The African Union-Regions Steering Committee on Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) is holding its Sixth meeting, hosted by the ECCAS Secretariat in Libreville, Gabon from 5 to 6 November 2012.

The workshop is attended by the members of the AU-Regions Steering Committee on Small Arms and Light weapons (SALW), including the AU Commission, EAC, COMESA, ECCAS, SADC, ICGLR, and RECSA. Also present are the representatives for Civil Society, the EU delegation to Gabon, and UNREC.

The main objective of the meeting is to take stock of activities carried out by the Members in assistance to Member States in meeting their obligations in the fight against illicit SALW in line with the draft AU Strategy on the Control of Illicit Proliferation, Circulation and Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons.

Colonel Jaques Mvom represented the Head of Department of Human Integration, Peace, Security and Stability of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS). In his welcome speech, he underscored the need for strong coordination in the fight against illicit SALW. He also called for the support of AU Member States in the implementation of the “Central African Convention for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and All Parts and Components that can be Used for the Manufacture, Repair and Assembly” of 2010 (also known as the Kinshasa Convention).

The workshop was also addressed by Dr. Tarek A. Sharif, Head of Defence and Security Division at the Peace and Security Department at the AU Commission. He
observed that the proliferation of illicit SALW remains a threat to peace and stability on the continent, and that it is all the more reason that the Steering Committee should strengthen its work in coordinating the implementation of the Strategy by assisting Member States in the Fight against illicit SALW.

He observed that the 6th meeting of the Steering Committee will, among others, evaluate the 2012 activities of the Members against the Work Plan that was developed during its 5th meeting, and elaborate a vision for 2013.

He also noted that the AU Commission has initiated a Disarmament Demobilization and Reintegration Capacity Program (DDRCP) in partnership with then UN and the World Bank. At the DDRCP validation meeting held on the 29th September 2012, in which members of the AU-Regions Steering Committee on SALW participated, it was agreed that the proposed DDRCP Steering Committee is merged with the AU-Regions Steering Committee on SALW.

It is hoped that the concrete proposals on composition and structure of the new Steering Committee will be agreed upon.