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

*Adopted by the Meeting of Member States Experts,  
26-29 September 2011, Lome, Togo*



## **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 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 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 an ad hoc AU-Regions Steering Committee on Small Arms and Light Weapons (**hereinafter AU SALW Committee**) to enhance the capacity and harmonize and coordinate the efforts of the AU, the

RECs and Regional Bodies with a SALW mandate 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 regional 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 small arms and light weapons 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 small arms and light weapons 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 small arms and light weapons 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 small arms and light weapons.
- 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 in the 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 small arms and light weapons.
  - 3.2.2 RECs to enhance inter-regional cooperation through, among others, exchange of information, and experiences, 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 proliferation of illicit small arms and light weapons at all levels.

3.4 *Resource mobilization*: The AU in collaboration with RECs and regional bodies with a small arms mandate to ensure availability of resources for the implementation of regional and continental agreements on 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 small arms and light weapons,
- 4.4 promote research and data collection on SALW in the regions, as well as engage in dialogue and cooperation between the governments, RECs, regional bodies and civil society,
- 4.5 follow up on the AU Strategy on the illicit proliferation, circulation and trafficking of small arms and light weapons, and its action plan, here to attached as **Annex A**
- 4.6 report annually to the relevant AU organs and Member States on progress achieved in implementation this Strategy in order to assess its impact.