

The SADC Conference on Parliamentary Oversight of the Security Sector
PROLIFERATION OF SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS IN THE CONTEXT OF DEMOCRATIC
STABILITY OF THE STATES—OPPORTUNITY FOR THE STATES TO PROVIDE SECURITY AS A
PUBLIC GOOD

17h - 18th March 2008 Maputo, Mozambique

COMMUNIQUE

We Parliamentarians from the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region, having participated in the two-day conference held in Maputo, Mozambique from March 17th-18th 2008 on Parliamentary Oversight of the Security Sector titled “Proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the context of democratic stability of the states -- opportunity for the states to provide security as a public good”; Organized by the Mozambican Force for Crime Investigation and Reinsertion (FOMICRES), the Parliamentary Forum on Small Arms and Light Weapons and the Center for Mozambican and International Studies (CEMO); We acknowledge the technical inputs of the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) and others.

The rationale for the conference of SADC Parliamentarians is to attend to the need for improved reduction and control mechanisms to effectively address the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the Southern African region. The contributions of the participants, from Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland and Zambia were essential in 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 SADC 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 SADC 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.
4. Key deliberations centered on Parliamentary oversight of SALW supply and demand, the role of SALW in the proliferation of armed violence in Southern Africa, the various regional and global instruments for SALW control, and harmonization of SALW control instruments in the region.

Specific Concerns in the Deliberations and Recommendations

We emphasized, among other concerns, the need for:

1. Further efforts to improve defense and security cooperation, record-keeping and border controls in the SADC region, recognizing improvements made in these areas to date
2. Better implementation and stronger political support of existing small arms and light weapons control instruments and processes, including the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (PoA), the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, and the SADC Protocol on the Control of Firearms, Ammunition and other Related Material
3. A comprehensive approach towards influencing public opinion and awareness-raising whereby parliamentarians incorporate the needs of women and children and addressing the culture of gun violence. The need for a harmonized age minimum was discussed. Participants, for the purposes of furthering a culture of peace and keeping children and future generations from being exposed to armed violence, propose an 18 year age minimum on the purchase, possession and use of firearms and in recruitment to military service throughout the region. Participants also stressed the need for more equal participation of women in SALW discussions and in parliamentary representation

4. More attention in terms of legislative control and oversight of the private security sector, in parallel to review of resources and the need for improved integrity of defense and security forces in the region
5. Improved technical responses, which require increased financial support by development assistance programs. These responses include weapons amnesty programs incorporating a holistic approach, including awareness raising and impunity; more detailed and specific sales restrictions on firearms and other light weapons; strengthening the legal and judicial systems; as well as effective legislative implementation with regards to punishment
6. The categorization of locally-produced arms and petrol bombs as illicit.
7. International standards by SADC or the African Union on ammunition storage together with unlimited oversight of ammunition storages by the relevant parliamentary committees to ensure these standards are met.

Done in Maputo on this 18th day of March, 2008