



# Paving the Way to Silencing the Guns in Africa: Interventions, Challenges and Options in the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapon

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## Executive Summary

The proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) and their abuse have been identified as a major trigger and accelerator of conflicts in Africa. It has negative impact on human security as well security at the community, national, and regional levels, and in turn on development. In response, Africa's leaders have been galvanising collective political will to overcome this phenomenon.

Their efforts led to the emergence of frameworks aimed at systematising the response against the proliferation of arms. The Declaration on the Moratorium on the Importation, Exportation and Manufacture of Light Weapons in ECOWAS member States of 1998 and the Code of Conduct for the Implementation of the Moratorium was one of the early frame works. Others have been launched and African countries are also implementing related global efforts such as the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons (UNPoA) and lately, the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT).

It is noteworthy that African leaders also recently adopted Agenda 2063: The Future We Want for Africa. This is a new and versatile initiative that links good governance, security and development and non-proliferation of SALW. This paper examines the challenges, the opportunities and the options in the action against proliferation of SALW.

## Key Points

- ❖ Proliferation of SALW and their abuse by government and non-government actors is a common characteristic of the political and security terrain in Africa.
- ❖ This proliferation and abuse of SALW undermine human security as well as national and regional security. It also diverts resources from development and keeps the continent in a cycle of mal-governance, poverty and conflict.
- ❖ Most of the weapons in Africa especially in sub-Saharan Africa are imported and efforts to combat proliferation can only be sustainable when they are global. Thus, the UNPoA and the ATT are important normative frameworks for providing opportunities and options.
- ❖ The African Union's Agenda 2063: The Future We Want for Africa is a very versatile addition to the previous and ongoing efforts because of the identification of the nexus of good governance, security and development. If faithfully implemented, Agenda 2063 brings greater opportunities for synergy among existing frameworks and stakeholders. It also increases implementation options to radically improve the chances for sustainable, effective and efficient counter measures against the proliferation of SALW.

## Background

Many African crises and conflicts are intense and, in many cases, long lasting because both state and non-state actors have access to small arms and light weapons (SALW). The access of non-state actors including insurgent groups, militias and terrorist organisations, to weapons and ammunitions, is made possible in a number of ways such as by the flow of illicit conventional weapons from conflict zones or countries, for example in the Libya crisis. In addition to this flow of illicit weapons, Ayissi and Sall reveal that "...soldiers, police officers and security forces are known to have sold government weapons to criminals".<sup>1</sup>

Predictably, the costs of the conflicts, which are often fuelled by illicit SALW, are the death of large numbers of people, physical and psychological trauma for survivors, displacement of large populations, upswing of diseases, and militarisation of society as a whole, especially the youth. This has led to heightened incidence of violence including armed robbery and assaults, sexual and gender-based violence such as rape, an emergent gun culture, and mass migrations leading to the depletion of the work force, the middle class and the intelligentsia.

Other effects of conflicts include disruption of agriculture, which fuels the cycles of hunger and disease, and disruption of social and economic life and social services, especially education and health, leading to retardation of progress with development. Former United Nations Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, underscored the impact of conflict thus:

*"Africa as a whole has begun to make significant economic and political progress in recent years, but in many parts of the continent progress remains threatened or impeded by conflict.... The consequences of those conflicts have seriously undermined*

*Africa's efforts to ensure long-term stability, prosperity and peace for its people".<sup>2</sup>*

Another type of cost related to the arms trade is financial. This has implications for how well and how far other sectors of the economy, especially agriculture, industry and the social sector, including education and health, will grow and impact on the lives of the people. Wezeman et al, reveal that the global budget for arms depreciated since 2014 for three years in a row, down to 2.3 per cent of global Gross Development Product (GDP), about 0.4 per cent fall from the figures for 2014.<sup>3</sup>

In contrast, Africa is one of the continents where there has been an increase in this period, accounting for 9 per cent of global sales. At that percentile, and with an estimated US\$ 1776bn in global sales Africa, spent \$160bn importing weapons.<sup>4</sup> Between 2005 and 2009 and 2010 and 2014, arms imports to Africa increased by 45 per cent, whereas there was a decrease by 36 per cent in Europe.<sup>5</sup> Were such monies made available to develop agriculture, industry, education and health, the economies of African states would have had greater transformation effects that could positively address the root causes of conflicts such as poverty.

Convinced that proliferation of SALW constitutes a major destabilising factor and poses a serious threat to the peace and stability of its peoples over the years, the African Union (AU) has been playing the role of continental lead in the global agenda to fight the illicit proliferation of SALW. AU premises its role in peace and security on the deep concern of its member states and their expressed conviction of the need for urgent action to control the illicit transfer of arms effectively.

Towards this end, AU member states have taken a number of policy decisions at the highest levels over the years to control the illicit proliferation of SALW. The latest such initiative is articulated in the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Solemn Declaration of 2013, to end all wars in Africa by 2020.<sup>6</sup> This Declaration asserts the determination of the current leadership of AU member states to achieve the goal of a conflict-free

Africa and make peace a reality. They also pledged “not to bequeath the burden of conflicts to the next generation of Africans and undertake to end all wars in Africa by 2020”.<sup>7</sup> On the specific matter of proliferation of arms, Article E subsection v of the Declaration committed the leaders to effective implementation of agreements on landmines and the non-proliferation of SALW.

The Solemn Declaration is based on a number of previous decisions which include: the relevant provisions of the Constitutive Act of the African Union;<sup>8</sup> the Bamako Declaration of 2000 on the Common African Position on the proliferation, circulation and illicit trade in SALW; and the African Common Position on the review of the United Nations Programme of Action on SALW of 2006.

Other initiatives that provide input into the Solemn Declaration include the following: the Lagos Plan of Action, 1980; the Abuja Treaty establishing the African Economic Community (AEC), 2001; the Minimum Integration Programme, 2009; the Programme for Infrastructural Development in Africa (PIDA), 2012; the Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP), 2003; the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD), 2001; and Regional and National Plans and Programmes. It also benefited from national, regional, and continental best practices in its formulation.<sup>9</sup> The latest initiative signalling the AU commitment to respond sternly against the illicit proliferation of SALW is encapsulated in its Agenda 2063: The Future We Want for Africa, 2013.<sup>10</sup>

In sum, Agenda 2063 is a development-focused document that recognises the wisdom in placing SALW challenges in the overarching development framework. Truly, SALW issues are as much about peace and security as they are about development. In this regard, the document identifies seven Aspirations.

Among others, Aspiration 4 clearly affirms the desire for a peaceful and secure Africa through a number of initiatives such as silencing the guns by

2020, building functioning mechanisms for peaceful resolution of conflicts at all levels, promotion of a culture of peace and tolerance among children and youth, and promotion of harmony at grassroots level so that management of diversity will be a source of wealth and social and economic transformation. Aspiration 4 also aims to develop a culture of human rights, democracy, gender equality and inclusion, provision of prosperity, security and safety for all citizens, and mechanisms to promote continent-wide, collective security and interest. Quite clearly, Aspiration 4 can be best achieved when it is taken alongside the provisions of Aspirations 1, 3, 6 and 7 that also address fundamental causes of illicit proliferation of SALW, such as poverty, inequity in access to opportunities, tendency towards exclusion rather than inclusion in governance, grave abuses of fundamental human rights, as well as lack of economic growth and development.

These Aspirations aggregate to form the essentials of good governance. Aside from the Agenda 2063 initiative, there had also been previous policy interventions to chart the course of the continent in this direction. Such interventions included the Protocol on Prevention of Internal Crises, Democracy and Good Governance, the Rights of States and of Persons of 1999, and the Decision of Heads of State and Government on Unconstitutional Changes of Government of 1999. These documents prescribed good practices that could eliminate or at least minimise the causes of illicit proliferation of weapons.

At the global level, AU also participated in processes leading to the emergence of other international instruments such as the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in SALW of 2001, the United Nations International Instrument of 2005 to Enable States to Identify and Rapidly Trace SALW, and the United Nations Protocol against the Illicit Manufacture of and Trafficking in Firearms, Spare Parts, Components and Ammunition supplementing the United Nations Convention

against Transnational Organized Crime, 2011, and the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) that entered into force in 2014.

It is noteworthy that the concept of silencing the guns finds an important complement on the global level in the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are successor to the MDGs in the United Nations Post-2015 Development Agenda. Goal 16.4 has identified clearly the connection between the arms trade and development and set 2030 as the year in which significant reduction is expected to have been attained in the flow of arms.<sup>11</sup>

This paper examines the potential of AU to achieve Aspiration 4, 'A Peaceful and Secure Africa', especially point 31 which states that, 'By 2020 all guns will be silent'. The paper ends with a number of recommendations that can further the achievement of the set goal focusing on the control of small arms and light weapons.

## Existing Instruments and On-going Interventions

In order to anchor its leadership position, the then Organization of African Unity (OAU), in 1998, adopted a decision prescribing an enabled coordination role for addressing the issue of proliferation of SALW.<sup>12</sup> Thereafter, OAU and later AU adopted a number of other decisions such as the Decision of the Assembly of the Heads of State and Government at its 35th ordinary session on the illicit proliferation of SALW, 1999; the Bamako Declaration at a Ministerial Meeting in Bamako, 2000; the First Continental Meeting of African Experts on SALW in Addis Ababa, 2000; the International Consultation on Illicit Proliferation, Circulation and Trafficking in SALW in Addis Ababa, 2000.

The RECs were involved in the process through decisions made at their regional level such as: the Decision from the Summit of Heads of State and

Government of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in Namibia, 2000; Decision by the Council of Ministers of SADC to conclude negotiations on its protocol on the control of SALW and other related materials, 2001; Decision by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to implement their agreement on a Moratorium on the importation, exportation and manufacture of SALW, 1998 and the Conference of the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa Conference on the Proliferation of SALW in Nairobi, 2000.

In addition, the RECs/RMs recorded a number of ground-breaking instruments in the fight against proliferation of SALW. Some such instruments are the SADC Protocol on the Control of Firearms, Ammunitions and Other Related Materials, 2001; the Nairobi Protocol on the Control, Reduction and Prevention of Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Great Lakes, the Horn of Africa and Bordering States, 2004; the ECOWAS Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, their Ammunition and Other Related Materials, 2006 and the Central African Convention for the Control of SALW, their Ammunition and Parts and Components that can be used for their Manufacture, Repair or Assembly, 2010.

It is noteworthy that all these instruments interface with global instruments such as the United Nations Protocol on Firearms and the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (UNPoA), the International Tracing Instrument.<sup>13</sup> The latest is the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) which entered into force on 25 December 2014.

## Intervention Areas

All the existing instruments provide a platform to implement the various provisions for disarmament activities which include in broad terms, control of the transfer, and manufacture of illicit firearms, and promotion of a culture of transparency through information exchange, operational mechanisms, institutional arrangements, and enhancement of cooperation and partnership across national, regional and continental divides. For further illustration, practical disarmament measures include the establishment of National Focal Points (NFPs) which have responsibility for coordination of and oversight over every initiative within countries and with external stakeholders.

Other measures are institutionalisation of actions to govern transfer modalities including export, import, shipment, transshipment, diversion, supply or brokering, border control, record keeping, and setting up and management of databases and or arms registers, to govern transfer, physical security and stockpile management, arms marking and tracing capacity, legislative framework, and enforcement capacity including judicial capacity. For the purpose of coordination, the capacity to gather data and write reports on the basis that will allow for comparison is important.

## Areas of Challenges in the Efforts to Control Small Arms and Light Weapons

Notwithstanding the existence of the various instruments, policy decisions and actions, the efforts to control illicit transfer of SALW since the late 1990s do not seem to have gone far and fast enough as a result of a number of observable challenges. Sarah Parker in her review of

state and regional reports for the Programme of Action on Small Arms says:

*“The majority of states that specifically list implementation challenges in their reports mention a lack of resources - be they human resources, money, technical expertise, equipment, training and so on. In fact, a lack of resources is the most frequently mentioned implementation challenge and is the central challenge to effective implementation”.*<sup>14</sup>

Another observable trend is the regional variation in the level of commitment at every stage in the various initiatives that have been outlined earlier. This was summarised in discussions as the level of political will at the highest levels of decision-making. Political will can be measured by a number of indicators including identification of NFPs, their funding, engagement in global discussions, participation in negotiations and ratifications, domestication and development of national instruments.

However, mixed signals continue to go from the continent to the rest of the world. For instance, whereas AU member States are known generally to participate with enthusiasm in international platforms on issues of SALW, at the stages of negotiation and discussion, the same cannot be said at the point of ratification and implementation as we saw with the ATT where only 16 ratifications have so far come from Africa, out of its 54 member states.<sup>15</sup> The point about regional variation in the show of political will is eloquently made by the fact that 11 of the ratifications were recorded in the ECOWAS region alone.

With the ATT, it was ECOWAS that provided the requisite leadership before, during, and after adoption of the treaty by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). This is seen in concrete terms in the number of ratifications on the continent, with ECOWAS recording 11 of the 16 ratifications.<sup>16</sup>

It is worth noting too that it was the intervention of the region with its well-articulated Common Position which served as a critical rallying point for other African regions.<sup>17</sup> This eventually changed the game in the ATT negotiations and ensured that SALW was incorporated as the eighth in the category of classical weapons.<sup>18</sup> It is also key to recall that AU did not quite pull its weight in that process nor did it play an oracular function for member states at other major platforms on SALW, such as the Biennial Meeting of States to consider Implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms.

Thus, for AU, the challenge is embedded in the chronic lack of both financial and human resources to fund and staff adequately, the Peace and Security Division, so that it can provide much needed guidance on substance and strategy as well as coordination to the regions, from its continental vantage position.<sup>19</sup> African RECs/RMs and member states receive insufficient hands-on leadership and follow-up coordination from the AU, both of which are important for a successful campaign to the efforts to control SALW.

Oftentimes, the rigour and vigour on display at critical moments have been provided by the RECS and not by AU, as with the example of ECOWAS. This has been observed on a number of occasions such as the proclamation of the ECOWAS Moratorium of 1998,<sup>20</sup> the Biennial Meeting of States to consider Implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons<sup>21</sup> and the negotiations for the ATT. At such important meetings, the AU representation failed to provide necessary and coordinated backstopping to African states in attendance when there is the need for quick consultation, especially on matters arising from the floor.

Analysts have tended to attribute ECOWAS leadership to a number of factors, which include the horrors experienced by the region in the numerous

major conflicts it has experienced, the lessons learnt from them and the commitment of its leadership to implementing these lessons.

Another contributory factor is the commitment of CSOs to the campaign to control proliferation of SALW in the region. As proof, it stands to their credit that the first draft of what was later to become the ECOWAS Convention on SALW was put together by CSOs. Further proof is in the evolution of state-based CSOs into a regional network, WAANSA, with establishment of a regional office, employment of staff and procurement of equipment. It also helped that as part of its own contribution to the strengthening of the network, the ECOWAS Commission through ECOSAP based in Bamako was able to further build the capacity of WAANSA through training, providing funding for some of its activities and helping it to mobilise resources. The example of the UK funding of the sensitisation project towards ratification of the ATT has yielded good results.

In line with the provisions of Article 25,<sup>22</sup> 1b, of the Convention which states *inter alia* that the ECOWAS Executive Secretary (now President of the ECOWAS Commission) shall 'provide the Member States with the necessary financial and technical support for the realisation of their activities', ECOWAS has funded an annual forum of WAANSA as a platform to share knowledge, information, and best practices and to make plans for the next year of priority activities.

Often, across board, lack of financial resources is cited as one of the challenges impeding implementation of the decisions that would contribute to silencing the guns across the continent.<sup>23</sup> This lack is attributed in part to competition between peace and security issues including, political radicalisation and terrorism, human trafficking, piracy, drug trafficking and development, including poverty eradication, education, reproductive health/rights, HIV/AIDS,

and the more recent environmental issues. While this may be true, it is only so to a limited extent because experience has shown that many needy countries still do not have a proper resource mobilisation strategy and therefore go about this key assignment in an ad hoc, knee-jerk fashion, instead of on a planned, systematic basis.

Indeed, in many cases where the funds are available, some member states do not know what to do or how to go about accessing the funds. In some cases where funds are allocated, it is observed that rules are not adhered to. For instance, projects and activities in the West African Action Network on Small Arms (WAANSA) are not properly formulated to allow for a systematic drawdown of funds.

Thus, it is not uncommon to see an intervention process started but get threatened or even halted because project implementation does not conform to agreements. As an example, the AU-EU Small Arms Project was halted for 14 months as result of the difficulty of mobilising the counterpart funding.<sup>24</sup> Another example is the defunct Programme of Coordination and Assistance on Security and Development (PCASED), 1999 to 2004, which acknowledged the enormous challenges it faced due to lack of resources, communication gaps between the programme and ECOWAS, and other management deficiencies.<sup>25</sup>

In sum, the challenges of low absorption capacity and the capacity gaps remain and have to be tackled. They exist right across the spectrum of formulation, adoption, implementation and oversight of legal frameworks and of the policy declarations relating to control of the illicit proliferation of SALW on the continent.

The element that applies to all the challenges identified above is the insufficiency of the 3Cs, that is, Consultation, Collaboration and Coordination, in spite of the platform provided by the AU - Regions

Steering Committee on SALW. This is because the Peace and Security Directorate, as stated earlier, has been dogged by insufficient staff to oversee every facet of the work, which includes project conceptualization, planning, resource mobilisation and inter-REC collaboration. This was clearly the reason for the hiccups suffered in the take-off and implementation of the AU-EU Small Arms Project.

It is observable that interventions in SALW show an insufficiency of the 3Cs within each of the three levels as well as among them. For instance, it is known that some in the stakeholder groups are sometimes shut out from the project planning, implementation and monitoring process.

At state level, there is also insufficient collaboration among member states and so experience-sharing and good-practice propagation often fall short of the mark. The same observation can be made at the level of the RECs/RMs. If consultation is poor, collaboration will suffer and breed lack of confidence and exclusion rather than the desirable inclusion of all partners and stakeholders.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

Consultation, Collaboration and Coordination, the 3Cs, are fundamental to meeting the call to Silence the Guns in Africa by controlling the illicit proliferation of SALW in Africa. As a sign of commitment to meeting this call, AU can point to many commendable, relevant instruments, policy decisions and actions that are all working towards achieving Goal 4 of its Agenda 2063. This plurality of policy actions and actors by itself could be strength or it could also be a weakness. What will make the difference is the degree of consultation, collaboration and coordination that is brought to bear at every level. Whereas 2020 is just a few years away, which makes the task somewhat onerous,

still, a lot can be achieved in the time space between now and then.

To Silence the Guns by 2020 in an efficient, effective and sustainable manner calls for a return to fundamentals. One of the first tasks is a re-mapping of existing frameworks, policy decisions and actions, their ratification and domestication, establishment of the necessary capacities to ensure enforcement and the basic institutional and implementation arrangements in the control of SALW. For instance, where still not in place, NFPs must be designated and empowered. Continental, regional and national action plans need to be developed, implemented and monitored against the background of a culture of good practices and results-based management. Then, the process of building on this infrastructure can commence, with some guarantee of success and sustainability.

Above all, to silence the guns, we need steady determination to identify, study and understand the reasons why there are so many guns in government stockpiles and in the possession of unlicensed non-state actors. In this regard, we should look in the direction provided by Aspirations 1, 3, 6 and 7 which, taken with Aspiration 4, provide a holistic platform to influence and shape good governance practices in many states where governance is threatened. This is key because the recourse to guns is an indicator of the failure of good governance. Hence, Silencing the Guns can be achieved on a sustainable basis only when the wider conflict prevention, resolution and management measures are in place.

Control of territory and of borders is an issue in every country in the world, in direct proportion to the lengths of its borders whether land or sea, its relative wealth, its technological capacity and the level of security among its neighbours. Many African countries do not have full control of their territory and borders, with huge tracts of uninhabited land, or habited tracts that have little or

no government presence because of the financial and logistic incapacity of governments to be fully on the ground. The same is true for the physical security and stockpile management which in many states exist only at a rudimentary level, falling below best practices levels.

These include, for example, location of stockpiles too close to civilian population, sub-standard or inadequate storage facilities, and old, weather-degraded and therefore accident-prone ordinances. Related to this is the lack of professionalization of the role of the armourer, and the tendency for corrupt practices. These conditions make states vulnerable to all kinds of criminal activities such as human, drugs and weapons trafficking. AU should lead investment in science and technology research and application to support practical interventions.

There are three core areas of recommendations with the AU as lead in collaboration with the RECs and states, as follows:

- A. There is need to review and update the AU Small Arms Strategy<sup>26</sup> and Action Plan in view of recent developments at state, REC/RM, and at global levels, such as the entry into force of the ATT and its implementation. In doing this, focus should be on the prescribed strategies which include: sensitisation and advocacy; capacity building as a cross-cutting strategy that touches training for individuals, provision of equipment and resources for organisations and or institutions; development or updating of legislation; and mobilisation of resources.

Similarly, policy planning, implementation and oversight must be steeped in global practices of accountability, transparency and results-based management so that impact will be measurable and results comparable. AU should lead in all working closely with RECs/RMs, MS, CSOs, technical and development partners and centres of excellence



B. Partnership is very important because control of small arms involves a plethora of stakeholders. It is important for there to be constant mapping of the players in order to ensure even implementation of the various strategies. For the purpose of geographically even impact, while not neglecting the traditional partnership with the international community, the partnership with in the continent needs to be played up. Experience sharing and partnership building should include promotion of collaboration among member states without excluding the traditional collaboration with the international community.

C. The culture of the 3Cs, namely, Consultation, Collaboration and Coordination, should be led by AU given its vantage position, in order to rein in the plurality of stakeholders and actors. This plurality is a characteristic feature in Africa, at national, regional and continental levels. What obtains more often than not is that partner stakeholders move into the field based on the mandates of their funding agencies, to develop a relationship with the national focal point or other players on the ground, often without due diligence of prior preparation, or background information regarding actors already in the field, ongoing efforts, or proposals and plans for the future. It is also not unusual that the mandates that determine their interventions areas are themselves not based on any rigorous research on the ground, or on consultation with the recipient nation or region.

Therefore, there are frequently many interventions in the same area overlapping thematically and geographically, so the evenness of interventions that is necessary for synergy, equity, sustainability, impact, and inclusion is lost. This leads to a waste of time and finances

and raises the spectre of donor and recipient disillusionment and fatigue. Consideration should be given to developing a standard engagement tool for partners. The RECS/RMs and states should then take their cue from AU.

Below are the detailed recommendations that are derived from and are an elucidation of the three core areas of recommendations above. They are as follows:

- I. There is need to consider budget caps to the purchase of SALW by states as this can have positive impact on socio-economic sectors such as agriculture, education, industry and health. For instance, the fewer the arms purchased by states, the more the money that will be available to the social sector to democratise access to opportunities for citizens and thus drive sustainable economic growth and development. AU should consider leading a continental consultation that will propose and adopt spending caps on SALW in member states who should then implement the decision.
- II. AU, working with the RECs should set standards that help determine what amounts to excess accumulation of SALW by states and this should be subjected to controls by invoking relevant provisions in the various arms control instruments. As for access of NSAs to weapons, the relevant provisions in the instruments should be invoked by states and where necessary, by the RECs.
- III. Practical measures to control the proliferation of SALW should include effective border control measures as well as Physical Security and Stockpile Management (PSSM). Border control is provided for in the various instruments and the provisions should be acted upon to ensure that the flow of weapons at the borders, whether land or sea border, are fully under the control of the

state. With regard to PSSM, it is important to ensure that best practices are followed, including professionalization of the cadre of armourers and storekeepers within the security organisations. AU should work with RECs to set up and promote standards for border control and PSSM while states should develop and implement practical measures that conform with best practices in this regard.

- IV. Silencing the guns cannot be achieved by controlling proliferation of SALWs alone because they are part of a larger problem. In order to avoid a strictly SALW control approach, it is important to be inclusive in designing interventions or implementing the ones that are already in place, and this approach should be considered from the stage of project or programme planning. This holistic approach should necessarily integrate Aspirations 1, 3, 6 and 7 to ensure that the core causes of the illicit proliferation of SALW are properly addressed. AU could take the lead in promoting the idea of mainstreaming the integration of Aspirations 1, 3, 6, and 7 in project conceptualization, planning and implementation on the continent. This holistic approach is fundamental to the efforts in the control of SALW and should be pursued with vigour.
- V. AU should encourage cooperation including joint planning among RECs, because of geographical contiguity of the regions, to encourage sharing of experiences and promotion of good practices. This initiative could be enriched by experience sharing with the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), which has many similarities to the challenges that Africa faces on SALW.
- VI. Oversight is important and this needs to be done at each of the three levels; national, regional and continental. This is about monitoring and evaluation and AU should take responsibility at the continental level, the RECs for their member states and states for all the local actors and stakeholders, and the interplay of their activities. This will encourage comparability and promote healthy competition and advancement in sharing knowledge and good practices at every level.
- VII. SALW and the challenges they pose are truly of global dimension and so, effective interventions can only benefit from strengthening existing platforms of partnerships. The traditional flow of funds, technical assistance and equipment from donor countries to Africa should continue especially to build capacity for implementation. It is desirable also to encourage collaboration and cooperation among African RECS and states, as well as with other regions of the southern hemisphere such as CARICOM, especially by sharing information and replicating good practices.
- VIII. States should step up sensitisation on SALW and the challenges they pose, increase knowledge of the various existing instruments and ensure ratification and or domestication where this is not the case, establish National Focal Points or Commissions, build their capacities and mobilise financial and technical support for implementation of their National Action Plans.
- IX. States should proactively ratify, domesticate and integrate relevant policy, frameworks and protocols into their National Action Plans.
- X. CSOs have engaged with AU over the years, playing a role in sensitisation, mobilisation and advocacy on a number of platforms, as with the platform of the Livingstone Formula of the Peace and Security Council as well as the Peace and Security Cluster of the AU Economic, Social and Cultural Council. Related to the proliferation of

SALW, CSO representatives participate as observers on the AU Small Arms Steering Committee. It is worthy of consideration, aside from participating alongside other stakeholders in the meetings on the African Union Strategy on SALW, for CSOs to be allowed a continental platform of their own on a regular basis. This would serve as platform for information/knowledge exchange as well as of good practices.

There is good practice in this area in the ECOWAS region where there is a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the ECOWAS Commission and the West African Action Network on Small Arms (WAANSA), a federation of national units.

This MoU provides the basis for an Annual Meeting of WAANSA, for the purpose of experience sharing, broadcast of best practices and provision of support for mobilisation of both financial and technical support to implement its annual work plan. This relationship between the Commission and WAANSA assisted in securing funds for the campaign that led to 11 ratifications of the ATT by ECOWAS states.

AU should consider mobilising resources to fund such civil society meeting platforms on a regular basis, even once in each semester, as this would ensure CSO contribution to implementation of the relevant decisions and instruments.

## End Notes

<sup>1</sup> Ayissi, A. N., & Sall, I. (2005). Combating the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in West Africa: handbook for the training of armed and security forces. United Nations Publications, UNIDIR. pp. 68

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> Wezeman, S. T., & Wezeman, P. D. (2014). Trends in international arms transfers, 2013. Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (Stockholms internationella fredsforskningsinstitut) (SIPRI). [www.sipri.org/](http://www.sipri.org/).

<sup>4</sup> Ibid

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

<sup>6</sup> African Union (2013). 50th anniversary Solemn Declaration adopted by the 21st Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the Heads of State and Government of the African Union, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 26 May.

[http://agenda2063.au.int/en/sites/default/files/50th%20Anniversary%20Solemn%20DECLARATION%20En\\_2.pdf](http://agenda2063.au.int/en/sites/default/files/50th%20Anniversary%20Solemn%20DECLARATION%20En_2.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> African Union (2000). The Constitutive Act. Addis Ababa: Ethiopia.

[http://www.au.int/en/sites/default/files/ConstitutiveAct\\_EN.pdf](http://www.au.int/en/sites/default/files/ConstitutiveAct_EN.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> African Union (2014). Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want. <http://archive.au.int/assets/images/agenda2063.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> Ibid

<sup>11</sup> Sustainable Development Goal 16 aims to Promote Peaceful and Inclusive Societies for Sustainable Development, Provide Access to Justice for All and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. Target 4 aims to significantly reduce illicit financial and arms flows, strengthen the recovery and return of stolen assets, and combat all forms of organised crime by 2030, available at [www.sustainabledevelopment.un.org](http://www.sustainabledevelopment.un.org) and at [www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/2015](http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/2015).

<sup>12</sup> African Union (1998). Decision of the Council of Ministers at the 68th Ordinary Session held in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso (CM/Dec/432 (LXVIII)). [http://www.au.int/en/sites/default/files/decisions/9611-](http://www.au.int/en/sites/default/files/decisions/9611-council_en_4_7_june_1998_council_ministers_sixty_eight_ordinary_session_third_ordinary_session_aec.pdf)

[council\\_en\\_4\\_7\\_june\\_1998\\_council\\_ministers\\_sixty\\_eight\\_ordinary\\_session\\_third\\_ordinary\\_session\\_aec.pdf](http://www.au.int/en/sites/default/files/decisions/9611-council_en_4_7_june_1998_council_ministers_sixty_eight_ordinary_session_third_ordinary_session_aec.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> United Nations General Assembly (2005). International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons. United Nations: New York.

[http://www.un.org/events/smallarms2006/pdf/international\\_instrument.pdf](http://www.un.org/events/smallarms2006/pdf/international_instrument.pdf) .

<sup>14</sup> Parker, S. (2014). Improving the Effectiveness of the Programme of Action on Small Arms: Implementation Challenges and Opportunities. United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, Geneva, Switzerland. p. 24

<sup>15</sup> This excludes Saharawi Republic which is not recognised as a sovereign state by the United Nations and as such is ineligible to accede to the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) that entered into force in 2014.

<sup>16</sup> The African countries ATT ratification list is as follows: Burkina Faso, Central Africa Republic, Chad, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Lesotho, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Niger Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, and Togo. United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. <https://www.un.org/disarmament/convarms/att/>

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<sup>17</sup> ECOWAS (2010). ECOWAS Common Position on the Arms Trade Treaty.

<http://www.unrec.org/docs/ATT/positions/ECOWAS%20Common%20Position.pdf>

It was adopted by Ministers of Defence and Security in Abuja and central to the success recorded by AU in making SALW one of the eight categories of classical weapons

<sup>18</sup> Other categories of classical weapons include battle tanks, armoured combat vehicles, large-calibre artillery systems, combat aircraft, attack helicopters, warships, missiles and missile launchers, Arms Trade Treaty, [www.un.org/disarmament/ATT](http://www.un.org/disarmament/ATT).

<sup>19</sup> Parker, S. (2014). Improving the Effectiveness of the Programme of Action on Small Arms: Implementation Challenges and Opportunities. United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, Geneva, Switzerland.

<sup>20</sup> ECOWAS (1998). Declaration of a Moratorium on Importation, Exportation and Manufacture of Light Weapons in West Africa. Lome, Togo

<http://www.poa-iss.org/RegionalOrganizations/ECOWAS/Moratorium%20and%20Code%20of%20Conduct.pdf>

<sup>21</sup> The Biennial Meeting of States to consider Implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects was instituted in 2001 as a review and coordination platform. It meets every two years and the author has participated since 2006. During that time, AU was never represented and as such, left leadership to a number of other stakeholders especially the ECOWAS Commission, the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and the Africa Group, usually led by Nigeria.

<sup>22</sup> ECOWAS (2006). ECOWAS Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and Other Related Materials, Article 25(1)(b). <http://www.poa-iss.org/RegionalOrganizations/ECOWAS/ECOWAS%20Convention%202006.pdf>

<sup>23</sup> Parker, S. (2014). Improving the Effectiveness of the Programme of Action on Small Arms: Implementation Challenges and Opportunities. United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, Geneva, Switzerland.

<sup>24</sup> AU/EU Small Arms Project 'Support the Fight against the Illicit Accumulation and Trafficking of Firearms in Sub-Sahara Africa', Minutes of the 2nd Project Steering Committee Meeting of Phase II held on 25 April 2016 at Africa Union Commission Headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, pp 5.

<sup>25</sup>The Programme of Coordination and Assistance on Security and Development was a UNDP project designed as implementation support for the ECOWAS Moratorium 1999-2004, cited in the Programme Document of the ECOWAS Small Arms Programme (ECOSAP) to Tackle the Illicit Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons in ECOWAS States, November, 2004, Abuja, pp 5.

<sup>26</sup> African Union (2011). African Union Strategy on the Control of Illicit Proliferation, Circulation and Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons. Lome, Togo

## List of Acronyms

**AEC** - African Economic Community

**AMU** - Arab Maghreb Union

**APSA** - African Peace and Security Architecture

**AU** - Africa Union

**ASC** - Action Support Centre

**ATT** - Arms Trade Treaty

**CAADP** - Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Programme

**CARICOM** - Caribbean Community

**CSOs** - Civil Society Organisations

**DPEE** - Direction de la Prevision et des Etudes Economique, Dakar

**ECOSAP** - ECOWAS Small Arms Programme

**ECOWAS** - Economic Community of West African State

**EU** - European Union

**GDP** - Gross Domestic Product

**GVC** - Global Value Chain

**ITI** - International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons

**MDGs** - Millennium Development Goals

**MIP** - Minimum Integration Programme

**MS** - Member State

**MoU** - Memorandum of Understanding

**NAM** - Non-Aligned Movement

**NEPAD** - New Partnership for Africa's Development

**NFPs** - National Focal Points

**NGOs** - Non-governmental Organisations

**NVCs** - National Value Chains

**OAU** - Organisation of African Unity

**PCASED** - Programme for the Coordination of Assistance for Security and Development

**PSC** - Peace and Security Council of the African Union

**PSDS** - Private Sector Development Strategy

**PSF** - Private Sector Federation

**RECs/RMs** - Regional Economic Communities/Regional Mechanisms

**SALW** - Small Arms and Light Weapons

**SADC** - Southern Africa Development Community

**SDGs** - Sustainable Development Goals

**SIPRA** - Stockholm International Peace Research Institute

**UN** - United Nations

**UNGA** - United Nations General Assembly

**UNPoA** - United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects

**UNESCO** - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

**WAANSA** - West African Action Network on Small Arms

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This paper was published by the Institute for Peace and Security Studies, Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia (IPSS). The opinions expressed in this volume are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of Institute for Peace and Security Studies, Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia.

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