

INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION DIRECTORATE

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Launch of Africa Amnesty Month 2024: Advancing the Goal of Silencing the Guns in Africa by 2030

“Educate and Sensitize Society on Surrendering Illicit Small Arms & Light Weapons”

In celebration of the 20th Anniversary of the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC), a significant session will be held on 10 September 2024, in Bangui, Central African Republic, to mark Africa Amnesty Month (AAM) 2024. This event will focus on the surrender and collection of illicit small arms and light weapons (SALW) under conditions of anonymity and immunity from prosecution. The commemoration will be chaired by the Republic of Cameroon with participation from the 15 Members of the AU PSC, the AU Commission, the Central African Republic government, the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the United Nations, and the Regional Centre on Small Arms (RECSA). Other participants include civil society organizations, media, the private sector and faith-based organizations.

The objective of Africa Amnesty Month is to encourage AU Member States to promote the voluntary surrender of illicit SALW in line with national laws and international agreements. This initiative aims to raise awareness and foster adherence among communities, urging civilians to surrender illegally owned weapons to designated authorities without fear of arrest or prosecution. The commemoration also seeks to engage civil society in promoting SALW surrender, support Member States in addressing the root causes of armament and call upon the international community to assist Member States in combating illicit SALW.

The AU Commission, in collaboration with the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA), continues to support Member States implementing AAM activities. This year, the Central African Republic, Djibouti and Rwanda will receive support to commemorate the AAM. Planned activities include public awareness campaigns on the negative effects of illicit SALW and efforts to enhance the capacities of the state agencies responsible for weapons collection, storage and destruction. Public awareness and the opportunity to voluntarily surrender illicit weapons are vital components of the AMM's implementation.

The commemoration will feature a symbolic destruction of collected illicit weapons by the Government of the Central African Republic.

It is anticipated that Africa Amnesty Month 2024 will drive Member States to advance SALW surrender initiatives, advocate for strengthened arms control and Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) programs in post-conflict situations, and encourage international organizations to share information on illicit SALW trade to support effective countermeasures by Member States.

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