

The President of the PSC,
The Commissioner of Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS),
Excellences, members of the PSC.

I wish to sincerely thank the PSC and ECOSOCC for inviting me to address the PSC on the perspective of the civil society on the situation of Peace and Security with focus on SALW and Silencing the guns in Central Africa and the Lake Chad Basin.

The question of SALW remains a complex one globally and in Africa in particular where these weapons have caused havoc since the advent of independence leading to unconstitutional change of governments. Unfortunately, no real statistics exist on the amount of illicit weapons in Africa. However, through baselines, about 40 Million – 100 Million of these weapons exist in Africa with over 10 Million in Central Africa. The availability of these weapons in Central Africa and the Lake Chad Basin are unevenly spread on the basis of the stability of the countries in question especially with the advent of the Boko Haram incursions to the Lake Chad basin, the infiltration of the remnants of weapons from Libya and the terrorists' activities in the Sahel Region. The kinds of weapons that exist in this region are both industrial and locally fabricated weapons that have been used in destabilizing the region and by extension leading to political upheavals and regime change in some of the countries in the region.

Considering that the bulk of the actors and victims of the illicit proliferation and misuse of weapons are civilians, most of the instruments regulating these weapons recognize the efforts of civil society and recommend their involvement in the fight against SALW. The Kinshasa Convention on SALW in Central Africa for instance in its article 8 on the institutional arrangements on its implementation recommends the involvement of the civil society in the fight against SALW in the region. It is for this reason that in October 2010, ECCAS facilitated the creation of the Central Africa Action Network on SALW (RASALAC), and in 2017 also facilitated the creation of the Civil Society Coalition for Peace and Conflict Prevention in Central Africa (COPAC) to play leading roles in the fight against SALW. Equally, the creation of the Civil Society Platform for the Stabilization of the Lake Chad Basin was facilitated by the Lake Chad Basin Commission in 2017. Cameroon Youths and Students Forum for Peace (CAMYOSFOP), a leading civil society organization in the domain, thanks to her collaboration with the government of Cameroon, ECCAS, RECSA, UNODA, UNREC, IANSA and Control Arms has been able to mobilize the member states of ECCAS on the universalization and implementation of key arms instruments, train them on the use of MOSAIC modules in the implementation of the Kinshasa Convention, and on data collection on SDG Target 16.4.2 on SALW and the International Tracing Instrument on SALW (ITI).

Talking about Silencing the Guns, though much still needs to be done in generating momentum at the grassroots, civil society have been involved in some scanty events of the programme. Thanks to the UN/AU Joint support to the Africa Amnesty Month, Cameroon, Central Africa Republic and DRC, benefited from this project and were able to work with the civil society in the collection and destruction of these weapons. In Cameroon for example, CAMYOSFOP was the implementing partner of the project.

Key Recommendations for Consideration:

- In line with the Livingston Formula on the involvement of the civil society in the promotion of peace, security and the stability of Africa, and the various instruments on arms control, civil society is obligatorily a key stakeholder in the fight against SALW and must be considered by member states of the AU as such.
- In order to effectively fight the illicit proliferation of SALW in Central Africa and Lake Chad Basin, it is imperative to fast track the universalization and implementation of key instruments such as the PoA, the ATT, the Firearms Protocol, the Kinshasa Convention, the Stabilization Strategy for the Lake Chad Basin, amongst others.
- Coordinated actions including the civil society will be more efficient with the creation of National Commissions on SALW (NatComs), the adoption of National Action Plans (NAPs), and the revision of national legislations on SALW.
- The Boko Haram crisis should be considered as ongoing and requires a greater involvement of the civil society in policy design in the fight and programmes to rebuild the basic infrastructure as well as more protection of civilians especially women, children and other vulnerable groups, easing access for communities in need of support.