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ADDRESSING THE ILLICIT TRADE IN SMALL ARMS AND
LIGHT WEAPONS IN AFRICA: MALAWI'S COUNTRY
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Mister Director, Peter Barcroft:

Right Honourable Speaker, Job Ndugai:

Fellow Members:

Ladies and Gentlemen:

The proliferation of small arms in Africa has been a major threat to social, economic and political development. Small arms have intensified and prolonged conflict, fostered a culture of violence, and contributed to an increase in violent crime. Small arms have also been used to facilitate torture, intimidation and oppression in Africa by both governments and non-state actors.

Malawi is not highly affected by illicit use of Small Arms and Light Weapons compared to our neighboring countries. However, our people still suffer significantly from the illicit use of small arms and light weapons both within their homes and business premises. Currently, it is estimated that 12,000 Malawians legally own firearms.

For the past years, many civilians and police officers have suffered various degrees of injuries including loss of lives due to

illicit use of small arms and light weapons. It is for this reason that Malawi always appreciates the importance of joining international and regional efforts in implementing bilateral and multilateral efforts initiatives aimed at preventing and reducing illicit use, trafficking and trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons.

Though violent crimes using firearms are almost constant for the past couple of years, Malawi continues to register an increase in terms of recovery of illegal firearms. This is largely due to good working relationship between the people and the police through Community Policing initiatives.

Evidence of Malawi's Commitment in joining the international community in the fight against Small Arms and Light Weapons:

The following milestone demonstrate that Malawi remains committed in the full implementation of initiatives aimed at combating firearms at National and International level:

1. Malawi signed the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, combat and eradicate illicit use of small arms and light weapons in 2001 when the Programme came into force. To this end, Malawi has submitted annual reports to United Nations Office on Drug and Alcohol on

progress that is being made in the implementation of the programme since 2006. Furthermore, Malawi has also participated in the biennial conference to report on progress made in the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action since 2006.

2. Malawi signed the SADC Protocol on Firearms, Ammunitions and related Materials in 2002. The Southern African Regional Police Chiefs Co-operation Organisation (SARPPCO) has been mandated with promoting and coordinating the implementation of the SADC Protocol.
3. Malawi established the National Focal Point (NFP) on Small Arms and Light Weapons control in 2006. This is a national coordinating body on all issues of small arms in Malawi. The National Focal Point comprises of the Police, Malawi Defence Force, Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and several other ministries and government departments as well as Civil Society Organizations. Currently the National Focal Point is headed by a senior police officer. The secretariat is at National Police Headquarters in Lilongwe.
4. With support from Regional Centre on Small Arms (RECSA) Malawi developed a National Action Plan

(NAP) as well as a Policy on the Control and Management of Firearms and Ammunitions in 2013. Though the National Action Plan now needs to be reviewed, it still remains a key policy document that shows the roadmap of what Malawi wants to achieve in the area of small arms control.

5. Malawi signed the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) in 2014.
6. Malawi continues to submit biennial reports on United Nations Programme of Action and International Tracing Instruments (ITI) as required.
7. Malawi annually destroys illicit arms at a public event that is widely publicized. In 2017, Malawi destroyed 2,700 illegally confiscated firearms. This event is usually done once every year during the World Week of Action against Small Arms and Light Weapons.
8. Malawi started the process to mark all firearms owned by the Police. The exercise will also extend to civilian owned firearms.

9. Recently from June 19th to June 30th 2018, Malawi participated in the UN Review Conference number 3 in New York. The Conference aimed at reviewing the United Nations Programme of Action.

Despite the success stories Malawi continues to face key Challenges and these are;

1. Manufacturing of illegal Muzzle Loading guns and Pistols which are used to commit both Wildlife Crimes as well as violent crimes in the society.
2. Controls over state-owned small arms, resulting in instances where state owned arms are used in committing of criminal offences and other forms of violence,
3. Marking of all Firearms is slow because it is a costly exercise. There is need for proper mechanism of marking parts of Small Arms by manufacturing states. It has been observed that in certain circumstances, some parts are not marked
4. Capacity building for our men in uniform and border officials in various aspects of Small Arms and Light Weapons control is lacking.

5. Porous border continues to pose a serious challenge in the fight against proliferation of small arms and light weapons. There is urgent need to improve detection of illicit arms and ammunitions that are hidden in scrape metals and other modes of transportations.
6. Outdated Firearms Act.

Recommendations

1. Urgent need to deal with wildlife crime through law enforcement and community empowerment programmes.
2. Urgent need to support the process of reviewing the Firearms Act of 1967 as well as both the Nation Action Plan and Policy.
3. Gender issues should properly be integrated into the National Action Plan and Policy. There is a lot of documentary evidence on how women and children are affected by small arms and light weapons.

4. There is need for continuous capacity building for individuals working on the control and management of Small Arms and Light Weapons in developing countries including Malawi.
5. There is need to develop a new mechanism of marking firearms and its parts by manufacturers to ensure that no single firearms have many parts with same serial number. .

Ladies and gentlemen, Malawi's Commitment:

Malawi remains committed in the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action and International Tracing Instrument in tandem with other local strategies such as community policing in the fight against illicit use of Small Arms and Light Weapons. Malawi will continue with the Firearms marking process which started a few years ago with support from Regional Centre on Small Arms.

Malawi remains committed to ensuring that awareness raising on the dangers of illicit use of firearms continues. Records keeping and stockpile management also remain a priority area for Malawi. Malawi will also put every effort to ensure that the Firearms Act which was enacted in 1967 is comprehensively reviewed. We will also continue to submit reports on both the United Nations

Programme of Action and International Tracing Instruments. We also remain committed to sharing of information at bilateral level through Joint Permanent Commissions and at international level through Interpol, Malawi also remains committed to working with the Civil Society in the fight against Small Arms and Light Weapons. This approach guarantees transparency and accountability in the way the government conducts its business.

Ladies and Gentlemen, allow me to conclude by outlining some of the solutions in addressing the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in Africa with reference to Malawi;

1. Intensify civil society or community-based policing. This project aimed at assisting the local police through local communities that have established community policing find effective methods of preventing firearms proliferation and misuse.
2. Enhance civic education and public awareness through radio, TV programs, community session and publication of materials on the dangers of illicit firearms and need for community-based policing.
3. Harmonise or review legal reforms especially laws on guns and firearms usages using United Nations Standards.

4. Comprehensive regional and international efforts in establishing systems of oversight and control. This should aim at closing down regional networks of illicit dealers, insurgents and permissive government agencies.
5. Adopt international norms against the uncontrolled and destabilizing transfer of small arms and light weapons to areas of tension and conflict.

Malawi continues to work and cooperate with other member states at bilateral, regional and multilateral levels to ensure that the dangers posed by illicit small arms and lights weapons are eradicated.