since the weapons of choice for this violence remain SALW.

In his welcome speech, Lt. Col. Tanki Mathae, Director, Organs on Politics, Defence and Security of SADC, underscored the need for strong coordination in interdiction and seizure as critical for success in the fight against illicit SALW. On his part, Dr. Tarek A. Sharif, Head of Defence and Security Division at the Peace and Security Department of the AU Commission, emphasized the need for the Steering Committee to focus on the implementation of the AU Strategy on SALW.
In her keynote speech, the Guest of Honor, Mrs. Segakweng Tsiane, the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Defence and Justice of the Republic of Botswana, called for immediate and purposeful action by African States to strengthen their legal frameworks to control possession of SALW; ensure record keeping of databases of civilian and state-owned stocks; develop mechanisms for marking, verification and change of ownership tracking, weapons collection, including voluntary surrender, and weapons destruction.