

**National Focal Point (NFP) on Small Arms Consultative Workshop, held on 14 August  
2009 at Lilongwe Hotel  
Lilongwe, Malawi**

**SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS**

Malawi is suffering from persistent attacks of gun violence involving small arms from neighbouring countries and within. Firearms issued to security services have sometimes been used in armed attacks.

Although the government of Malawi in partnership with civil society organisations (CSOs) have made efforts to curb firearms proliferation, they have been operating without a clearly articulated policy to guide action since the country attained independence in 1964.

The discussions and recommendations from the consultative workshop hosted by the National Focal Point (NFP) on Small Arms are summarised below. The workshop was held at Lilongwe Hotel in Lilongwe, Malawi, on 14<sup>th</sup> August, 2009 and brought together approximately 50 participants from Government Departments, Government Ministries, Malawi Police Service, National Assembly, Civil Society, traditional leaders, and the Institute for Security Studies (ISS).

The workshop was convened to get stakeholders' input into the draft Policy for the Control of Firearms and Other Related Materials. It is envisaged that the policy will help in reviewing the Firearms Act of 1964, which is now outdated; as well as addressing issues such as monitoring of the influx of firearms across our porous borders, misuse of firearms by security officers and monitoring of such.

It was officially opened by the Minister on Internal Affairs and Public Security Hon. Aaron Sangala MP and was also graced by the Inspector General of Police Mr. Peter Mukhito. Following presentations on the background of the NFP and an overview of the Draft Policy on Firearms, participants discussed the draft policy at length; gaps were noted and recommendations made.

**DISCUSSION**

- Firearms licenses are issued but no effort is made to monitor abuse. If the firearm license holder dies, for example, the law says the firearm should be handed over to the Police. But there's very little compliance with this law and nothing is done to check this.
- Better monitoring of the influx of firearms at borders is needed. Hand searches are not effective in detecting firearms. In addition, Malawi's borders are so porous, it's virtually impossible to monitor every firearm being brought into the country.
- The police are significantly under resourced, lacking training and specialized capacity such as firearms ballistic and forensic units to effectively combat the perpetrators.
- The firearm management system in the security services is prone to abuse. Firearms issued to security services are sometimes being used in armed robberies and other armed attacks.
- The vetting of police officers needs to be taken into account in the Policy to ensure that criminals are not brought into the system.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Firearms inspection and audits need to be carried out.
- As most firearms used in gun crime are coming from neighbouring countries and Malawi security services, it is essential for stringent monitoring of cross-border trafficking in small arms and armed crime as well as monitoring of firearms issued to security.
- Donor assistance should integrate crime prevention and small arms control into wider development projects.
- Commission research on gun crimes to identify which firearms are involved and where the sources of ammunition. The Malawi Young Pioneers (MYP) were heavily armed with sophisticated weapons and most of these weapons have not been accounted for. The research should determine how much of the guns left behind by the MYP are still around and how much have been used in gun crime.
- The Policy on Firearms needs to clearly define what "Small Arms" are and what "Light Weapons" are.
- Commission research on the sentencing and rehabilitation of offenders involved in possession or use of firearms

### **Challenges NFP is facing:**

- Lack of funding for NFP operation – impacting sustainability of NFP
- The outdated legislation is big challenge – not compatible with the current environment.
- Lack of Comprehensive Policy on Small Arms and Light Weapons

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