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SALW/RPT/EXP (I)

**First Continental Meeting of African
Experts on Small Arms and
Light Weapons**

17 – 19 May, 2000
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

REPORT OF THE MEETING OF EXPERTS

**FIRST CONTINENTAL MEETING OF AFRICAN EXPERTS ON
ILLICIT PROLIFERATION, CIRCULATION AND TRAFFICKING
OF SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS**

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Assembly of Heads of State and Government meeting at its Thirty-fifth Ordinary Session in Algiers, Algeria, from 12 to 14 July, 1999 adopted decision AHG/Dec. 137 (LXX) on the Illicit Proliferation, Circulation and Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons, in which it inter-alia, requested "the OAU Secretariat to organize a ministerial preparatory Conference on this matter, prior to the International Conference scheduled for the year 2001 and to seek the support of the relevant UN Agencies and other actors concerned, so as to evolve an African common approach". In implementing this decision, the General Secretariat, with the support and collaboration of the Institute for Security Studies and the cooperation of the UN Regional Center for Peace and Disarmament in Africa, and the assistance of the Eminent Persons Group on Curbing Illicit Trafficking in Small Arms and Light Weapons, convened the First Continental Meeting of African Experts on Small Arms and Lights Weapons in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from 17 to 19 May 2000. The meeting was held at the United Nations Conference Centre in the presence of Government Experts from OAU Member States, the African Diplomatic Corps in Addis Ababa, OAU partners, UN agencies and other international organizations, as well as non governmental organizations.

II. INAUGURAL SESSION

2. In his opening statement, H.E. Dr. Salim Ahmed Salim, Secretary-General of the OAU, welcomed the participants to the First Continental Meeting of African Experts on Small Arms and Light Weapons. He expressed his appreciation for the presence of many government experts from OAU Member States and eminent personalities from the Eminent Persons Group, which, he indicated, was a testimony and reaffirmation of the serious concern attached to the issue of small arms and its negative ramifications to the Continent's efforts towards lasting peace, political stability and socio-economic development. He also expressed his appreciation to the Governments of the Netherlands, Sweden and Switzerland for their support in the

convening of this important meeting, which aims at seeking a coordinated approach in addressing the problem of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Africa.

3. The OAU Secretary-General stated that the problem of the proliferation of small arms and the combating of illicit trafficking and its adverse consequences to African societies has become a priority on the Agenda of the Continental Organization. In this regard, he indicated that, in 1999, in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, the OAU Council of Ministers reiterated the urgency and the need for Inter-African cooperation in the search for solutions to the problems posed by the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and stressed the primary role that the OAU should play in the coordination of efforts in this area. Furthermore, he reiterated the urgency and the need for an Inter-African Cooperation in addressing the problems associated with illicit use, transfer and manufacture of small arms and light weapons.

4. The OAU Secretary-General emphasized the consequences of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons on peace processes and human security and called it a major cause in sustaining and compounding armed conflicts in Africa and, more tragically, promoting the phenomenon of child soldiers. He underscored the need to involve all sectors of society at all levels, governments, private sector as well as civil society. Furthermore, he stressed the need to enhance legal controls and regulations over licit arms and to improve border controls and exchange of information to crack down on criminal operators and illicit traffickers. He pointed out the need to urge all manufacturers, traders and brokers in arms to tighten control of their operations, respect the ECOWAS Moratorium and stop all illicit trading.

5. The OAU Secretary-General concluded by reiterating the commitment made by African Leaders at the Algiers Summit to make the year 2000, a year of Peace, Security and Solidarity in Africa. He expressed the full commitment of the OAU to work closely with Member States and all its partners to establish a coordinated and comprehensive approach to the problem of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the Continent, and to find ways and means of developing a culture of peace in African societies, where tensions and divergences would be resolved through non-violent means.

6. In his address, Mr. Johan Holmberg, the Ambassador of Sweden to Ethiopia, on behalf of the partner countries, namely Sweden, the Netherlands and Switzerland, stated that the proliferation of small arms and light weapons is assuredly a global phenomenon, whose adverse effects are visible in Africa in the appalling loss of innocent lives and the easy availability of these weapons. He indicated that it was, therefore, imperative for Africa to agree on a common approach that will assist African governments as well as inter – and non-governmental organizations in developing effective measures to curb the excessive and destabilizing accumulation of these weapons, as well as their illicit trafficking, transfer and possession.

7. Amb. Holmberg also stressed the need for that meeting to address four areas of concern. They include the establishment of common norms to control and regulate the availability and possession of such weapons; the adoption of clear standards of international transparency in arms trade; the provision of technical assistance in the effective implementation of relevant legal instruments; and the integration of the small arms issues in peace-building efforts.

8. Amb. Holmberg concluded by calling for specific measures to address these priority areas, including the establishment of legal arms registries at the national and regional levels; the adoption of confidence-building measures; and the enactment of stringent control measures restricting arms supply to national governments. He noted that the effectiveness of these and other similar measures will depend greatly on the development of technical capabilities at the national and regional levels, as well as the political will of concerned governments to apply them and ensure their respect.

9. On behalf of the UN Under Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Dr. Richard Ivor Fung, Director of the UN Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa, reminded the audience that the issues of disarmament, security and development were not new to the OAU. He recalled that, at the 21st Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Head of States and Government held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in 1985, African Leaders expressed the OAU's firm conviction in the inter-relationship between security, disarmament and development, and called on the UN to establish a regional office in Africa to conduct in-depth studies and to promote the objectives of peace, arms limitation and disarmament. The UN Regional Centre for

Peace and Disarmament in Africa was thus established in Lomé, Togo, and officially inaugurated on 24 October, 1986.

10. Dr. Fung indicated that small arms and light weapons are manufactured to military specifications for use as lethal instruments of war. He noted that these arms have become cheaper, and easy to possess, conceal, smuggle across borders, use and maintain. They thus generate the phenomenon of child soldiers and combatants and are increasingly used indiscriminately against non-combatants in total violation of human rights and international humanitarian law.

11. Dr. Fung referred to the mandate of the UN Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa in support of sub-regional efforts to curb the availability of small arms. He indicated that such support led to the adoption by ECOWAS of a three-year Moratorium on the purchase and sale of arms in the sub-region. At the operational level, the UN Lome Centre has set up a sub-regional program in West Africa that aims, among other objectives, at the development of a culture of peace; the creation of a database and registry of arms in circulation; the collection and destruction of surplus weapons and those acquired without authorization; and dialogue with African and foreign arms producers and suppliers.

12. In his statement Dr. Jakkie Cilliers, the Executive Director of the Institute for Security Studies, provided an overview of the assistance of his organization to national governments, sub-regional organizations like SADC, IGAD and EAC. The ISS is also the research branch of Southern African Regional Police Chiefs Cooperating Organization (SARPCCO) and Eastern African Regional Police Chiefs Conference (EARPCCO), and is already co-ordinating support to the Central African Regional Police Chiefs Conference (CARPCCO) and the West African Regional Police Chiefs Conference (WARPCCO). He indicated that the OAU and the ISS had developed a joint project to facilitate the implementation the 'Decision on the Illicit Proliferation, Circulation and Illicit Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons' taken by Heads of State at the 35th Ordinary Session of the OAU in Algiers in July 1999, in advance of the Ministerial Conference scheduled to be held in Mali in October 2000 and the UN 2001 Conference.

13. Dr. Cilliers indicated that the ISS partnership with the OAU has been a positive one, and that the two Organizations have cooperated in awareness – raising and sensitization on the nature of small arms proliferation in Africa and the different

measures to contain it. In this regard, four editions of a joint newsletter have been published and disseminated worldwide, each of which with a focus on different African regions and on issues such as the child soldiers and landmines. Five more issues of the newsletter will be produced this year. The OAU and ISS have also undertaken joint facilitation, of which this meeting is a first step. The aim of this facilitation is to share ideas on the development of a possible common African approach and position on small arms. The next phase in the implementation of the project is a second meeting presently planned for 5 - 7 June 2000 in Addis Ababa, which will be an opportunity for the OAU to consult with other stakeholders – UN agencies, African subregional organisations and non-governmental organizations. The conclusions of both of these meetings will then be presented to the ministerial conference scheduled for Bamako, Mali, from 31 October to 3 November, 2000.

14. ISS will also produce reports of the meetings, so as to create a record of the discussions and decisions taken. These reports will also help to increase awareness both within and outside Africa, about the strides that are being taken in this continent.

15. Dr. Cilliers concluded by stressing that the OAU-ISS collaboration highlights the need for a constructive relationship between NGOs, governments and inter-governmental organizations to address a problem that touches everyone, and that can be resolved only through collaborative efforts.

III. PROCEEDINGS

ITEM I: Small Arms and Light Weapons Proliferation : A Global View of the Nature, Scope, and Impact of the Problem

16. The session was chaired by Mr. William Eteki-Mboumoua, and the keynote speaker, Dr. Sola Ogunbanwo, introduced the theme. Discussants included experts from the OAU, ISS, ICRC, UNICEF and UNIDIR. The general debate that ensued focused on several issues, including supply and demand; unscrupulous behaviour by some manufacturers, dealers and brokers; the use of arms as valuable commodities for trading purposes and trans-national criminal activities; and the recycling of old stocks from one conflict area to another.

17. In particular, the session highlighted the adverse effects of the proliferation and illicit trade in arms on human security - especially on children, women and other vulnerable groups - and property. It demonstrated that the nature and scope of the problem of small arms and light weapons proliferation relates to both the control of small arms proliferation and the reduction of the illicit trade in arms in all its aspects.

18. It was agreed that this problem should be addressed by tightening legal controls on manufacture, transfer, dealing, brokering and possession of firearms and ammunition, including those in possession of the State. It was suggested that a useful approach would be to increase international transparency on the licit trade and to strengthen national legislations governing arms trade and possession of weapons. It was further suggested that arms should be brought back into the control of the state and the latter be made accountable.

19. It was felt that the boundary between what is legal and controlled and what is illicit and unregulated has become blurred. For this reason, it was suggested that national legislations on firearms and ammunitions be tightened. Furthermore, it was suggested that governments should ensure strict control over existing stocks and destroy surplus ones. Regional co-ordination should be enhanced to facilitate the combating of trans-border crime and the illicit trade in arms. The removal of small arms in partnership with communities, moratoria on arms imports, exports and manufacture, and the adoption of codes of conduct regulating arms transfers are equally important. Any such action should include control of ammunitions. It is also imperative to sensitize all segments of civil society and develop joint programmes between governments and grass-roots organizations. In short, small arms must be tackled by developing a realistic, achievable and co-ordinated approach that is global and interactive in character.

20. The session highlighted that the proliferation and illicit trade in small arms and light weapons have adverse effects on human security, in particular on women, children and other vulnerable groups, and on infrastructure. Furthermore, the misuse of arms promotes a culture of violence and destabilizes societies by creating a propitious environment for criminal and contraband activities, in particular looting of precious minerals and the trafficking in illicit substances and endangered species.

21. It was pointed out that violence caused by small arms undermines good governance, jeopardizes fundamental human rights, and hinders economic

development. It exacerbates armed conflicts, the displacement of innocent populations and threatens international humanitarian law.

22. It was unanimously felt that the problem of proliferation and illicit trafficking of small arms transcends borders and calls for cooperation at all levels, international, regional and local. Preventive measures must be put in place and regional co-ordination for the implementation of these measures must emerge. Prevention, management and resolution of the small arms problem must include both combating the illicit trade and enhancing legal controls over arms. In so doing, the international community, regional and national actors must work closely with those officials who must implement in the field, such as the police, but also seek the co-operation of civil society and local communities in this approach.

23. In conclusion, the need was stressed to act in a coordinated manner and to address the root causes of conflicts and violence. The OAU Member States and the international community were invited to establish an appropriate legal and institutional environment to enable the collection and exchange of data on the different aspects of the problem of proliferation of small arms and the illicit trade in arms.

ITEM II: The Dynamics of the Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons – The Regional Perspective

24. This session was chaired by Amb. Sahnoun, and the theme was introduced by Mrs. Virginia Gamba. Discussants included representative of IGAD, SRIC, ECCAS, SARPCO, ISS, OSCE, PCASED, Bonn International Centre for Conversion, the President of the UN International Commission of Inquiry on Rwanda and the Great Lakes Region, as well as Representatives of the Government of Mali and the EU. The session highlighted that the uncontrolled and illicit accumulation of small arms is a vital instrument for the conduct and escalation of armed conflicts, as well as the perpetration of violence against civilian populations. It was, therefore, felt that arms collection and reduction should be planned as an important step towards sustainable post-conflict peace building. It was noted, however, that in conflict resolution processes, the dynamic of peace is often not followed by a climate conducive to arms collection and destruction, a prerequisite for sustainable conflict resolution and peace building. Thus, it was suggested that confidence and trust should be built in order for arms collection programmes to be effective.

25. It was reiterated that regional cooperation and coordination is fundamental for the prevention, management and reduction of small arms proliferation. The following points were made on various regional experiences.

26. In **Eastern Africa**, several initiatives are being deployed to address the problem. At the sub-regional level, they include the recent convening by the government of Kenya of a conference on small arms attended by ten countries from the Great Lakes and the Horn of Africa. This ministerial conference has adopted the Nairobi Declaration (15 March 2000). Inter-governmental organizations (the EAC, the IGAD and COMESA) have established the East African Regional Police Chiefs Conference (EARPCCO), and the latter is working in cooperation with the EAC which has set up a permanent desk on small arms issues. IGAD, which has received a mandate for conflict resolution, has set up an early warning mechanism. At the level of civil society organizations, several NGOs are actively involved in the field of small arms and conflict management, including the implementation of the Nairobi Declaration.

27. In **Southern Africa**, the escalation of cross-border criminality led SADC Member States to establish the Southern African Regional Police Chiefs Co-operating Organization (SARPCCO) in October 1995, which operates in the framework of the Interpol office in Southern Africa. SARPCCO has identified a number of priority crimes to combat. This work is complemented by a computerized database on firearms. In 1999, SADC took a decision to establish a working group on small arms. It was also decided that SARPCCO should draft a protocol that would deal with the illicit use, transfer and manufacture of small arms and light weapons within the sub-region. SARPCCO will also act as the implementing agency for this envisaged small arms protocol. At the end of April 2000, SADC was presented with this draft protocol and the SADC working group has, since, referred the draft protocol to the various Member States for further discussion at their respective national levels. Together with the Draft Protocol on Small Arms, SADC is also considering a Draft Declaration and Draft Programme of Action of the implementation of the Protocol once it is ratified. It is the hope of SADC Member States that these three documents will be finalized in time for the Heads of State Summit, this forthcoming August. Bilateral initiatives include community-based activities, such as operation Rachel (August 1995) mounted by Mozambican and South African Police to collect and destroy the remnants of previous conflicts.

28. In **West Africa** the Member States of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) have declared a three-year renewable moratorium on the importation, exportation and manufacture of light weapons, and adopted a Code of Conduct governing its implementation. ECOWAS has also established a regional project administered by UNDP called the Programme for Coordination and Assistance for Security and Development (PCASED). Since its establishment in Bamako in March 1999, PCASED has begun the implementation with the following activities: developing a culture of peace, training of security forces, collection and destruction of surplus and unauthorized weapons, revision and harmonization of national laws on weapons, dialogue with supplier and producer countries, enlargement of the moratorium, and the establishment of a database and an arms register. The "Flame of Peace" project (March 1996) in Mali gave momentum to ECOWAS disarmament efforts. The meeting was informed of the initiative taken by the Current Chairman of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), President of the Republic of Mali, to convene a consultative meeting in which the Current Chairman of the OAU and the Current Chairmen of the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) would participate, in Abuja, Nigeria, concurrently with the celebration of the 25th anniversary of ECOWAS, scheduled from 27 to 28 May 2000.

29. The meeting would focus mainly on the establishment of interregional partnership in integration and security, particularly in the establishment of a common platform for the control of the proliferation of small arms.

30. In **North Africa**, the view prevails that effective programme for mines clearance should be put in place. The initiatives on curbing the proliferation of small arms should focus on transparency and on Confidence Building Measures (CBMs). Furthermore, North African countries would support the initiative of setting up national Registers on small arms and light weapons.

31. In **Central Africa**, measures have been taken at the national and sub-regional levels to resolve the problem. At the sub regional level, actions have been taken to operationalize the Council of Peace and Security (COPAX) and its support organs: Central African Multinational Force (FOMAC) and Early Warning Mechanism (MARAC). The purpose of these organs is to follow up on the political situation with a view to preventing the outbreak of crises and conflicts. Small arms proliferation is

a real and serious problem in this sub-region, given its great number of conflicts and the porosity of borders:

32. The experiences of the **European Union and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)** were shared in order to enlarge understanding and enable Africa to build appropriate partnership with other parts of the world.

- a) The European Union has adopted three instruments: the programme to fight against the proliferation of small arms (June 1997), the Code of Conduct on the transfers of conventional weapons (June 1998) and the Common Action to prevent the accumulation and destabilizing proliferation of arms (December 1998). In addition, the EU has initiated a partnership with SADC to support its action programme. Such partnership is also being launched with ECOWAS.
- b) The OSCE has established a Crime Prevention Centre in Vienna, at its Headquarters, and has been active in the field of conflict resolution. It is important to note that the majority of OSCE Member States are arms producers and suppliers.

ITEM III: Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons elements of an International Action Agenda

33. The Session was chaired by Mr. Michel Rocard, and the theme introduced by both the Chairman and the Count Albi, Honourable Albrecht Gero Muth. Discussants included representatives of the Bonn International Centre for Conversion, the Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa and the Norwegian Institute on Small Arms transfers, as well as the Chairman of the 2001 UN PreComm for the UN Conference in illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects.

34. The view was reiterated about the need to develop a common definition and understanding of what constitutes small arms from an African perspective. However, opinion was expressed that deviation from the commonly accepted UN definition may not be constructive, and that it is important to agree on a common perspective. It was agreed that Africa would play a key role in the outcome of the 2001 UN Conference if it could adopt a 'proportional and integrated' approach. Such

an approach could explore the complementary role that several initiatives, such as the firearms protocol that forms part of the Vienna Convention on Transnational and Organized Crime, could play. Africa may also seek to build upon North-South alliances with select partner countries and groupings.

35. It was further suggested that the millennium report of the United Nations Secretary General, Mr. Kofi Annan, provides an appropriate and realistic starting point for such an approach.

36. It was stressed that any international agenda should be at the level of norm setting and through co-operation at the national, sub-regional, regional and international levels. Norm setting could include:

- a) Revision and tightening of the criteria for licit transfers from the producer countries into, and out of, conflict prone regions and the tightening of controls over indigenous small arms and ammunition manufacturing as well as state armouries.
- b) Standardization of legal arms transfer codes by, amongst others, generating criteria for global and regional registries for transparency on arms deals.
- c) Codification and standardization of systems of marking of small arms.
- d) Deployment of efforts towards a common approach for harmonizing legislation related to firearm licensing and information sharing.
- e) Establishment and/or enhancement of regional interactions through committees and point agencies for the exchange of information and the management of joint operations to contain and reduce the extent of the illicit flows.
- f) Assistance in the development of technical and legal national capacity to control and curb illicit transfers and holdings.
- g) Verification of the status of licensing laws on a comparative basis to help identify the loopholes that allow illicit trafficking of small arms.

37. The need was reiterated for data collection and policy oriented research to inform efforts to control the illicit small arms trade, in particular the supply and demand dynamics for the small weapons market in Africa.

38. Emphasis was placed on the need for training government officials and other key interlocutors. It was agreed that long term strategies to reverse the culture of violence and gun-dependency would require education and socio-economic development projects. This would, in turn, require a change in culture and an approach that provides both incentives and disincentives to give up small arms, and to dissuade their continued proliferation. Undertaking peace-building strategies that could tie small arms control to the review of criminal justice systems and sustainable development at local levels will have to be part of such approaches.

ITEM IV: Towards a Coordinated African Approach: Elements for an African Common Position

39. The meeting approved the following recommendations related to:

- a) Prevention and reduction of Illicit Proliferation and Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons.
- b) Policy, Institutional Arrangements and Operational Measures for addressing Illicit Proliferation, Circulation and Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons.

Prevention and Reduction of Illicit Proliferation and Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons

On preventive measures

40. The meeting discussed the issue of identification of elements that could improve the capacity of member states to prevent future illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons. The meeting reaffirmed that there were no short term answers since many of the challenges that face Africa with regard to small arms will only be met within a framework of an international climate conducive to sustainable

development, good governance, sound economic policies, respect for international law and human rights.

41. Some elements of the discussion are presented below:

- a) Transparency on licit and illicit trade occurs on two dimensions: those of suppliers and recipients; and at national, regional and international levels. Transparency also impacts upon imports, exports, manufacturing, holdings, seizures and destruction.
- b) Some delegations pointed out that, in some instances, national security considerations could inhibit complete transparency at a national level.
- c) The meeting discussed the issue of public transparency on the small arms holdings of governments, some calling for complete transparency in this regard.
- d) Some delegations agreed that governments should maintain registers of the small arms holding of government departments as well as those of their citizens.
- e) Some delegations proposed the issue of limiting to governments the trade in small arms. Other delegations added registered/licensed recipients/traders to this list.
- f) Some delegations proposed that sub-regional and international arms registers could play a role with regard to transparency regarding licit weapon holdings. Sub-regional agreements may also provide for a degree of certification of arms transfers. A comprehensive register should then provide for imports, exports, manufacturing, holdings, seizures and destruction.
- g) The meeting also discussed the review and enhancement of national legislation governing manufacture, trading, brokering, possession, and use of firearms and ammunition. Although legislation differs between countries, all legislations share a number of common features. The meeting agreed that standardization in this regard would enhance

international efforts. The meeting called on the OAU and/or sub-regional bodies, such as ECOWAS, ECCAS and SADC, to review and enhance national legislations towards greater harmonization. Common standards could include those of marking, registers, and controls governing imports, exports and licit trade.

- h) Enhancement of regional and international cooperation among police, customs and border control services against the illicit circulation and trafficking of arms with a view to putting an end to cross border crimes such as terrorism, drug trafficking, contraband and organized crime.
- i) The Interpol database on stolen vehicles was quoted as an experience that could be used to further the efforts to contain illicit trade.
- j) The meeting called on the supplier community to render all necessary assistance to African initiatives to control and reduce arms proliferation and the illicit trade in arms and for a dialogue with supplier countries in this regard.
- k) The meeting agreed that long term strategies to reverse the culture of violence and gun-dependency would require education and socio-economic development projects. This would, in turn, require a change in culture and an approach that provides both incentives and disincentives to give up small arms and to dissuade continued proliferation.

On Reduction measures

42. The meeting dealt with the identification of elements that could improve the capacity of member states to address the problem of small arms proliferation and illicit trade in arms. The following issues are summarized in this regard:

- a) The meeting expressed support for the identification of surplus and obsolete stocks of licit and illicit arms and light weapons and destruction of surplus, obsolete and captured material. In the case of the West-African moratorium, surplus requirements are based on Member States declarations regarding their national requirements. The meeting also

pointed to the important role that the international community could play regarding the destruction of arms since this exercise is expensive.

- b) The meeting pointed to the negative practice that was evident from non-African supplier countries of the dumping of surplus small arms stocks on Africa, and called upon a responsible approach by the international community in this regard.
- c) The meeting agreed that the civilian possession of military style arms (automatic and semi-automatic, etc.) was unacceptable.
- d) The meeting gave its support and priority to voluntary weapons collection programs and called for the support of regional organizations and the international community.
- e) The meeting supported joint operations for the identification, removal and destruction of illicit arms and ammunition caches in post conflict environments.
- f) The meeting supported an approach that seeks to enhance the capacity of regional organizations and of the OAU to provide oversight and monitoring of disarmament operations during international peace support operations in Africa.
- g) The meeting agreed that national and regional long-term programs should be undertaken in support of communities who wish to surrender arms and called upon the support of the international community, as well as the promotion of associated development projects. The state could play a pro-active role in this regard.
- h) The meeting agreed that long-term programs to assist in the demobilization, disarmament and reintegration of combatants, as well as the rehabilitation of child soldiers, should be supported and encouraged.
- i) The meeting supported the creation of mechanisms to ensure that small arms control initiatives accompany existing and emerging initiatives on topics such as de-mining operations, child soldiers demobilization and

rehabilitation, and the combating of transnational crime, drug trafficking and terrorism.

Policy, Institutional Arrangements and Operational Measures for Addressing Illicit Proliferation, Circulation and Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons

43. The meeting considered common elements that might enhance the African capacity to coordinate policy, increase the capacity of existing institutional arrangements to address Illicit Proliferation, Circulation and Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons, and to ensure the implementation of common actions to resolve the arms problem.

44. The meeting recommended that Member States should focus on three key items, namely: coordinated approaches, institutional arrangements and operational measures. Certain specific recommendations were made on each of these items.

On a coordinated approach

45. The meeting recommended:

- a) the establishment, as soon as possible, of national coordinating agencies or bodies on small arms issues in all Member States;
- b) the establishment of Regional information exchange mechanisms with a view to:
 - i) sharing information on items such as captured and seized illicit weapons; and
 - ii) supporting common actions on the combating of the arms problem across borders. The existing police and security organizations could develop these regional information exchanges and improve their information exchange capacity. The Regional secretariats of SARPCCO, EARPCCO, WARPCCO and CARPCCO could be utilized to establish such a regional and inter-regional exchange.

- c) Some delegations felt that more opportunities should be given to engage in dialogue between regions and organizations, so that coordination on the combating of the arms problem could be undertaken uniformly, benefiting from all experiences. Thus the Conference recommended that all organizations, and particularly the OAU, engage in frequent coordinating workshops and seminars among Member States of a region, among the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and at the continental level on common themes, and also to address the root causes of the arms problem in all its aspects, with a view to finding possible solutions.
- d) Some delegations proposed that this experience of sharing information and experiences be complemented by the encouragement of joint projects and operations by similar international organizations such as the OAU, all UN agencies, international humanitarian organizations, and civil society.

On institutional arrangements

46. The meeting recommended:

- a) The improvement and strengthening of the capacity of law enforcement and security agencies to address all aspects of the arms problem, including the capacity of all agencies that had functions in the control of the arms problem, such as police, security and armed forces, judicial, customs, immigration, etc. The meeting was also in favour of improving and strengthening training, equipment and resources and the conclusion of necessary regional agreements between agencies to cooperate on common issues such as border controls.
- b) That the exchange of information and the undertaking of joint activities by Regional Organizations be encouraged. This issue referred to sub-regional developmental organizations working hand in hand with police organizations and other security, political and similar entities. This would ensure that there is no duplication of initiatives and that all organizations have a role to play in combating the arms problem.

On operational measures

48. The meeting recommended the establishment of national and regional databanks on all aspects related to the arms problem, which could be linked to the coordinating bodies and work closely with the Regional Police Chiefs Secretariats (Interpol offices), particularly on the control and impact of those arms. Research should be carried out on key areas, such as the manufacture of home made weapons; the state of border controls; impact of arms on communities; integrity of national registers; problems of law enforcement, security, firearm-related crimes, and other arms problems; use of firearms on violent crime.

48. It was agreed that a similar type of exercise could be undertaken on firearm related injuries suffered by civilians; on reintegration and rehabilitation of child soldiers; and on demobilization and reintegration of ex combatants.

49. It was suggested that research could be undertaken on the links and impact of arms on other types of crime, such as drug traffic; the impact of arms on human security and socio-economic development; and the impact of arms on economic and environmental issues.

50. The meeting called for the establishment of common standards for the training of law enforcement and security agents on investigative procedures, border control and other specialized units that are called to act together in combating the arms problem.

52. Regarding the Plan of Action, the following suggestions were offered:*

- a) the Plan of Action should take into account the existing regional action programmes in collaboration with all relevant regional institutions, such as IGAD, ECOWAS, SADC, EAC, ECCAS, SARPCCO, EAPCCO, WARPCCO, CARPCCO, COPAX, ISDSC and other similar organizations.
- b) the Plan of Action should also include research parametres that could assist in the effective implementation of the actions proposed, in close collaboration with civil society and specialized agencies.

- c) the Plan of Action should encourage the development of a culture of peace in Africa; mobilize resources and facilitate dialogue with suppliers and manufacturers.

V. ADOPTION OF THE REPORT

52. The meeting adopted its report on 19 May 2000 after having made the necessary amendments, which are reflected in this document.

53. In his concluding statement, the Assistant Secretary General in charge of Political Affairs, Amb. Saï d Djinnit, remarked that each time Africa presented a united front on the international scene, it made its voice heard. He indicated that the meeting was the first stage of a series of consultations on the problem of small arms and light weapons in Africa, which should lead to the adoption of an African common position at the Ministerial Conference scheduled in Bamako, Mali, from 31 October to 3 November 2000.

54. Amb. Saï d Djinnit, reiterated the OAU's gratitude to all Government Experts, African Personalities, Resource Persons and Members of the Eminent Persons Group for their invaluable contribution to the discussions. He paid particular tribute to Mr. Eteki-Mboumoua, former Secretary General of the OAU, to Amb. Mohamed Sahnoun, former Assistant Secretary General of the OAU, and Mr. Michel Rocard, former Prime Minister of France. Furthermore, he thanked all the partners and collaborators of the OAU Secretariat, particularly, the partner countries for their political and financial support, the staff of the UN Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa and of the Institute for Security Studies, especially Mrs. Virginia Gamba, for their intellectual and quality contribution to the deliberations.

55. Finally, he declared closed the First Continental meeting of African Experts on the Illicit Proliferation, Circulation and Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons.

* Egypt expressed its reservations