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“Parliamentary Action on Small Arms in West Africa”

Parliamentary Forum on Small Arms and Light Weapons
United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa
(UNREC)
House of Representatives of Liberia

**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PARLIAMENTARIANS FOR THE CONTROL OF SMALL ARMS
AND LIGHT WEAPONS IN THE ECOWAS REGION, CAMEROON AND THE DEMOCRATIC
REPUBLIC OF CONGO**

We, Parliamentarians from West African states, Cameroon and the Democratic Republic of Congo, gathered together with civil society organizations and concerned with the violence and consequences emanating from the proliferation of small arms in the region;

Considering that the circulation of small arms is a destabilizing factor for states and is a threat for peace and security;

Considering the repeated encouragements of the United Nations on the matter of disarmament in Africa;

Considering that the implementation of a small arms policy is of crucial importance for the promotion of collective peace and security;

Considering that the fight against small arms proliferation requires a global coordinated and multi-sector approach;

Considering the political and legal commitments of states to put in place regional and national coordination mechanisms;

Recalling previous recommendations in Bamako and Accra;
agree together to:



PARLIAMENTARY FORUM
ON SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS



1. **International Treaties**

- Promote the ratification of international and sub-regional instruments on small arms such as the UNODC Firearms Protocol and the ECOWAS Convention on Small Arms,
- Encourage the development of further international conventions to address small arms related violence, in particular at UN level,
- Urge West African states, Cameroon and the Democratic Republic of Congo, to prioritize negotiations towards a comprehensive Arms Trade Treaty, with the strongest possible standards on human rights, prevention of conflict and end user responsibilities.
- Request the inclusion of parliamentarians in national delegations to international or sub-regional conferences for negotiations related to small arms,

2. **Improve Parliamentary work on small arms**

- Propose legislation or encourage their respective governments to draft and harmonize legislation to integrate and domesticate international and sub-regional instruments on small arms in national legislation,
- Urge their respective parliaments to strengthen the capacities and means of the Defence and Security Committees and their members,
- Make recommendations to their respective governments for the establishment and strengthening of the National Commission on Small Arms, as the principal body responsible for the coordination and implementation of the convention, to allow them to function effectively,
- Be associated as an observer with all the activities of the National Commission on Small Arms,
- Increase the oversight of their respective governments' actions in the area of defence and security by requesting periodic reports on the implementation of national legislation on small arms and the National Plan of Action on small arms,
- Create national chapters of parliamentarians working on small arms issues within each parliament and create an umbrella network for the ECOWAS and WAANSA regions to assist with the creation of these national parliamentarians' networks,

3. **Governance and Democratic stability**

- Recognize democracy as the only working method to solve disputes within countries and prevent violent conflicts,
- Insist on respect for human rights, the rights of minorities and power sharing as the mechanisms required to ensure the participation of all ethnic, lingual, religious or tribal groups in society,
- Urge governments to eradicate impunity for human rights violations.



4. Culture of peace

- Encourage dialogue and synergies with civil society, including sensitization of public opinion on SALW and the participation of women in peace education,
- Promote dialogue and cooperation between different ethnic, religious or other groups, e.g. interreligious councils,
- Work in parliamentary constituencies to raise awareness among the population on the dangers posed by small arms – possession, bearing, using and trading in SALW,
- Highlight specific small arms and security problems encountered in parliamentary constituencies to the government and the National Commission on Small Arms,
- Urge governments to ensure that traditional practices are carried out in line with human rights standards and conventions,
- Promote the concept of violence prevention in all sectors of society.

5. Gender equality and peace

- Recognize that gender-based violence is used in the region, Africa and around the world as a deliberate and strategic weapon in warfare and that governments must develop mechanisms to prevent violence against women
- Promote equality between women and men in all public and political life,
- Encourage the fulfilment of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security, and 1820 on gender-based violence in conflicts at local, national, regional and international levels,

6. Security Sector Reform

- Contribute to the elaboration of a strategy to reform the security sector,
- Follow up on the implementation of the convention by the executive as well as military and security forces,
- Improve oversight of the security sector by establishing dedicated parliamentary mechanisms,