

# **COMMENTARY ON SMALL ARMS CONTROL IN GHANA**

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**BY  
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The government of Ghana has shown great commitment over the years in pursuing a formidable and binding small arms control policies and programmes both at home and in the ECOWAS sub-region. As we continue relentlessly as a nation to draw support for the Global control of small arms, it is important that we recognise the contributions and commitment of the ECOWAS member states who have consistently pursued policies to realise the dream of a regional control instrument to replace the over nine (9) years old Moratorium of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) by a Convention.

The high level of poverty in the ECOWAS sub-region can be attributed in part to the numerous conflicts that have engulfed the region in the past decades. Yes small arms were used in all these conflicts. With the return of relative calm to the once very volatile Liberia, Sierra Leone, Cote d'ivoire and quite recently the Dagbon area, they have remained the biggest threat to the peace and security of the sub-region. These arms might have gone silent, the fact remains that the evil forces against development have suddenly revived the arms to perpetrate economic and social crimes.

The manifestations of the latest twist in the mis-use of these arms are evident in the daily occurrences of armed banditry and mis-use by security agencies mandated to protect life and property. As a country, we are at a crossroads where peace loving Ghanaians are confronted by the dangers posed by armed chieftaincy and land, political and ethnic disputes, armed highway and domestic robberies as well as the action by some security agencies to shoot and kill innocent people. Sadly, the very recent attacks on our police by armed robbers at Taifa and the accident killings of unarmed civilians at Dansoman and Kotobabi by the police are vivid reminders that a lot still remains to be done to assure citizens of the needed peace and security. In all these instances small arms be the locally manufactured or imported are used. The fight to control small arms and light weapons is the collective responsibility of all. Efforts at controlling the small arms menace would be fruitless unless we develop strong individual, community, national, regional and international regulations. There is no better time than now for all to join hand to support the International Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) the only initiative that would bring peace and development to our world.

## **GHANA BROADCASTING CORPORATION RADIO NEWS ON THE WAANSA PRESS STATEMENT**

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The West African Action Network on Small Arms (WAANSA) has congratulated ECOWAS Heads of States and Government on signing the Convention on Light Weapons at the Summit in Abuja. A Statement signed by the Secretary of WAANSA, Afi Yakubu, commended the Heads for their political commitment, dedication and great efforts in the fight against the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the sub-region. The Statement described the convention as heart warming and appropriate coming 12 days before the commencement of the United Nations Conference in New York to review progress made in the implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons. The Convention on Light Weapons replaces the 1998 Moratorium on the Importation, Exportation and Manufacture of Light Weapons which was a voluntary response to the small arms menace which resulted in the death of two million West Africans in the last decade. With the convention, WAANSA believes national governments can now harmonise their domestic legislation on arms and ammunitions and cross-border activities with a view to enhancing peace, security and development in the sub-region. The Chairman of WAANSA, Baffour Dokyi Amoa, called on all peace loving security minded people of the sub-region and the world at large to ensure successful implementation of the West Africa Convention on light Weapons. He urged governments of the sub-region to pay due attention to the convention and ensure speedy ratification by the various parliaments.

