



**Ninth Conference of State Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty  
21<sup>st</sup> -25<sup>th</sup> August 2023**

**Regional Centre on Small Arms and Light Weapons (RECSA) Statement**

The Regional Centre on Small Arms and Light Weapons (RECSA) Secretariat congratulates you, Mr. President, and your team for your stewardship of this assembly.

Distinguished delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen

Over the past two decades, the Great Lakes Region and Horn of Africa have experienced some of the most dangerous armed conflicts in Africa. The armed conflicts in a number of countries illustrates how SALW and their illicit circulation contributes to rapid fragility situations leading to violent shifts of political regimes, instability, gender-based violence, humanitarian crisis and terrorism, with dreadful spill-over impact across the region. The impact of misuse of these small arms and light weapons ranks among today's most pressing security threats cutting across all sectors of an economy. The 2021 Fragile States Index (FSI) shows that nine out of 15 RECSA member states are in the top 20 most fragile states.

Therefore, RECSA welcomes the agenda of this meeting, which among other issues will deliberate on the *Role of Industry in Responsible International Transfers of Conventional Arms*. It is essential for arms industry players to ensure that arms are transferred in a manner that promotes peace, security, and human rights. By adhering to transparency, due diligence, and compliance measures, industry actors can contribute to the prevention of arms diversion, conflict, and human rights abuses, while ensuring that legitimate defense and security needs are met.

It is a reality that weapons and ammunition do not respect borders and that no single country can solve the problem of illicit flow of arms alone. Universalizing the Arms Trade Treaty in the RECSA region holds significant importance for enhancing regional security, preventing arms diversion and misuse, promoting development, and fostering international cooperation. RECSA continues to support the ATT universalization by providing assistance to its Member states (2021-2023 through implementation of VTF projects in Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan and Sudan). In the recent past with funding from UNSCAR RECSA has also sensitized and engaged all its 15 MS on the implementation of the ATT.

The implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty often intersects with other arms regulation instruments and initiatives. These efforts often overlap, complement, and reinforce each other, contributing to the overall goal of preventing the illicit manufacture and trade in arms, promoting responsible transfers, and enhancing peace and security on a global scale.

Particularly, the Nairobi Protocol on the Prevention, Control, and Reduction of Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa and the Arms Trade Treaty

(ATT) are two distinct international instruments aimed at addressing the proliferation and misuse of small arms and light weapons (SALW) respectively share common objectives of promoting peace, security, and stability. The Nairobi Protocol aims to prevent, control, and reduce the proliferation of SALW in a region plagued by conflicts and instability while the ATT seeks to regulate the international trade in conventional arms to prevent diversion and misuse that could contribute to armed conflicts, terrorism, organized crime, and human rights abuses.

In its strategic interventions, RECSA has prioritized strengthening of the national coordination institutions which have the mandate to implement national laws and policies that will enhance the compliance of regional and international arms control instruments including the ATT. For instance, some RECSA Member States which are not States Parties to ATT have revised their national legislations and harmonized them with some of the provisions in the ATT on manufacture, imports, transit, transfer, tracing, regional and international cooperation, dealers and brokers and information exchange.

In the spirit of offering “African solutions to African problems” the African Union Commission launched the Silencing the Guns in Africa which is a flagship initiative of the African Union’s (AU) Agenda 2063 that aspires to end all wars, conflict and gender-based violence, and to prevent genocide. The African Union designated RECSA as the implementing partner for the STG campaign under the September Amnesty Month Project.

RECSA has also been at the forefront in training selected Law Enforcement Agencies within the region on how to apply effective measures to manage and control weapons and ammunition, reducing the risk of diversion, theft and accidental/unintentional explosions at ammunition sites in line with IATG. So far, 725 officers have been trained, 13 Senior Instructors and 27 National level instructors qualified after undergoing rigorous training programme.

International cooperation and assistance is crucial for supporting the effective implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa. Given the specific challenges faced by the RECSA region, international collaboration is essential to strengthen the capacity of member states and enhance their ability to regulate arms transfers responsibly.

Cognisant of the need for international cooperation and assistance to support implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty, RECSA’s mandate provides the platform and capacity to enhance co-operation and co-ordination among its Member States. This facilitates commensurate national control systems, and assist in establishing conditions conducive for effective controls.

RECSA Secretariat remains grateful to the international community notably; Austria, United States of America, Germany, Japan, Norway, UNODA, ATT Secretariat and BICC for walking with us the journey of SALW control and management in the region. Appreciating the unity of purpose and close cooperation in the RECSA region, actions at these levels serve to catalyse the realisation of global ambitions for actions on the implementation of the ATT.

I call upon the international community to prioritize supporting States to strengthen their capacities to effectively implement the arms control instruments.

I thank you for your kind attention