OF THE UNITED NATIONS PROGRAMME OF ACTION ON PREVENTING,
COMBATING AND ERADICATING ILLICIT TRADE IN SMALL ARMS &
LIGHT WEAPONS IN ALL ITS ASPECTS BY THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF
NIGERIA

INTRODUCTION

In Nigeria, the implementation of the UN Programme of Action (UNPoA) on preventing, combating and eradicating the illicit trade in SALW progressed steadily since the July 2001 conference on illicit trade in SALW in all its aspects. At the global level, Nigeria consistently attended conferences and meetings that were organized to further move the implementation of the UNPoA forward. At the regional level, Nigeria continued to support the advocacy for the transformation of the moratorium regime into a convention which is a more legally binding instrument and a lot has been achieved in this direction. At the National level, it has remained a key objective of Nigeria to continue with the steady sensitization on the culture of peace, collection and destruction of illicit arms so as to safeguard them from returning to the illicit market.

A. NATIONAL LEVEL COORDINATION

2. Consistent with the part II, paragraph 5 of the UNPoA, Nigerian National point of contact that acts as liaison between states on such related matters, remains, the Department of Collective Defence and Security, Ministry of Cooperation and Integration in Africa, the presidency Abuja, Nigeria; with FAT Oreagba (Mrs.) as the focal person (+234-802-303-7561).

LEGISLATIONS, REGULATIONS AND PROCEDURES
The Firearms Act

3. In Nigeria there exist the firearms Act of 1959 which has the core objective of achieving the following amongst others:-
✓ To Enable state to remove illegally possessed firearms from society, to control the supply, possession, storage, transfer and use of firearms;
✓ To deter and punish the negligent and criminal use of firearms;

4. It is worth mentioning that the implementation of this legislation is progressing effectively in Nigeria. However, the national implementing unit of the UNPoA sets in motion, the process of seeking for the amendment of some sections of the Firearms Act so as to make them relevant to present day realities. In the meantime, in order to heighten the momentum, government puts in place ad-hoc presidential committees so as to increase surveillance and recoveries of illicit arms often used for violent crimes.

PUBLICITY AWARENESS RAISING ON RELEVANT LAWS

5. The public enlightenment of the citizenry forms one of the cardinal objectives towards inculcating the culture of peace in the country. Apart from sensitizing the top echelon in Government, the point of contact conducts regular publicity and public relations activities using the mass media. The public statements by government officials and political leaders assists tremendously in deterring people from illegally bearing of small arms. In addition, civic education is conducted by the civil society organizations.

STOCKPILE MANAGEMENT AND STREATHENING BORDER SECURITY

6. The existing facilities for stockpiling in the country were provided since colonial administration and are now obsolete and dilapidated. This is why the last episode of the Ikeja Bomb Blast recorded substantial casualties. In the country presently, all the formations including the Armed and Security Services and Police require modern and computerized filling system and equipment in order to forestall future occurrence of this unfortunate episode.
7. In an effort to effectively strengthen Nigeria’s borders, the focal point undertook massive resource mobilization both with the local and international partners. This resulted in securing a 3-phase training support from the United States International Narcotics Law Enforcement Unit who, through the US Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF) provided training on Enhancing Border Security for Nigeria’s border security operatives. Thus, in 2002 and 2003 experts from the United States ATF came to Nigeria and conducted the train-the-trainers’ workshops for border security operatives. The workshops took place in Katsina and Lagos respectively, these two border towns are the most busy entry points in the country.

**COLLECTION AND DISPOSAL**

8. The Nigeria focal point continued sensitization of the armed services police and the security forces leading to the massive recoveries and seizures of arms in the hands of unauthorized bearers and criminals alike. In commemoration of the 2004 UN Arms Destruction Day, the National focal point in conjunction with the Collection and Destruction Committee, destroyed 1,466 assorted Arms and 15,080 rounds of ammunition. The Niger Delta region of the country has restive youths and environmentalist using SALW to vandalize oil pipelines and caused severe havoc. In order to stem the level of insecurity in the region, proactive measures were taken by the government which culminated into the recovery of various calibers of sophisticated arms and ammunition. This resulted in the massive seizures, and in some cases voluntary surrender by the ethnic militias due to inducements given by the government in return.

9. It would be recalled that with the advent of democracy in the country, disarmament momentum heightened in the country. In July 2001, the Federal Government carried out the first destruction of arms and ammunition that were seized by security agencies across
the country. During that exercise, 428 riffles, 494 imported pistols, 287 locally made pistols and 48 Dane guns were seized and destroyed. It is worth reporting also that, from January 2002 to June 2003, 1,902 assorted firearms and 13,271 rounds of ammunition were collected and destroyed.

HOSTING OF INTERNATIONAL TRIPARTITE SEMINAR ON ENHANCED BORDER SECURITY AGAINST ILICIT SALW AND OTHER CROSS BORDER CRIMINALITIES

10. In its onerous efforts to check the menace of SALW proliferations, and considering its vast borders, Nigeria initiated and hosted an International Tripartite Seminar on Enhancing Border Security for Border Security Operatives from the Republics of Benin, Niger and Nigeria. The workshop attracted participants from the 3 countries and discussed on wide-ranging issues concerning the sanctity of our borders, the indispensability of security as well as further stressing our commitments to integration and development. In the course of the workshop, the participants observed as the root causes of SALW proliferations amongst others, the following:

- the porous nature of the sub-regional border due to their extensiveness and shortage of manpower and equipment facilities smuggling of SALW;

- the abundant national resources in the sub-region are being illegally exploited by prominent citizens, mercenaries, arms dealers and mafia groups and battered for Small Arms and Light Weapons;

- the deteriorating economic and social conditions as indicated by mass unemployment of the youths and deepening poverty have led to the rampant illicit use of arms for violent crimes, inter-religious and inter-ethnic conflicts; and
* the burgeoning trade in arms fuelled by arms producing countries has led to the easy availability of illicit arms within the sub-region.

11. After extensive collaborative deliberations on the menace of SALW, participants at the tripartite seminar recommended that national governments of the participating countries should take all the necessary steps to nurture a Culture of Peace in the sub-regions by initiating programmes aimed at enhancing the living conditions of the citizens of the sub-regions. It also advocated, the need to harmonize and strengthen relevant legislations, establishment of Joint Border Patrols; establishment of Joint Intelligence Networks; as well as providing modern border security equipment such as scanners, infra-red goggles, cameras and computers. The International Community and other International Organizations such as the UN and AU, together with Donors and Partners should support this initiative so as to assist in the implementation of these decisions, since resources were identified by the participants, as major constraints.

B. REGIONAL

12. A number of regional commitments and declarations were acceded to by Nigeria and are steadily being implemented. The Bamako Declaration signed December 1, 2000 sought to present common African position on the illicit proliferation, circulation and trafficking of SALW. In this declaration, member states agreed to address these problems in a comprehensive and efficient manner so as to promote peace, security and stability in Africa. The Small Arms Transparency and Control Regime in Africa (SATCRA) have Nigeria as a core of 10 countries in Africa implementing its pilot scheme. The ECOWAS Moratorium regime and its code of conduct are being implemented in Nigeria with tremendous successes recorded. The advocacy for the transformation of the moratorium into a Convention
is being pursued with vigor due to the obvious advantages of having a legally binding Instrument.

C. INTERNATIONAL

13. International Conferences/Workshops were designed to further articulate effective implementation strategies of the UNPoA such that attendance at them, hosting and participation were very significant. The focal point participated at the DNI-ECOWAS Workshop on International Arms Brokering sponsored by the Dutch and Norwegian Governments in March 2004 held in Abuja - Nigeria. Also, the focal point participated at the 1st and 2nd sessions of the Open Ended Working Group on Marking, Tracing and Record Keeping of Small Arms on a timely and reliable Manner. Apart from the multilateral and bilateral frameworks adopted towards effective implementation of the UNPoA in the country, the focal point engaged and collaborated with both intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations such as Oxfam, IANSA, Safer Africa, amongst others in the discharge of the priority areas of the UNPoA.

CONSTRAINTS/CONCLUSION

14. Although, Nigeria recorded modest achievement in terms of the implementation of the UNPoA, a lot more grounds are yet to be covered due to lack of resources. As such, Nigeria is yet to establish a National Arms Register and Data Bank, as well as to secure Arms Destruction, and border security equipment. In conclusion, a country such as Nigeria having a contiguous border with four other countries, it is imperative that a proactive action must be in place to safeguard the incidences of arms running/trafficking. Of course, this could only be achieved with the consistent support of relevant stakeholders and the International community. Despite growing enthusiasm amongst government functionaries, law enforcement agencies and political leaderships, NATCOM members agree that
more is needed to be done to reverse the suicidal trend of arms proliferation in West African sub-region. The challenges of implementation of the UNPoA remain enormous.

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