GHANA’S COUNTRY REPORT - 2005
TO UN DEPARTMENT OF DISARMAMENT, 26TH JUNE-7TH JULY, 2006.

PREAMBLE:

Ghana is delighted to announce to the global community that the country is currently experiencing a comparatively conducive and stable political climate as evidenced by good governance, freedom of speech and rapid socio-economic / infrastructural development.

The International Community has recognised this progress in good governance and political stability in Ghana over a long period of time followed by a successful democratic change of government describing her as an oasis of peace in the midst of the turbulent West African sub-region.

This achievement of political stability has been underpinned by the continued emphasis on factors that have the potential, directly or remotely, to undermine Public Safety, peace, law and order or the conducive socio-economic environment. Prominent among these is the menace of the proliferation of small arms, which the Government continues to take seriously. Thus Ghana, notwithstanding this commendable achievement, is in the forefront in the fight against proliferation of illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons [SALW] circulating in the West African sub-region.

Ghana is continuing with measures to jealously guard this enviable record chalked in the field of good governance and vibrant press freedom in an atmosphere of relative peace. This is because the prevention of conflicts through the control of SALW has been recognised by government as prerequisite for development.

The Ghana National Commission on Small Arms [GNACSA] is collaborating with the Security Agencies such as the Police, Military, the Customs and Excise Preventive Service [CEPS] to control the proliferation of illicit SALW. The Commission has also succeeded in dialoguing with some manufacturers of small arms to shift from the production of lethal instruments to the production of tools for peaceful uses. Periodically, swoops and surveillance activities are organised to identify and apprehend illegal manufacturers of weapons with ‘Cordon and Search’ operations to retrieve illicit arms and ammunitions from their hideouts.

Ghana is also in collaboration with her neighbouring countries in initiating preventive and control measures to address the menace of small arms proliferation and trafficking, notwithstanding the challenges.
THE LEVEL OF SMALL ARMS PROLIFERATION IN GHANA

Small Arms have been the main instrument of violence in most developing countries, with Ghana being no exception. Intelligence sources in Ghana have revealed that the threshold of proliferation of illicit SALW is as follows:

- Leakages from state armouries during political upheavals in the late 1970’s and early 1980’s and siphoning by criminal elements within the security apparatus for sale;

- Smuggling from our neighbouring countries due to the porous nature of our borders, and which fuel domestic conflicts, as is being experienced in the Northern part of Ghana;

- Production of locally made illegal weapons, which satisfies local demands by traditional hunters and peasant farmers. The local manufacture of small arms has grown in sophistication and intensity to meet the growing demand by citizens who require them for self-protection as a result of general insecurity and also unfortunately by criminals for robbery and other criminal activities.

Ghana is currently working on a draft National Plan of Action [NPA] for Arms Control and Management which provides the framework for a comprehensive set of activities to ensure the effective and efficient control and management of arms in the country. Specifically, it is the core document to guide the country’s efforts to arrest the proliferation and the misuse of small arms, and eradicate the threats they pose to human security. The formulation of the NPA is the culmination of a consultative process and programmes initiated in the framework of the Ghana Small Arms Reduction and Conflict Prevention Project by the Ministry of the Interior and the Ghana National Commission on Small Arms [GNACSA], with the support of the United Nations Development Programme [UNDP] and other Development Partners. This project is a conflict prevention initiative that aims to address the widespread circulation of illicit small arms in the country, and their potential to foment violence. In spite of some tensions and localised violence, Ghana has not been involved in a full blown, nation-wide conflict like some of her neighbours in the West African sub-region. The conflict prevention project on small arms thus
represents a national commitment to safeguard and ensure the country’s continued stability.

**CAPACITY BUILDING**

A workshop organized at Elmina in the Central Region of Ghana for Security Operatives and a retreat for Commission members at Ada in the Eastern Region of Ghana created the appropriate forum for capacity building for selected Security Operatives from all the ten [10] Administrative Regions of Ghana and GNACSA members. The workshop created the platform for Capacity Development in Arms Inventory and Stockpile Management, Cross Border Control, Sensitization and Awareness Raising Campaign, Strategic Planning, identification of national priorities and intra and inter-agency coordination.

Subsequent to a very successful workshop and the valuable experiences gained, a comprehensive report was compiled and circulated to participants and Government Agencies to serve as reference material for training programmes.

**STOCKPILE MANAGEMENT / ARMS COLLECTION AND DESTRUCTION**

A national stock-taking exercise of small arms which were confiscated or surrendered to the security agencies, was undertaken in some selected Police armouries about two (2) years ago in all regional capitals, and will be extended to other armouries. These weapons are earmarked for destruction as part of Ghana’s commitment to fulfil her international requirement geared towards the realization of the objectives of the ECOWAS Convention on SALW which re-enforces the United Nations Programme of Action [UNPoA]. In this regard, Ghana destroyed Six Hundred and Seventy-Five [675] assorted weapons on 9\textsuperscript{th} July, 2005 [UN Weapons’ Destruction Day] at Tamale, an area noted for protracted disputes in the Northern part of Ghana. In all, Ghana has destroyed over 2,500 weapons since 2001.

**ADDRESSING THE ISSUE OF BLACKSMITHS AND ILLICIT PRODUCTION**

The Ghana National Commission on Small Arms with support from the United Nations Development Programme [UNDP] has been engaging local Blacksmiths to shift their focus from the production of small arms to that of other socially-beneficial tools for peaceful purposes and which have ready markets, examples being plough blades for farmers and hand-
cuffs for the Police. It is hoped that this will help in helping to preserve their entrepreneurial skills as well as re-directing same into productive and equally lucrative economic activity. Interactions with the Ashanti Regional Association of Blacksmiths [ASHRAB], which is currently the best organized in the country, has yielded very fruitful results. As a result, blacksmiths in other regions are also being encouraged to organize themselves into well recognised groups to form a National Association to present a formidable front. This will enhance the process of identifying their needs which will facilitate the rationalisation of support from the Ghana National Commission of Small Arms, Development Partners and other organizations. Meanwhile, part of a comprehensive National Plan of Action [NPA] is to introduce skills training and support measures to convert skills to other viable alternatives.

**AWARENESS RAISING CAMPAIGN**

Sensitisation and Awareness Raising campaigns which were initiated in the latter part of 2004 are on-going and have yielded positive results. A significant percentage of the citizenry have been sensitised about the dangers associated with illicit arms and on the need to reduce the demand for weapons.

Thousands of students of first and second-cycle schools as well as inhabitants of communities have been encouraged to establish Weapon-Free Clubs or Societies during the Commission’s outreach programmes which have yielded good results as evidenced by the number of communities renouncing violence and using dialogue to resolve disputes. Some communities in the Volta and Northern Regions of Ghana with protracted disputes have now resolved them amicably.

**BASELINE SURVEY**

The report of the Baseline Survey which was initiated in 2004 to research and provide a comprehensive overview of the SALW situation in Ghana, and conducted by the African Security Dialogue and Research [ASDR] was completed and presented to government. This survey formed the background document for a National Strategic Conference on Small Arms which was held in Accra from the 14th to 16th of March, 2006, which brought together the Development Partners, Security operatives, Civil
Society Organizations [CSOs] and local craft producers of Small Arms to foster dialogue and build consensus for a National Plan of Action.

**POLICY AND LEGISLATION**

Measures are underway to develop Ghana’s SALW policy, and to review the country's legislation on small arms. A policy drafting committee is expected to be established to draft Ghana’s SALW policy, and the committee is expected to ensure that CSOs are effectively consulted in its development. This process of policy development is already far advanced. Based on the committee’s report, Ghana is expected to formulate a more effective and comprehensive national policy on firearms, ammunition, explosives and related materials in accordance with international and regional programmes, protocols and national objectives. Meanwhile the existing laws on Arms have been consolidated into a single legislation.

**SUB-REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION**

Ghana has continued to participate in international Small Arms conferences, seminars and workshops. Ghana has been quite active in a Consultative Group process regarding the issue of arms transfer with particular focus on transfer to non-state actors and will continue to support all the recommendations from the process for onward submission to the United Nations for possible adoption. Ghana acknowledges that for effective control of the proliferation of small arms in the country, she requires coordination and cooperation with her neighbours. Therefore, Ghana will continue to: engage in consultative processes; in the ECOWAS framework, to promote collaboration among sub-regional agencies on the control of small arms, explore and promote bilateral and sub-regional cooperation on efforts to combat small arms proliferation, and initiate cooperation and information sharing within the sub-region and internationally within the framework of national policy.

**EMPOWERING WOMEN AND CHILDREN**

Ghana National Commission on Small Arms is working towards better collaboration with CSOs to put in programmes that can focus on sensitisation and empowerment of women and children. We are of the view that children and women suffer most in times of conflict, so the Commission is in consultation with CSOs and the UNDP-Ghana to empower children and women to understand the negative implication of armed violence which has come about as a result of the proliferation of SALW. This will make them consider joining seriously the fight against
illicit SALW which is expected to result in their playing a very significant role in order to help protect them.

**ACHIEVEMENTS**

Despite the numerous challenges that the Commission has faced, it has been able to chalk some successes. The following are a few achievements:-

- A Baseline Survey of Small Arms proliferation in Ghana to assist in formulating a National Plan of Action was completed, and structures are in place to address issues of Small Arms and Light Weapons;

- National Firearms Registry Fibre Optic infrastructure was completed;

- Awareness Raising Campaigns on the dangers of the proliferation of SALW were conducted in all ten [10] regions of Ghana;

- A Secretariat has been commissioned for the Ghana National Commission on Small Arms and is functional;

- The Commission has developed at its secretariat a Small Arms Incidents Media Database which captures small arms-related cases reported country-wide in the print media on daily basis in order to ascertain areas noted for armed related violence. The Commission is also collaborating with the Security Agencies to capture a comprehensive report on all small arms cases recorded at all Police stations in the country;

- Legislation on Arms and Ammunition has been harmonized and updated. Cabinet has approved it and is now before Parliament;

- Six Hundred and Seventy-Five [675] illicit weapons were destroyed on UN Weapons’ Destruction Day;

- There has been periodic Amnesty for those in possession of illicit arms to facilitate Voluntary surrender of firearms as a way of retrieving illicit arms in the country;
A draft National Plan of Action [NPA] has been prepared and is to be validated and adopted as the country’s Road-Map for tackling the menace of proliferation of small arms;

There has been integration of issues pertaining to the control of small arms into a Growth and Poverty Reduction Programme [GPRS II], which is Ghana’s Medium-Term Development Agenda.

CHALLENGES:

The menace of small arms has been perceived seriously at the level of the country’s Presidency and National Security Council. However, due to the fact that Ghana has never experienced civil war, greater efforts are needed to let the citizenry appreciate the problem of the proliferation of small arms as both a Security and Developmental issue.

There should be serious efforts geared towards disarmament in localities and communities identified as areas of high concentration of firearms and in the Volta Region where two [2] communities have smoked the peace pipe recently after decades of war, as well as ‘weapons for development’ programmes and practical projects in areas of tension and conflict. This will enhance weapon-free societies and bring development to the people, especially the youth who are easily recruited into conflict.

Artisans who have the capacity to manufacture arms locally have continued to succeed in carrying out their production in the criminal underworld despite the fact that this activity remains illegal, making efforts to ensure the ban counter-productive. The main motivation for the production of locally-made small arms by these artisans, especially blacksmiths, is that of economic factors more than any other. The prevailing economic situation in the country and the sub-region makes the manufacturing and the smuggling of small arms very profitable, and unless economically viable alternatives are provided to these blacksmiths, it is expected to be very difficult to win the fight against the local production of arms.

There is the need for greater collaboration with identifiable organisations and CSOs, of which some consider themselves as competitors with the Small Arms Commission in their activities, to build a cohesive intervention in the area of awareness raising.
It must be stated though, that Ghana is consistently making inroads in the fight against the proliferation of small arms, yet sustaining the momentum and meeting all these challenges would require financial and logistical support which the government of Ghana alone cannot address. In this regard, we see the strengthening of international cooperation and assistance, especially financial and technical, as paramount since majority of developing countries including Ghana lack the capacity to fully implement some of the provisions of our National Plans of Action. Here, we make special mention of the U.K government and the United Nations Development Programme for their support and hope we could count on their continued assistance.

**CONCLUSION**

Ghana has chalked considerable success in the field of Public Sensitization and Advocacy, Weapons’ Destruction, conduct of comprehensive Baseline Survey of Small Arms Proliferation, which formed the basis of a National Strategic conference on Small Arms which was held in March, 2006. It is hoped that when the National Plan of Action [NPA] which was a by-product of the conference is validated by the end of 2006, it will form the road-map for the activities of the Commission.

The Government of Ghana and Ghana National Commission on Small Arms give special recognition to the fact that the present political stability and accelerated socio-economic development are contingent on peaceful atmosphere, which can be seriously undermined by such instruments of violence as small arms, when they are in wrong hands. It is, therefore, our utmost responsibility to adopt robust and realistic measures for the removal of this menace, notwithstanding the daunting challenges.

The fight against the proliferation of small arms will continue to be relentless and with support from our Development Partners, and in collaboration with Civil Society Organisations, other stakeholders, and the International Community, there is strong indication that the battle will be won.
H. E. GHANA'S PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE TO U.N.
UNITED NATIONS HQRS.
NEW YORK

THROUGH
HON. MINISTER
MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, REGIONAL CO-OPERATION & NEPAD
ACCRA.

SUBMISSION OF GHANA'S COUNTRY REPORT TO UN DEPARTMENT OF
DISARMAMENT - 26TH JUNE - 7TH JULY, 2006

Please find enclosed in both hard and soft copies, Ghana’s Country Report to UN Department of Disarmament - 26th June - 7th July, 2006

Please acknowledge receipt.

HON. KWAKU AGYEMAN-MANU
DEPUTY MINISTER & CHAIRMAN / GNACSA