



Co-operating to Disarm

**Regional Parliamentary Round Table Meeting
Addressing The Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons
and Mitigation of Armed Violence**

**Hilton Double Tree Hotel Oyster Bay
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Key Note Address

**BY
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Read by

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Hon. Deputy Speaker of Parliament, Hon. Dr. Tulia Ackson,
Tanzania

Deputy Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Relations and
International Cooperation, Tanzania

State Counsel, Presenting The Attorney General, Tanzania

Your Excellency Pekka Hukka, Ambassador of Finland to
Tanzania

Mr. Alvaro Rodriguez, Resident Coordinator of the UN in Tanzania

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me take this opportunity to appreciate the hospitality
extended to us by the Government and the people of United
Republic of Tanzania since arrival yesterday.

May I also on behalf of RECSA Executive Secretary express our
gratitude to Parliamentarians for Global Action for the invitation
to participate in this Round Table meeting. *Asanteni sana*

Madam Chairperson;

The proliferation of illicit small arms and light weapons in the Region and Africa continues to sustain armed conflicts, cattle rustling, poaching and fuels armed crimes and terrorism. All these challenges contribute to fragility situations that result into negative effects on sustainable development.

Armed violence and insecurity have profound and long-term negative consequences for states, societies, and the quality of people's lives. This has progressively built consensus around acceptance that issues related to peace, security, and good governance should play a significant role in Sustainable Development Goals and national development agendas.

Hon. Ladies and Gentlemen;

In an effort to address this challenge, countries in the Great Lakes Region and Horn of Africa came up with the *Nairobi Protocol for Prevention, Control and Reduction of Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Great Lakes Region, the Horn of Africa and Bordering States* of April 2004. To coordinate their aspirations, the Regional Centre on Small Arms (RECSA) was established in June 2005. It is an intergovernmental organization hosted in Nairobi by the Government of Kenya and mandated to coordinate the implementation of the protocol in the 15 Member States.

Over the years, a consensus has emerged that there are negative and mutually reinforcing links between armed violence, insecurity and development. The death toll of armed violence is higher than the total casualty of any disease or calamity (300,000 to 500,000 per year). SALW as a tool of choice in armed conflicts is a major driver of fragility that weakens societies/nations resilience.

The proliferation of small arms constitutes a threat to human rights, development, good governance and democratic consolidation. The recognition of the interdependence of security and development can be articulated in the relationship between poverty, inequality, lack of opportunity and causes of armed violence. In fact Africa is said to be losing 18 billion dollars annually to armed violence and conflicts. The size of the SALW proliferation problem thus requires concerted efforts of various stakeholders.

Hon. Ladies and Gentlemen;

The role of parliamentarians in making relevant and stringent laws to regulate the trade and use of arms cannot be overemphasised. Your role in conflict resolution and as the repository of democratic values and practices for our societies is self-evident. As such it is a great opportunity for us to reflect on the matter of good management and control of small arms and light weapons to protect our people from armed violence. At this point allow me to appreciate the Parliaments of Burundi, Rwanda and the United Republic of Tanzania for their SALW legislation that is harmonized to international and regional SALW instruments. Other countries should emulate these good examples. Effective strategies to fight proliferation of illicit SALW require strong legislation and I believe your role in this regard will make a significant difference.

The forging of partnerships between African Parliaments and their international networks, the civil society and other development partners in Peace and State Building process, including the fight against illicit spread of small arms and enhancing Human Security cannot be overemphasized.

Some individuals and communities in our regions are armed because of marginalization and insecurity vulnerability, their situations should be addressed by leaders to enable them surrender arms and concentrate on development and life skills development. This is what we call practical disarmament where you address the demand factors as a means of disarmament. In other words, disarming the minds and hearts of people through provision of opportunities and alternative livelihoods.

Hon. Ladies and Gentlemen;

Parliamentarians are the custodians of national politics and agenda setting. It is possible for parliament to battle in words for positions of national interests to avoid seeking these aspirations through armed violence. It will serve our societies better when we trade words and considered or moderated opinions rather than trade bullets from AK47s.

At the international level, after many years of debate we finally have the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) to guide the regulation of trade in conventional arms including SALW. It's my appeal that parliaments encourage governments that have not ratified or acceded to the treaty to do so for the wider human society welfare.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to emphasize the need to integrate SALW control in our national development strategies and policy papers. In Africa, SALW are our weapons of mass destruction yet they are not remembered when addressing the national visions

and strategic documents and this is how they are left out in allocation of appropriate resources.

Ultimately, the capacity of governments to address the illicit trade in small arms and thus reduce armed violence will be dependent on strong national institutions responsible for small arms management and control. It is the role of parliament to ensure the institutions are established and have appropriate mandate, staffing, and budget to deliver on this critical national interest issue.

Finally, countries need to continue supporting regional mechanisms they put as the war on SALW trafficking cannot be won by one country. The future of our people depends on the fight against proliferation of small arms and light weapons. Let us join our efforts in this battle.

I thank you for your kind attention