REPORT ON

UNITED NATIONS PROGRAMME

OF ACTION (UNPoA)

BY

THE KINGDOM OF LESOTHO

SECOND BIENNIAL MEETING OF STATES
NEW YORK, U.S.A.
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1. **BACKGROUND**

The Kingdom of Lesotho is a small country lying toward the Southern tip of Africa. At 30 350 km$^2$ in area, Lesotho is one of the smallest countries within the African Continent. She is completely land-locked by South Africa.

Lesotho being aware of an increase in proliferation, accumulation, availability and misuse of small arms in the world today, and aware that such illegal circulation of small arms intensifies violence and perpetuates crime, took national, regional and international initiatives to find a solution to the problem of uncontrolled flow of small arms.

At national level the country developed an internal policy to reduce and control the number of weapons held by Government bodies by constructing safe and secure storage.

Lesotho established National Focal Point as recommended by United Nations Plan of Action to Prevent Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons (UNPoA). This body was established in 2002 whose function is to prevent, combat and eradicate the spread of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW), to review the national policy on firearms and ammunition, and to review the laws relating to control of firearms to be in conformity with regional and international developments.

The Ministry of Home Affairs and Public Safety through the Office of the Commissioner of Police oversees that the public is made aware of the negative perception of possession and use of weapons whilst encouraging the love for peace and democracy.

Lesotho is a full member to the UNPoA and regionally, she is a State Party to Southern African Development Community (SADC) Protocol on the Control of Firearms, Ammunition and the subsequent Declaration, a party to the Agreement on Defence Issues between Lesotho, South Africa and Botswana, and a member of the Southern Africa Regional Police Chiefs Cooperations Organisation (SARPCCO).
The remaining challenge is to speed up the process towards the revision of its laws taking into account UNPoA and all the other Regional Agreements.

2.1 National Focal Point (NFP)

In December 2002, Lesotho established the National Focal Point which is composed of the Law Enforcement Agencies (such as Lesotho Mounted Police Service, Lesotho Revenue Authority, Immigration, Office of the Attorney General), the Security Agencies (Ministry of Defence, National Security Service, Lesotho Correctional Services), Other Ministries (Home Affairs, Foreign Affairs) and the Civil Society Organisations which assist with a wide range of activities such as exchange of information, research, training, review of legislations etc.

The Commissioner of Police has been selected as the National Focal Contact Person and below is her contact address:

Mrs. Malejaka E. Letooane  
Commissioner of Police  
Police Headquarters  
P.O. Box 13  
Maseru 100  
Lesotho

Tel: +266 2231 4947  
Cell: +266 5885 8810  
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The functions of the National Focal Point amongst others are as follows:

- Responsible for coordination of the implementation of SADC Protocol, Action Plans and Declarations pertaining to SALW such as UN Protocol, UNPoA, Bamako Declaration etc on the national and sub-regional level.
- Responsible for coordination of all activities related to SALW on the national level.
- Responsible for development, implementation, resourcing and monitoring national action plans.
- Coordinating and interacting with civil society
• Raising public awareness on small arms.

Even though this NFP was established in 2002, it has only been functional in January 2005. The Government hopes to keep the momentum on the implementation of UNPOA and other related Protocols and Declaration on SAW.

2.2 Legislation, Regulations, Administrative Procedures:

The bulk of control measures on firearms and ammunition are currently contained in the Internal Security (Arms and Ammunition) Act of 1966 (The Act). Minor Amendments relating to sentences and penalties were made to the Act in 1999. The necessary process for review and modernization of the Act is underway. Such Legislation will take into account the recent regional and international developments regarding the firearms control. It will address issues relating to controls on civilian possession and use, manufacture, trade, import and export, and transit. It will address competency testing requirements and controls over brokering.

2.3 Stock Management, Collection and Disposal:

After the 1998 civil unrest and the looting of the Government armories, Lesotho has constructed safe and secure storage facilities for confiscated and or returned weapons from civilians. This will ensure that these firearms are not illegally transferred back to unlicensed civilian users for criminal purpose.

An Agreement on Defence Issues between Lesotho, South Africa and Botswana signed in 1999 sets a framework for cooperation that has been used by Lesotho to request South Africa’s assistance in the destruction of unserviceable, non-standard excess and redundant small arms.

In November 2001, approximately 3800 weapons were destroyed in an operation code named Operation Qeto. This Operation was successful and clearly demonstrated commitment to abide by the SADC Declaration on Small Arms of 2000.
A follow up operation was conducted in September 2004 where a total of one hundred and thirty four (134) firearms recovered by the Police were decommissioned. Again the South African Government assisted Lesotho under the SADC Defence Cooperation.

2.4 **Export Controls, Brokering, Marking and Tracing:**

Lesotho does not manufacture firearms but it is not immune from the problems that maybe caused by lack of legislative provisions on export controls, brokering, marking and tracing.

It is intended that the review of the law will take into account all the existing regional and international instruments on the issue.

2.5 **Awareness Campaigns:**

The Lesotho Mounted Police Service holds regular public gatherings and rallies to educate the public about use of small arms. The Public is taught about the negative effects illicit use of small arms can have. The Police try by all means to instill the love for peace and tranquility amongst the communities.

2.6 **Regional and Global level measures:**

As has been mentioned earlier Lesotho is a party to most of the Regional and Global Instruments that support the arms control, non-proliferation and the UNPoA as a whole. All that remains is the implementation on the ground of the UNPoA. A lot has been achieved, all that is needed is to keep the momentum.

**Conclusion**

Lesotho has taken an active role in international deliberation on SALW and on all issues of disarmament. All she has to do is to speed up the process towards the revision of its laws taking into account the regional and international instrument and the implementation of UNPoA.