

Clipping #2 – DiSec Topic A



Uniform Laws Needed in Great Lakes

New Vision Kampala (Uganda), 1 June 2005 – UGANDA wants the Great Lakes Region to enact uniform laws and policies to put an end to the proliferation of small arms and anti-personnel mines.

The laws would strengthen cooperation in defence and security and build confidence.

The resolutions were reached at a national plenary meeting at Speke Resort Munyonyo on Monday, in preparation for the international conference on the Great Lakes Region due in November in Nairobi.

The committee on peace and security, chaired by Mwalimu Musheshe, urged member countries to enact laws on disarmament and resettlement of armed groups in the region.

400,000 illegal small arms in country

The Independent (Bangladesh), 4 June 2005 – There are only 25 thousand legal firearms in Bangladesh while the number of illegal arms is almost 400,000.

The number of illegal firearms users in the country is about 600,000. Most of the illegal firearms are used by the cadres of different political parties in the country.

Besides, 124 vicious circles of criminals use illegal arms while the age of almost 40 percent illegal arms users is below 18, it was disclosed at a press conference Friday organised at the National Press Club in Dhaka.

Bangladesh Network on Small Arms, Bangladesh Development Partnership Centre (BDPC), Women and Human Rights Foundation, Voice Bangladesh and Bangladesh Coalition for Child Rights (BCCR), organised the conference on the occasion of United Nations Small Arms Conference.

These organisations announced a one-and-half month long campaign programme on the occasion of the biennial meeting of the UN on 'control of small arms' which is scheduled to be held from July 11 to 15.

The UN in 2001 undertook programmes to protect and stop illegal business of small arms across the world. Some 41 countries have already signed and approved the programme while 32 countries have signed it. But Bangladesh is yet to sign it.

It was mentioned at the press conference that the number of licensed or legal arms in the country is 25 thousand, excluding the firearms of policemen and law enforcers.

Ukhia, Naikhyachhari, Ramu, Maheshkhali have become smuggling route of illegal arms in the country. Besides, many terrorist groups, including Rohingya National Organisation (RNO), have established bases in Sylhet, Cox's Bazar and Chittagong.

The organisers of the press conference urged the government to sign and implement the UN Firearms Protocol.

Small Arms That Do Big Damage

A Global Week of Action Against the Flow of Small Arms That Is Fuelling Conflicts in Africa and Elsewhere Kicked Off Monday

InterPress Service News Agency (South Africa), 7 June 2005 – According to the London-based International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA), these weapons have killed an estimated two million children since 1990, many of them in Africa. In addition, about 1.5 million people are said to be wounded by small arms annually.

IANSA is one of about 30 non-governmental organisations (NGOs) supporting the week of action. Global aid groups Amnesty International and Oxfam have also joined the campaign, which ends Jun. 12. On Monday, about 60 activists gathered in the South African commercial hub of Johannesburg to mark the start of the event.

Chemist Khumalo, national co-ordinator of the Johannesburg-based Ceasefire Campaign, told IPS that not all of the blame for the small arms crisis in Africa could be laid beyond the continent's borders.

"South Africa and Egypt are the highest suppliers of weapons in Africa. South Africa, which is a bigger supplier than Egypt, sells arms even to Britain and the United States," he said at the Johannesburg gathering.

Ceasefire is also concerned about South Africa's own expenditure on weaponry and other defence-related matters.

"South Africa has committed itself not to spend over 1.7 percent of its GDP (gross domestic product) on military expenditure," said Khumalo. "About two months ago, the minister of defence (Mosiuo Lekota) told us that they were spending less than 1.7 percent of the GDP. We have no independent way of confirming this figure."

The United Nations recommends that countries should not spend more than 1.7 percent of their GDP on defence. But, even this is too much, says Ceasefire.

"We would like this money to go to social services such as health and education, development, job creation, crime prevention and poverty alleviation," observed Khumalo.

The Coalition Against Military Spending, a South African group of which the Ceasefire Campaign is member, believes the country's military spending has increased by over 50 percent in the course of the past three years.

IANSA's Joseph Dube said a number of African countries had ratified the United Nations Vienna Protocol on Firearms, an initiative for marking firearms and tracking them in the event that they changed hands – but cautioned that ratification did not necessarily translate into effective control of small weapons on the ground.

In 2001, a UN Conference on Illicit Trade in Small Arms was held, resulting in a programme of action to eliminate the trade in small arms and light weapons. UN agencies and NGOs will meet in New York next month to evaluate the implementation of this programme.

Desmond Rose of the 'For a Better Society' NGO, also based in Johannesburg, said concerted action by campaigners was key to stemming the circulation of small arms.

"We need to build up an international network...That was how apartheid was defeated: through a network of protests, sanctions and isolation. We should employ the same tactics to stop the supply of arms to Africa," he told IPS.

The release of a new book edited by Australian academic Geoff Harris has coincided with the global week of action against small arms.

In the preface to the book, 'Achieving Security in Sub-Saharan Africa: Cost Effective Alternatives to the Military', Harris notes a widespread belief among nations that their security is threatened – or that some form of threat will materialise in the future.

"The only way of deterring such threats, it is argued, is a strong military," he stated further, at the launch of the book in Johannesburg on Monday. But, "the recent history of warfare suggests that invasions of one country by another since 1945 have been rare events."

"Very few countries can be realistically described as being in danger of invasion, although the armed forces of almost all countries are said to be built on this premise."

Harris questions the ability of armies to ensure security – saying they have proved "costly, ineffective and immoral" in this regard – or to bring about beneficial changes in the leadership of countries.

"Out of 16 regime changes only four – Germany, Japan, Grenada and Panama – have been successful in the 21st century in terms of sustainable democracy."

He argues that a general improvement in levels of development would serve as a more effective deterrent to insecurity than substantial investments in the military. However, it would also require courage on the part of leaders to pursue less conventional – albeit cheaper and more moral – approaches to providing national security.

"The military is often effective, in the short term, in winning wars; but this normally does little to deal with the underlying reasons for the conflict, thus resulting in a likelihood of renewed warfare," Harris observes.

Global Week Against Small Arms: Say NO to Arms!

One World South East Europe, 7 June 2005 – Human rights and civil society development NGO, and the Journalists for Rights of Women and Children and Environmental Protection implement the "SAY NO TO ARMS" campaign, conducted under the Global Week Against Small Arms, June 6-12. The global campaign was initiated by International Action Network for Small Arms IANSA.

Tragic incidents, caused by use of small arms, are almost a daily occurrence in Macedonia. The number of injured by gunfire is on the rise, as is the number of participants in violent acts involving firearms.

According to the information available from SEESAC (SEE Small Arms Control), presented by CIVIL, the number of illegal arsenal in Macedonia lingers around 450,000, owned by some 170,000 persons.

The survey that CIVIL itself conducted in five cities in the country, on a sample of 300 predominantly young persons (between the ages of 14 and 22), approximately 40 of the polled have come in contact with fire arms. The survey was conducted in cooperation with UNDP/SACIM, in May 2004.

The most common weapons owned are a pistol and Kalashnikov type assault rifle, and only 25% of the polled would report the presence of guns in their schools to the police. Only 18% of the poll believe that guns are carried around for self-protection, while 45 percent believe it is done "for the fun of it".

According to the data from a similar SEESAC survey on the use of small arms in Macedonia, 89% of the victims in gun-fights are male. The data from the analysis conducted by the media show that about 10 of the victims are children and under-aged.

The SAY NO TO ARMS Campaign, with the goal to increase the awareness of the dangers and tragic consequences the small arms bring to the country, addresses all relevant factors, institutions, media and individuals, to give their contribution to the fight against arms. The Government, the local authorities and political parties are invited to adopt and implement policies that will make the safety of the citizens paramount, and to create systems and plans for stable and safe community.

Call to give toy guns the bullet

Daily News (South Africa), 9 June 2005 – Gun Free South Africa (GFSA) has sent out an urgent plea to parents not to buy toy guns for their children.

The plea was made to coincide with Child Safety Month and the Global Week Against Small Arms being observed by 50 countries.

According to statistics, more than 25 people are killed each day in gun violence in South Africa, and most are men aged between 15 and 25.

GFSA director Judy Bassingthwaighte said the organisation had launched a campaign last year to reduce the popularity of toy guns among children. "We want to change the mindsets in society that are so engrossed in violence. Basically we are sending a message to our children that guns are not good," she said.

Bassingthwaighte said that even though most children could differentiate between real and toy guns, there was still a need to teach them that guns caused more harm than good.

"It's important that we build a culture of peace and offer alternative solutions to our children. Children need to learn how to make positive choices for themselves."

GFSA visits schools regularly to teach children the dangers of using pellet guns, which are "extremely popular" among children.

The Child Accident Prevention Foundation has also issued a warning to parents about the dangers of pellet guns. Eye injuries are the most common consequence of playing with pellet guns.

Ten Million Illegal Weapons in Civilian Hands

Large Quantities of Illegal Weapons Have Fuelled Sectarian and Regional Violence

Daily Times (Pakistan), 9 June 2005 – Civil society organisations working towards a world free of firearms urged the government on Wednesday to fulfil its commitment to implement the United Nations' Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons.

In connection with the global week of Action Against Guns (June 6 to 12), officials of the Sustainable Peace and Development Organisation (SPADO) and Community Appraisal and Motivation Programme said that four years ago while adopting the UN programme, Pakistan had pledged the establishment of a commission to eliminate arms from society, but the government had failed to implement the minimum requirements of the accord. They said the signatory states were required to submit annual reports to the world body about their progress, but Pakistan had submitted only one report. The officials also called for the ratification of the UN Firearms Protocol, a global treaty to regulate the manufacturing, export, import and transit of firearms. Although Pakistan was a signatory of the treatment, it had yet to get it ratified from parliament, they said.

SPADO Chief Executive Raza Shah Khan said that in Pakistan civilians had more than 10 million illegal weapons and the number of illegal weapons in the NWFP and the tribal areas was four to seven million. "There are small and light weapons in these areas which are the largest number of guns per capita in the world," he said.

"The total number of licenses issued in the NWFP from 1979 to 2000 is about 2 million," he said. He said there were an estimated 75 million firearms in South Asia, 63 million of which were with civilians. He said that in India and Pakistan there were almost 40 million and 20 million firearms. The two countries locally manufacture arms. "Civilians are the largest category of gun owners in the region, holding more weapons than military and police," he said, adding that millions of lives had been lost in the region due to illegal arms.

In murder and attempted murder cases in 2003, firearms were used in the NWFP in general and in Peshawar in particular, according to a SPADO research.

"The huge number of illegal weapons with civilians had fuelled sectarian and regional violence," he said. In Karachi, he said, the death toll was annually 1,000 and it was estimated that between 1992 and 1998, the city had lost 18,000 to 20,000 people to violence. According to another estimate 500,000 people had lost their lives over the past 20 years.

Khan said that the impact of small arms and light weapons in the NWFP and the tribal areas was devastating as these were being used to settle personal and tribal disputes and those were the main sources used in terrorist and

anti-state activities. The use of small arms in both minor and major disputes is adversely affecting the socio-economic conditions of the parties involved. According to data collected by interviewing local communities and media, small arms were used in family disputes.

UN to co-sponsor conference of African disarmament experts in Sierra Leone

UN News Centre, 9 June 2005 – With about a dozen African countries in various stages of disarming, demobilizing and reintegrating (DDR) former fighters, the United Nations and the Government of Sierra Leone will host a conference later this month aimed at building a network of African DDR practitioners and improving existing programmes.

Many disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes have lacked in-depth analyses of the specific political, social and economic contexts of the preceding conflicts, or have been conceived without long-term strategies for stabilizing development and peace, Ruth Bamela Engo of the UN Office of the Special Adviser on Africa (OSAA) said at a briefing on the conference at UN Headquarters in New York.

From 21 to 23 June, conference participants from African countries and UN agencies meeting in Sierra Leone's capital, Freetown, will examine "the extent to which current practices of DDR programmes genuinely lead to stability and development, analyzing cross-cutting DDR themes and identifying the necessary preconditions for success," she said.

Reflecting African perspectives, they will also recommend solutions to DDR challenges in various post-conflict countries, she said.

The conference, funded by Sweden, Germany and Finland, is designed to complement the Stockholm Initiative on DDR (SIDDR), which focuses on the funding, political and peacebuilding aspects of DDR, and the UN Inter-Agency Working Group on DDR, which seeks to improve the way the UN System designs, implements and monitors DDR programmes, Ms. Engo said.

Pre-conference national workshops and consultations were held in eight countries with present or past conflicts : Angola, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Liberia, Mozambique, Rwanda, Sierra Leone and Zimbabwe, she said. Representatives of other countries, such as Eritrea, Ethiopia and Uganda, will analyze their experiences at the conference.

It will be co-chaired by the Special Adviser on Africa to the UN Secretary-General, Under-Secretary-General Ibrahim Gambari, and Sierra Leonean Foreign Minister Momodu Koroma, she said.

Ms. Engo said the conference idea grew out of a ministerial roundtable OSAA organized in June of last year entitled, "Do Current Practices of Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Lead to Stability and Development in Africa?"

Nearly 60,000 ex-combatants disarmed in Afghanistan – UN

UN News Centre, 9 June 2005 – Almost 60,000 former Afghan military troops have disarmed, and most of them have entered a programme aimed at helping them to re-join society, the United Nations reported today.

Of the 58,974 officers and soldiers who have laid down their arms, 49,205 have entered the reintegration process known as the New Beginnings Programme, according to the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). The programme offers jobs or skills training and support for establishing small businesses.

The mission said that around 33,500 medium and light weapons were collected from military units which have gone through the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) process.

Somewhat less than a third of those weapons were transferred to the Afghan Ministry of Defence and the Afghan National Army. Usable ammunition has been transported to safe storage, the mission reported.

More than 80,000 weapons handed In

BuaNews (South Africa), 10 June 2005 – Safety and Security Minister Charles Nqakula today announced that 80 147 firearms have been collected so far during the firearms amnesty.

The amnesty period, which expires on 30 June, is not likely to be extended, he said.

The amnesty is aimed at reducing the number of illegal firearms in circulation in the country and has already been extended, from 1 April to 30 June.

Mr Nqakula today briefed Parliament's Portfolio Committee on Safety and Security on gun control in the country.

"Any firearm that is taken out of circulation saves lives and it stops the commission of crime using firearms," he said.

Mr Nqakula told the committee that the firearms amnesty has also - so far - netted 106 hand grenades, 23 rifle grenades and 24 mortars. "There are other South Africans who gave us anti-tank missiles, anti-tank grenades and aircraft rockets. But where are the launchers?" he asked.

"This is what some South Africans are keeping in their homes or elsewhere," the minister said. Mr Nqakula said the amnesty period is "working" but said it was unlikely it would be extended.

Small Arms Threaten Peace, Security

Concord Times (Sierra Leone), 10 June 2005 – Senior Research Associate Centre for Development and Security Analysis and Head of Political Science Department at Fourah Bay College, Osman Gbla Wednesday disclosed that small arms posed a serious threat to peace, security and good governance in West Africa.

Gbla who was speaking during the launch of the Million Faces Campaign at the Council of Churches in Sierra Leone conference hall said it is estimated that about eight million light weapons are in West Africa and a considerable number of them are found in the Manor River Basin.

"A good number of these lethal weapons are illegally transferred across porous borders in the West African sub-region with ease. They have over the years not only been used by dissidents groups poised to wreak havoc on defenseless citizens but also by government forces," he said and added that although small arms by themselves do not cause the conflicts but their availability, accumulation and proliferation have intensified violence and organized crime.

He says Sierra Leone and Liberia are still suffering from the ripple effects of small arms thorough increased crime rate and frequent human rights abuses.

" It is disheartening to learn for example that an average of 22 billion dollars a year is expended on small arms by countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East, a huge sum that could have been used to meet the Millennium Goals of archiving universal primary education estimated at 10 billion dollars a year," Gbla noted.

Mayor of Freetown, Winstanley Bankole-Johnson maintained that the reckless manipulation and lack of control of light weapons on several occasions resulted to major damages to innocent and potential lives.

Afghan Government begins disbanding of illegal armed groups – UN

UN News Centre, 13 June 2005 – As programmes for disarming the regular military are completed in Afghanistan, the country's Government has announced the official start of a program to disband illegal armed groups, to be carried out with the support of the international community, including the United Nations.

According to the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), the program, known as the “Disbandment of Illegal Armed Groups” (DIAG), will represent the next crucial step in the disarming of all irregular forces in Afghanistan. It coincides with the completion of the first two parts of the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) programme.

The number of Afghan military personnel disarmed through that programme topped 60,000 today, UNAMA said, with over 50,000 demobilized and nearly as many entering programmes to reintegrate them into civil society.

“We are grateful with all those who cooperated with DDR, especially the commanders, Filippo Grandi, Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan (DSRSG), said Afghanistan’s Vice-President Khalili, launching the programme this past Saturday.

“The struggle is now to make renewed efforts to build a prosperous and democratic country. This will need the cooperation of all the people of Afghanistan, he added.”

Mr. Grandi, as well as the Vice-President, also reminded electoral candidates who have been deemed to have links with illegal armed groups that weapons collection sites are being set up in all provinces. Notified candidates will have until the end of June to consign weapons to those sites, to comply with the electoral law.

As provided by the Electoral Law, as well as the political Code of Conduct and the declaration signed by candidates when they filed their nomination documents, candidates are prohibited to participate in the electoral process if they have links to illegal armed groups.