I. INTRODUCTION

The need to have a strict control of small arms and light weapons in all its aspects is today an imperative to reestablish a climate of international stability and security.

The United Nations Program of Action to prevent, combat and eliminate the illicit traffic of small arms and light weapons, adopted in 2001, foresees inter alia the taking of measures at the national level.

In this connection, the Angolan Government appointed the National Commission for the Implementation of this program, coordinated by the Minister of External Relations, through Presidential Decree nº 08/04, of July 23rd.

However, the complexity of the execution of this program required the adoption of additional measures to improve the mechanisms for its implementation. Thus, a Workshop on the disarmament of the civilian population took place in Luanda on March 4 and 5, 2008, whose objective was to sensitize the political stakeholders, the civil society and the population in general to the danger that firearms in the hands of civilians pose to individual and collective security. This exercise was also aimed at gaining the support of all for the voluntary surrender of weapons.
The results of the Workshop led to the establishment of the National Commission for the Disarmament of the Civilian Population, through a Presidential Decree of March 5th, 2008. The objective of this Commission, which is coordinated by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Angola, is to collect, store and safekeep all small arms and light weapons in illegal possession of the civilian population, former military and police officers, and private security companies.

This Commission elaborated a program of action on the disarmament of the civilian population, which was approved by the Government on April 16th, 2008.

II. COORDINATION OF DISARMAMENT ACTIVITIES

An important decision for the success of the process of disarmament in Angola was the adoption of the principle of a good coexistence between the National Commission for the Disarmament of the Civilian Population and the National Commission for the Implementation of the Program of Action on the Illicit Trade of Small Arms and Light Weapons, for while the former aims, in a contained manner, to collect weapons of war in illegal possession of citizens, the latter was created to prevent, fight, and eradicate the illicit trade of small arms and light weapons in all its aspects, at the national, regional and global levels, in the framework of the United Nations Program.

On the basis of such coexistence, the first political act aimed at the implementation of the disarmament objectives of the Government was the Presidential Decree of March 5th, 2008, which creates the National Commission for the Disarmament of the Civilian Population (CNDPC), Coordinated by His Excellency the Prime Minister of the Republic of Angola, and that integrates the following entities:

- Minister of the Interior – Deputy Coordinator;
- Minister of Defense;
- Minister of External Relations;
- Minister of Territorial Administration;
- Minister of Justice;
- Minister of Social Communication;
- Minister of Education;
- Minister of Social Assistance and Reintegration;
- Minister of Public Construction;
- Minister of Finance;
At the Provincial, Municipal and Communal levels, there are Local Commissions that are coordinated by their respective Vice-Governors and staffed by local activists in all Communes.

At present, the Government is involved in a project that encourages the taking of practical measures for the implementation of this instrument.

III. LEGISLATION AND REGULAMENTATION

The materialization of the disarmament of the civilian population has allowed for the identification of some legislative aspects, whose revision is decisive to the success of the process, including:

- The elaboration of the 1st Law that changes the rules for possession and use of small arms for defense, recreation and hunting, since it is obsolete and inadequate for the present socio-political juncture;
- The amendment of the Law on private security so as to render adequate the coercive means used by companies in this field;
- Revoking the Decree that prohibits the import and sales of weapons for defense, hunting and recreation with a view to establishing national entities that will acquire and sell arms in a controlled manner, sustaining the appropriate conduct of private security activities;
- Elaborating Regulations on the safety of military entities with the objective of determining a new type of weapon that such entities and guards may carry, and thus proceed to the collection of the weapons of war they now carry.
- Creating the conditions for the adhesion of Angola to the Bamako Declaration, to the Protocols of Nairobi and SADC on the Control of Firearms, as well as the UN Convention on Organized Transnational Crime and its Additional Protocols.
IV. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DISARMAMENT PROGRAM AT THE LEVEL OF THE NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR THE DISARMAMENT OF THE CIVILIAN POPULATION (CNDPC)

1. Evaluation of Objectives and Strategy

The CNDPC started its activity by evaluating its mission and conducting several consultations on sensitive issues such as:

a) The evaluation of the police study on the problem of the proliferation of weapons of war in possession of civilians. This evaluation, carried out by the National Police in 2006-2007, established a database necessary for establishing the Government’s Program of Action and made it possible to determine the true nature and dimension of the problem of firearms in the Country. Also, the study helped identify available resources and the ones that will be needed for the effective implementation of the National Plan of Action;

b) The Angolan People’s perception of disarmament;

c) The cleavages of the disarmament process in Angola;


e) The estimate of the number of weapons to be collected;

f) The methods to sensitize and mobilize society;

g) The issue of rewards;

h) The mobilization and integration of social partners;

i) The conditions for the gradual substitution of the armament used by private security companies;

j) The scope of technical and material needs.

Based on a series of conclusions, the National Commission proposed changes to the program and strategy, establishing the principle of complementarity of the phases of the process. This principle allows for elasticity and spontaneous integration of actions within the several phases. Only thus it is possible to ensure the continuity of the sensitization phase that would have ended on April 30th, 2008. On the
other hand, this principle safeguards the instructions given the police forces to continue targeted searches within their competence.

Once these conditions were created, the Council of Ministers approved the Government’s Program of Action for the disarmament of the civilian population (PAGDPC) on April 16th, 2008.

2. Evaluation of the Implementation of Disarmament Phases

2.1. Organization and Sensitization Phase

2.1.1. Organization

The following steps were taken in this section:

- The National Commission for the Disarmament of the Civilian Population has been instituted;
- The Local Commissions for the Disarmament of the Civilian Population have been instituted and are functioning;
- The working regulations of the National and Provincial Commissions have been elaborated;
- The place and procedures for delivery of weapons have been defined;
- The prohibition on the import and sale of defense, hunting, and recreational weapons has been revoked;
- The amendment to the Law on the possession and use of defense weapons and on Private Security has been elaborated;
- The working group on the transmission and treatment of information on illegal possession of firearms has been created;
- The framework of logistical, training and informative conditions for the success of disarmament operations has been conceived and guided, and a budget has been identified for it.

The creation of these instruments has triggered actions that have allowed for:

- The elaboration of a computer and a manual data-base project for the registry, cataloguing and storage of the weapons to be received,
separating them from those that already exist in military and police institutions;

- The construction of weapons stockpiles and surplus disposal in the Provincial Police Commands. This is an important first step for a more efficient development of a regimen of weapons control.
- The accomplishment of the information, education and sensitization campaign;
- Training of personnel for the administration of the control, marking and tracing of weapons;
- The promotion of surveys and technical studies;
- The acquisition of transportation, computer, and consumable resources.

2.1.2. Sensitization

The sensitization phase started on March 4th, 2008, with the accomplishment of the Workshop on Disarmament, in which participated Members of the Government, of the house of Representatives, of the Diplomatic Corps accredited in the country, people from Organs of the United Nations System, Provincial Governors, representatives of Political Parties, of the Angolan Armed Forces and of the National Police, Religious Entities, Traditional Authorities and NGO's. This event, which provided experiences accumulated in the disarmament of citizens in illegal possession and use of weapons of war, reactivated the commitment of all the Sectors of the Government and the Angolan society, which has lent the disarmament process much of its current impetus.

Of great value to the event were the experiences conveyed by the representatives of some international organizations, countries and NGO's, namely the United Nations and its specialized agencies, IANSA, Tanzania, Mozambique, South Africa and Namibia, which have resulted in the definition of strategies and methods for carrying out disarmament.

The Workshop and the provincial seminars were useful in identifying partnerships in the area of communications, sensitization and mobilization of Traditional Authorities, Local Commissions and Administrations, Activists, Churches, NGO's, the Military and the
Police on the ways of making information available to citizens, of strengthening their understanding of the national and local dimension, and of including them in the continuous dialogue on the issue of disarmament.

The Workshop allowed for some considerations to be made, such as:

- Changing the perception on channeling part of the State's General Budget for the purchase of armament, since the cost and consequences of a single bullet has a negative impact in the economic and social development of the Country.
- The possibility of the existence of many weapons in hiding places and stockpiles;
- The continuation of the implementation of the Program of Demobilization and Reintegration of former combatants.

The sensitization campaign was intensified starting June 15th, 2008, through the following actions:

- A series of advertisements and announcements in mass transportation vehicles;
- Outdoors billboards and posters with several messages;
- Distribution of flyers and brochures in the main transportation routes, airports, streets, streetlights, walls of public and private buildings, flags with slogans in soccer, basketball and handball fields and on beaches, as well as stationary and dynamic advertising;
- Use of activists;
- Creation of a journalism prize and the promotion of improved work by the social communication (the press, television or radio);
- Creation of a national prize for the best comic drawing in secondary and junior high schools;
- Promote the writing of poetry and theatre pieces on the subject to youth organizations, and to the several existing public and private youth groups;
- Mass distribution of Information, Education and Communication materials (IEC) and several giveaways.
2.2. Voluntary Surrender of Weapons Phase
2.2.1. Disarmament in the Framework of the PAGDPC (Government’s Program of Action for the Disarmament of the Civilian Population)

The program reserved the months of May and June of 2008 for the voluntary surrendering of weapons at the places indicated for the effect. However, the positive impact of the above mentioned Workshop on the disarmament of the civilian population stimulated the voluntary submission of weapons so that until June of the present year (end of the phase of voluntary surrender), approximately 23,444 weapons of several calibers, 11,667 loaders and 57,611 diverse types of ammunition were voluntarily submitted, with a highlight to the provinces of Huila (5,473 weapons), Huambo (3,845 weapons), Uíge (2,786 weapons) and Luanda (1,504 weapons).

Still during the months of May and June, thanks to reports made by the population, 8 weapons stockpiles were deactivated in some localities in the country where diverse materials were located, with a highlight to:

- 7,414 pieces of ammunition of several calibers;
- 3,984 projectiles of the type 82mm;
- 980 explosive heads of the type 82mm;
- 23 boxes of ZU-23 projectiles;
- 275 pipes of 105mm cannons;
- 5 BM-21 projectiles;
- 230 ZU-23;
- 133 weapons of several calibers.

2.2.2. Disarmament in the Framework of International Cooperation

In the framework of the SARCCO and with a view to controlling the illicit circulation of weapons in the region, operation MANDUME was carried out in November of 2007, involving police forces from Angola, South Africa and Namibia, and resulting in the recovery of 6,799 weapons of several calibers, 543 explosives of several types, 517 loaders and 13,683 pieces of ammunition of different calibers.

It should be noted that 30% of the material mentioned above was recovered from gun stockpiles in the localities neighboring the Republic of Namibia, 20% was voluntarily surrendered by the population, and
50% was collected coercively from populations who possessed them illegally.

2.2.4. Treatment Given to Recovered Weapons

The weapons collected received the following treatment:
- Destruction of 1,013 weapons of several calibers with the support of The Halo Trust, a Non-Governmental Organization, as they were obsolete;
- Use of those that were still operable to supply the needs of public defense and security organs.

3. Financing

The Program of Action for Disarmament of the Civilian Population is supported by the State’s General Budget and by national donations from companies in the oil, diamond, industrial and hospitality sectors.

V. IMPACT OF THE ACTIONS TAKEN

Angolan citizens proved their recognition of the danger posed by firearms by engaging in sensitization and mobilization campaigns and in the voluntary surrender of weapons, thus preventing the problem from becoming uncontrollable.

Also, military and police units and private security companies strengthened their levels of weapons control.

In this connection, the steps taken by the two Commissions resulted in:
- A change of perception of the urgency of disarming active military and police, resulting in amendments to the regulations on the safety of military entities;
- The need to change the Law on the Exercise of Private Security;
- In the revoking of the Decree prohibiting the import and sale of defense, hunting and recreational weapons in the terms of the previous legislation;
- In the increase of the population's awareness of the danger of the illegal ownership and improper use of weapons;
- In the massive adhesion of all sectors of society and of the populations to the program in order to help in the discovery of weapons hideouts;
- In the change of perception concerning weapons of war in possession of civilians, acquired illicitly, and as such, without any registration;
- In the elaboration of a diagnosis of the Private Security Companies and Self Protection Systems that carry weapons of war, and which were created during the war period.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

1. The number of weapons surrendered monthly had an immediate impact in the public safety situation. There was a reduction of crimes involving firearms and a change of the modus operandi of violent crime. This example shows that disarmament has been having a positive influence in the humanitarian, socio-economic, cultural, political and public security situation.

2. The supplemental efforts to control weapons in military and police units, as well as the export of these weapons and even of defense, hunting and recreational weapons will certainly be beneficial both to the development and to the stability of the Country and the Region.

3. In order to efficiently prevent the proliferation and distribution of illegal weapons, it will be necessary to have a wider cooperation at the international level.

VII. PROSPECTS

The satisfactory account presented herein also recognizes that many challenges still remain, and it is imperative that the Government increases its efforts through the Commissions it has created. In this fashion, in order to guarantee the consistency of the measures to be taken, we foresee the following:

1. To intensify the information and sensitization campaign by mobilizing the financial support of public and private companies, and on the other hand, to better monitor the actions of social partners.
2. To adequately prepare police operations for the phase of coercive weapons collection by elaborating an estimate of the number of weapons possessed illegally, and to improve the information treatment work.

3. To address eventual difficulties in a timely manner.

4. To create training conditions in order to qualify the system of control of weapons and explosives, as well as the methods of certification of the marking, tracing, and use of weapons.

5. To carry out a study for the control of the traffic of weapons at the regional and international level. For the effect, it will be necessary to establish partnerships with the organizations and international institutions dedicated to this field.

6. To give special attention to the discovery of unreported weapons stockpiles.

Once reached the significant objectives under analysis, the Commissions will continue their work in a more consistent manner.

NATIONAL COMISSION FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAM OF ACTION ON THE ILLICIT TRADE OF SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS

Luanda, _________, 2008.-

THE COORDINATOR OF THE COMMISSION

JOÃO BERNARDO DE MIRANDA
MINISTER OF EXTERNAL RELATIONS