



PARLIAMENTARY FORUM
ON SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS



The Working Group Session on Parliamentary Oversight of the Security Sector

UNDERSTANDING RELEVANT REGIONAL AND GLOBAL INSTRUMENTS FOR SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS MANAGEMENT

6th - 7th March 2008 Arusha, Tanzania

COMMUNIQUE

We Parliamentarians from the Great Lakes Parliamentary Forum on Peace (AMANI FORUM), having participated in the two-day workshop held in Arusha, Tanzania from March 6th-7th 2008 on Parliamentary Oversight of the Security Sector titled “Understanding relevant regional and global instruments for small arms and light weapons management”; Organized by the Great Lakes Parliamentary Forum on Peace-AMANI Forum and the Parliamentary Forum on Small Arms and Light Weapons; We acknowledge the technical inputs of the East African Community Secretariat (EAC) and the Regional Centre on Small Arms (RECSA).

The rationale for the Working Group Session of Great Lakes Parliamentarians is to meet the need for a more structured organization of Members of Parliament to effectively address the small arms and light weapons issues. Thus the creation of a regional platform for information exchange on best practices and lessons learned, with the aim of understanding the relevant instruments, implementation progress and challenges served as the aim of the session.

We noted that the initiative for this meeting comes at an opportune time, when the Great Lakes Region has made considerable efforts towards putting in place the necessary structures for engagement of various actors in small arms control and management, recognizing the critical role arms proliferation plays in fueling conflicts in the region.

The objectives of the workshop were to:

- 1 Review the current progress made by Parliamentarians, Parliaments and other parliamentary and non-parliamentary bodies in the Great Lakes Region, Europe and internationally in supporting prevention of violent conflicts as well as control and reduction of small arms and light weapons, SALW.
- 2 Review the implementation of national, regional and global instruments to control and limit the proliferation of small arms and light weapons.
- 3 Delineate specific areas of Parliamentary engagement in order to address the implementation challenges of these instruments.

Key deliberations centered on Parliamentary oversight of SALW supply and demand, the role of SALW in the proliferation of armed violence in the Great Lakes, the various regional and global instruments for SALW control, and harmonization of SALW control instruments in the region.

Specific Concerns in the Deliberations

We emphasized, among other concerns, the need for:

- 1 A more organized structure for Parliamentarians to properly address small arms and light weapons issues in their work.
- 2 Increased Parliamentary oversight and engagement on the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the region and continent, given regional evidence of the detrimental effect armed violence has on development in Africa and recognizing the need for countries that manufacture SALW to take greater responsibility.
- 3 A concerted effort and proper Parliamentary oversight and engagement in addressing the issue of sexual violence and SALW.
- 4 Adequate Parliamentary oversight and regulation of the private security sector.
- 5 A trans-national, multi-lateral approach to the regional problems of small arms and light weapons, best demonstrated in the small arms challenges evidenced in the Karamoja Cluster, among others. The effects of conflict in one country quickly spread to others. No country is alone capable in fighting the spread of armed violence.
- 6 Underscoring the link between small arms and armed violence, as evidenced in the recent political unrest in Kenya, inclusive solutions like power sharing are an important method for conflict prevention.
- 7 The spread of information on small arms related issues to colleagues of the Parliamentarians present, in order to facilitate greater oversight of national small arms issues.
- 8 Addressing the needs and rights of children detrimentally affected by armed conflict and SALW proliferation.

Recommendations for the Way Forward

1. The Great Lakes Parliamentary Forum on Peace-AMANI Forum and the Parliamentary Forum on Small Arms and Light Weapons should provide a more structured vehicle for Parliamentary engagement at the national, regional and global levels.
2. The complexity of conflicts in the region requires the need for an improved, consolidated regional approach to harmonize legislation against the proliferation of SALW, as such the linkages between the national parliaments and the East African Legislative Assembly need to be strengthened.
3. Governments and parliaments should recognize the imperative of political will, resource allocation and increased capacity to achieve proper implementation of the national, regional and global instruments on small arms and light weapons.
4. Following the success of the Parliamentary Forum on Small Arms and Light Weapons Model Legislation in Latin America, Members of Parliament of the AMANI Forum appreciate the need for a similar instrument to assist regional and national legislative processes in Africa.
5. The AMANI Forum and the Parliamentary Forum on Small Arms and Light Weapons should create a task force of Parliamentarians to improve the dialogue with small arms supply countries in combating the proliferation of SALW.

Done in Arusha on this 7th day of March, 2008