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PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL
9TH COMMEMORATION OF THE AFRICA AMNESTY MONTH

2 TO 3 OCTOBER 2025
KAMPALA, UGANDA

PSC/AAM/CN.9 (2025)

CONCEPT NOTE

COMMEMORATION OF THE 2025 AFRICA AMNESTY MONTH FOR THE SURRENDER AND COLLECTION OF ILLICIT WEAPONS

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. It is recalled that the 29th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the Union, held in Addis Ababa in July 2017, adopted Decision Assembly/AU/Dec.645 (XXIX) in which it declared the month of September of each year, till 2020, as "Africa Amnesty Month" (AAM) for the surrender and collection of illicit small arms and light weapons (SALW). However, the Assembly subsequently, at its 14th Extraordinary Session held on 6 December 2020, decided to extend the annual September commemoration and conduct of the Africa Amnesty Month for a period of ten (10) years, from 2021 to 2030.

2. The decision is based on the recognition that illicit firearms on the Continent constitute a serious threat to peace, security and stability that Member States continue to experience. This is because they are key enablers for armed conflicts and violence perpetrated by criminals, insurgents and terrorists. The result is continuing deaths and injuries of innocent civilians and security personnel, forced displacement of communities leading to large numbers of internally displaced persons and refugees, destruction of public infrastructure and property, and also affecting service delivery and national development.

3. In this regard, the Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the African union (AU) has been commemorating African Amnesty Month during the month of September each year since the adoption of Decision Assembly/AU/Dec.645 (XXIX) by the 29th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the Union, held in July 2017. To date, the PSC has held eight (8) AAM meetings thus far. The fifth (5th) commemoration was held from 4 to 7 September 2022 in Lomé, Togo, and this was the first for the AMM to be held outside the AU Headquarters. The PSC, in Communiqué PSC/PR/COMM.1105 (2022) adopted at its 1105th meeting held on 15 September 2022, acknowledged that commemorating the AAM in the Member States creates more awareness to the people on the implementation of the AAM; and support of their respective national authorities is easy to achieve. In this context, Council decided to continue launching the AAM events in the Member States, with the participation of the youth, women, media, academia as well as Faith-Based Organizations and other relevant groups.

4. During the commemoration of the AAM in September, Member States, with the support of the Commission, Regional Economic Communities/Regional Mechanisms (RECs/RMs) and partners are expected to undertake a range of initiatives to encourage civilians to voluntarily surrender illicit weapons in their possession to competent national authorities, on the condition of anonymity and immunity from prosecution.

5. Members States undertake nation-wide sensitization and awareness creation on the AMM in order to mobilize society on the importance of the national and continental agenda of silencing the guns to promote peace, security and development.

6. In this regard, the commemoration of the AAM for 2025 will take place in Uganda, underscoring the positive role played by the Republic of Uganda in engaging various initiatives aimed at the voluntary collection of small arms and light weapons in its communities, primarily to enhance security. These initiatives include disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) programs, Community Awareness Campaigns, voluntary Surrender Programs supported by both government and non-governmental organizations, as well as establishment of legal frameworks and policies aimed at regulating the possession and use of firearms.

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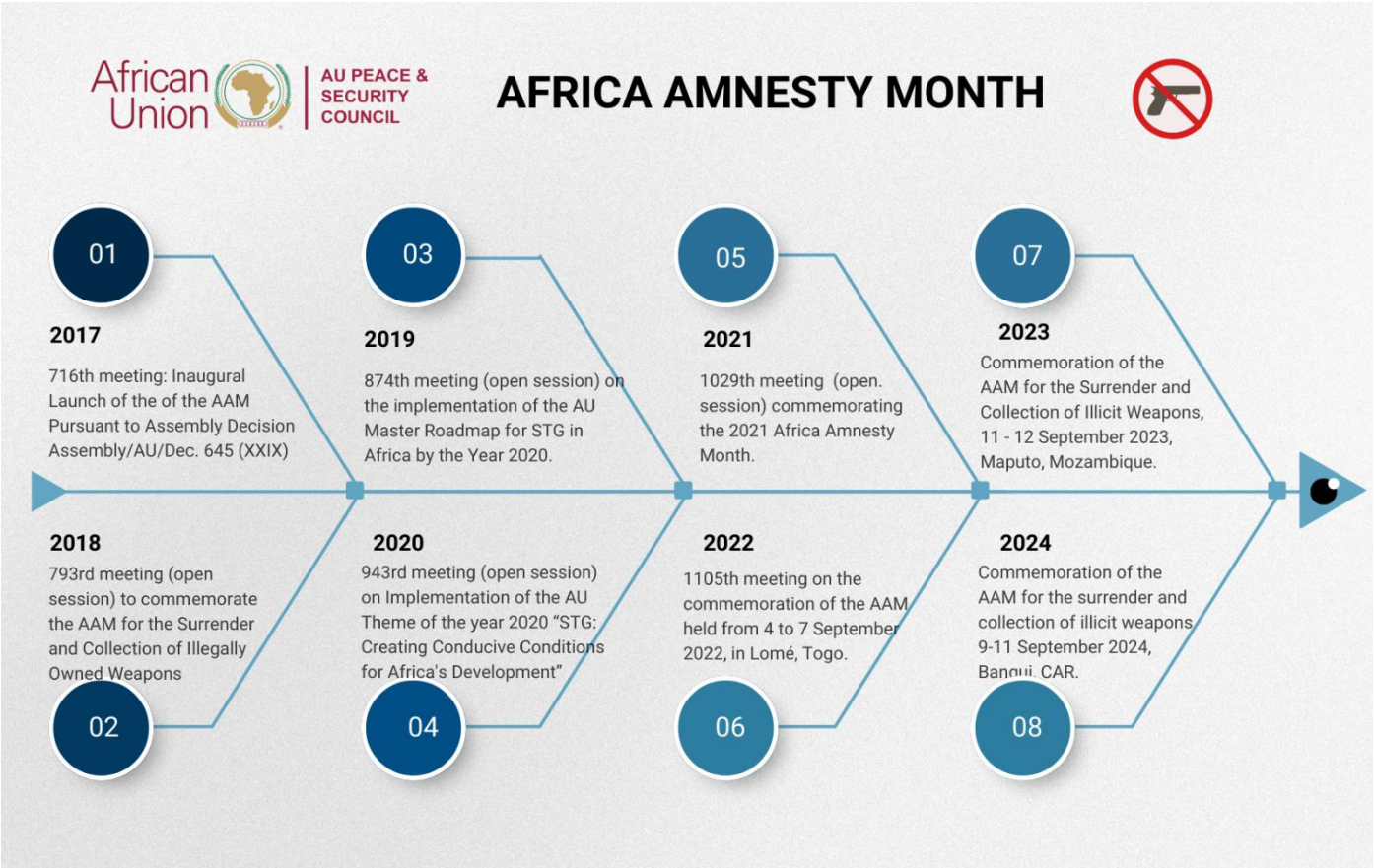

II. CONTEXT

7. The AU recognises that, while the causes and factors driving conflicts in the continent are diverse, the use of illicit SALW has remained a common feature. The easy availability of illicit SALW in the continent has long-term and widespread negative effects, which includes causing deaths, displacement of populations, loss and destruction of property and the disruption of livelihoods. It also exacerbates intra and inter-communal violence – thereby fuelling protracted conflicts, enabling or triggering fresh ones and cumulatively hampering peace building.

8. It can be recalled that, in 2019, following the request by the PSC, the Commission conducted the study **"Weapons Compass: Mapping Illicit Small Arms Flows in Africa"**. The findings indicated that civilian actors in the continent, which include private individuals, registered businesses such as private security companies, and non-state armed groups, hold more than 40 million—or almost 80 per cent—of all small arms on the continent. This is in contrast to the armed forces and law enforcement agencies that hold less than 11 million small arms. Of the 40 million civilian-held firearms, only 5,841,200 are recorded as being officially registered, while 16,043,800 are unregistered, with the status of the remainder unclear. This scenario stresses the importance of implementing the Africa Amnesty month by all Member States, and to develop programmes that will encourage civilians to cooperate with governments and surrender their illegal weapons.

9. Since 2018, the AU Commission has continued to support Member States to implement various activities in commemoration of the AAM, including in partnership with the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA). The strong commitment of Member States has been demonstrated by the active participation of some Heads of State and high-level government officials during the September activities. This year, the following countries received financial and technical support, through the AU-UN partnership, in the implementation of the AAM, namely Liberia, Tanzania

and Togo. Activities to be undertaken include media campaigns promoting the AAM, workshops to sensitize and engage civil society training on arms collection standards, management and disposal of weapons.

10. The continued commemoration of the AAM by Member States strengthens confidence among State security institutions as custodians of weapons and citizens. It also enables the development of programs and policy frameworks that facilitate surrender of illicit weapons to the relevant government authorities in the month of September, without fear of prosecution.

11. The report also noted that most of the firearms circulating in the Continent were initially legally produced, but that only subsequently diverted to armed groups, criminals, or other unauthorized users at some point. Diversion is in the form of illicit transfers, losses from national stockpiles, and diversions/losses from legitimate civilian possession. Whereas the UN Arms Trade Treaty seeks to regulate the international trade in conventional weapons – thereby contributing to controlling the inflow of arms into the Continent, focus should also be put in the management of government weapons stockpiles.

12. Indeed, disarmament programs continue to be strategic and essential in controlling the proliferation and circulation of illicit weapons, reducing crime and inter-communal violence, thereby improving human security and creating conditions conducive to peace, stability and development. It is in this regard that national, regional, continental and international instruments in the fight against illicit firearms call on States to undertake programs to collect illicit arms from civilians, in collaboration with civil society, faith-based bodies and other stakeholders. On its part, the Commission will continue to support such initiatives, including by mobilizing the requisite technical and financial resources. The Commission is also undertaking programs that provide technical support to Member States in the field of Physical Security and Stockpile Management of arms and their associated ammunition, in line with international standards.

III. OBJECTIVES

13. The commemoration of the Africa Amnesty Month in Uganda is in implementation of the decision of the PSC to bring this activity closer to the people and communities implementing the decisions. The specific objectives include to:

i. Motivate Member States, RECs/RMs and partners to commemorate the Africa Amnesty Month in their respective countries as part of the implementation of the AU Master Roadmap to Silence the Guns in Africa;

ii. Encourage civilians to voluntarily surrender their illegally owned weapons to the dedicated state authorities, without fear of prosecution, which also enhances confidence building between the State and people;

iii. Call on Member States to develop annual plans on the commemoration of the AAM, including promoting Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) programmes where appropriate;

iv. Encourage the participation of African civil society – including the youth and women, non-governmental organizations, faith-based organizations, private sector, and the media to actively participate and support their respective governments to promote the surrender of illicit firearms by civilians during the AAM;

v. Address the factors and drivers underlying possession of illicit arms by civilians, and how the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) and African Governance Architecture (AGA) can contribute to the fight against the illicit flows of firearms, and in the removal of illicit firearms from the possession of civilians and unauthorized groups, in an integrated and sustainable manner; and

vi. Mobilize international support for Member States and RECs/RMs in the design and implementation of initiatives to commemorate the AAM, including as part of the Silencing the Guns initiative.

IV. PARTICIPATION

14. The commemoration will be an open event of the PSC, under the Chairship of the Republic of Botswana, with the participation of the officials from the Government of Uganda, East African Community (EAC), Regional Centre on Small Arms (RECSA), United Nations (UN) and other relevant stakeholders in Uganda, including the civil society organizations, youth and women, students, media, private sector and faith-based organizations.

V. PRESENTATIONS

15. Presentations will be made by the following:

i. The Chairperson of the PSC for the Month of October 2025;
ii. Representatives of the Government of Uganda;
iii. Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security;
iv. AU High Representative for Silencing the Guns in Africa;
v. Representative of EAC;
vi. UN Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs;
vii. Pan-African Civil Society Organizations Network on Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PANPAPS);
viii. Representative of the Regional Centre on Small Arms (RECSA); and
ix. Representatives of the civil society organizations in Uganda.

16. The commemoration will also include a symbolic destruction of collected illicit weapons by the Government of Uganda.

VI. EXPECTED OUTCOMES

17. It is expected that Council will adopt a report of the mission and a Communiqué of the meeting, giving guidance on action at national, regional and continental levels in the commemoration of the AAM.