



**MEETING OF THE COORDINATION PLATFORM FOR THE AU-GERMANY PROJECT ON
ENHANCED SALW CONTROL AND PHYSICAL SECURITY AND STOCKPILE MANAGEMENT IN THE
GREATER SAHEL REGION**

**NEW YORK, USA
11 JUNE 2016**

SUMMARY REPORT



Background

The meeting of the coordination platform for the African Union (AU) – Germany project on enhanced Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) control and Physical Security and Stockpile Management (PSSM) in the Greater Sahel region was held on 11 June 2016 at the Permanent Mission of Germany to the United Nations in New York City. The meeting was organized with the support and facilitation of the Bonn International Centre for Conversion (BICC).

While placing particular focus on PSSM, the AU-Germany project aims to counter the illicit proliferation of SALW by improving the coordination of small arms control projects across the Greater Sahel region, by identifying and addressing capacity shortfalls, and by better linking the needs of states with the resources of donors.

Attendance

The meeting was attended by representatives of the following:

- *AU Member States*: Algeria, Burkina Faso, Cote D'Ivoire, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, and Senegal.
- *G7 members and international partners*: Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Switzerland.
- *Regional Organizations*: African Union Mission for Central Africa and the Central African Republic (MISAC), Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CENSAD), Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), European Union (EU), Mission of the African Union for Mali and the Sahel (MISAHEL), North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Regional Centre on Small Arms in the Great Lakes Region, the Horn of Africa and Bordering States (RECSA).
- *United Nations and implementing agencies*: UN Mine Action Service (UNMAS), UN Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA), UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), UN Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa (UNREC), Conflict Armament Research, Mines Advisory Group (MAG), and the Small Arms Survey.

Objective

The aim of the New York meeting was to discuss how to tangibly improve joint action on PSSM and small arms control in the Greater Sahel, particularly in response to the challenges and gaps identified during four previous meetings: a preparatory meeting (15 May 2015), a two-day experts meeting (3-4 September 2015), a high-level meeting (16 October 2015), and a meeting of donors (15 February 2016). These prior meetings were jointly organized by the AU and

Germany, and, with the exception of the Berlin-based meeting of donors, were held at the Headquarters of the African Union in Addis Ababa.

Proposed action areas

The New York meeting considered and discussed a set of proposals jointly drawn up by the African Union and Germany (the “co-organizers”). These proposals addressed challenges pertaining to four main issue areas:

a. Harmonization of training and capacity building support

A number of factors undermine the effectiveness and sustainability of training activities and other capacity building interventions, including:

- Variation in the training programs and modules used by different agencies;
- The absence of policies and strategies at the national level to retain and utilize individuals who undergo training;
- Varying criteria applied by implementing agencies for the enrollment of personnel in training activities, or the lack thereof;
- Over-reliance on international experts to conduct PSSM projects, training and needs assessments;
- Absence of a centralized and shared database of trained practitioners in the region to aid in the implementation of activities.

To overcome these challenges, during the meeting’s morning session the co-organizers proposed the creation of an AU roster consisting of African personnel trained in different aspects of SALW control and PSSM. According to this proposal, the roster would aim to institutionalize a mechanism by which individuals trained in one Greater Sahel country could be called upon to train others in the region, rather than (or in addition to) international staff. This roster would also be developed in collaboration with the existing regional training centers in Nairobi, Benin, and Accra.

In response to this proposal, the meeting participants agreed on the need to develop a formal, institutional mechanism both to identify existing capacity within the Greater Sahel and to promote South-South cooperation. The participants also acknowledged the broad number of PSSM courses provided by different agencies in the Greater Sahel, and the need to foster closer collaboration between these different course-providers. It was therefore suggested that the development of an AU roster could help to generate a set of common criteria - shared across different training providers - which, once obtained, would have two uses: 1) to standardize the number of hours/modules required for PSSM courses (strategic, operational, tactical) focusing on different target groups, and 2) to allow the certification of a PSSM instructor as an “*African Union PSSM instructor.*” This kind of formal AU accreditation would also help to ensure that

only individuals qualified to a certain minimum standard are eligible to sign up for the AU roster.

The meeting participants also highlighted some of the challenges which may emerge during the development of an AU roster. These include the need for rostered individuals to regularly update and refresh their knowledge, and the logistical difficulties of pulling experts from one country and sending them to another, particularly if trained individuals are needed in their home countries. The participants were also concerned by the prospect of creating a roster which is not sufficiently supported by the necessary financial resources to ensure the deployment of rostered personnel. This issue is particularly pertinent given that rostered individuals are likely to be serving military officers who require release from their day jobs and compensation for additional roster-based assignments. Given the need to work out these logistical issues, some participants suggested the creation of an informal community of experts as an interim step prior to the development of a fully-fledged roster. In addition, all participants agreed on the need to make use of existing structures, including already established regional training centers.

b. Development of operational guidance for sound project design and implementation

In many instances, small arms control interventions are designed without necessary attention to local context. However, the absence of assumed preconditions, particularly in terms of local capacity and infrastructure, can impede and prolong the implementation of program activities and/or undermine impact. Potentially problematic preconditions may include:

- The absence of a focal or lead agency with effective links to relevant institutions;
- Limited human and technical capacities at relevant national agencies;
- Unclear immediate and long-term stakeholder obligations, including among states, donors and implementing agencies;
- Absence or unclear agreement regarding monitoring and evaluation, and measures to ensure sustainability;
- Absence of a regulatory and operational infrastructure and framework to ensure that improvements are integrated and sustained.

To address these issues, during the afternoon session the co-organizers proposed the development of an operational guidance note (OGN) on PSSM. This OGN would be designed to help states, donors, and implementing agencies better understand the preconditions which are necessary to enable to effective delivery of PSSM assistance. The proposed PSSM OGN would also contribute to enhanced communication and transparency between donors and recipient states, and help to build strong partnerships and ensure ownership and sustainability. Building on the experiences of the members of the coordination platform, the OGN would also ideally cover aspects related to stakeholder mapping, inter-agency coordination, human capacities and

development, regulatory frameworks, stakeholder obligations, modalities of assistance, and monitoring and evaluation.

In response to this proposal, the meeting participants agreed on the development of an OGN for PSSM but stated that any such guidance note should also include provisions related to training (including criteria for the selection of trainees) and equipment (including maintenance). Discussion of the proposed OGN was also linked to debate concerning minimum PSSM standards, with some participants arguing that current international standards, such as the ISACS and the IATGs, do not correspond to local realities in under-resourced settings. Subsequent discussion among the meeting participants considered the possibility of creating a technical working group, composed of PSSM training providers, to discuss how current international standards could be broken down into realistic and achievable minimum standards. While some participants argued that the articulation of minimum standards should be seen as a way to prioritize select components of PSSM in contexts of resource scarcity, others expressed concern that such an endeavor would lead to the lowering of standards that should otherwise be seen as aspirational. A potential middle-ground would therefore be to ensure that any future OGN on PSSM emphasizes both the importance of international standards and the need for “low cost – high impact” improvements in environments where resources are scarce.

c. Improving the identification and articulation of needs

In some cases, more support is needed for states to be able to determine their own needs and priorities in terms of small arms control. Difficulties concerning needs articulation can lead to the misallocation of resources and can also undermine national ownership. This is often due to:

- Lack of national capacities to assess needs and identify priorities;
- Low levels of reporting on international instruments that could aid in communicating needs;
- Needs assessments and priorities identified by implementing agencies are not always owned by states;
- Existence of gaps between needs identified and the political commitment to address them.

In order to address these problems, the co-organizers proposed the following:

- Development and implementation of training on how to conduct needs assessments and project reporting;
- Deployment of rostered experts to undertake needs assessments and transfer related skills to national stakeholders;
- Closer collaboration between states, donors, and implementing agencies on needs assessments and project development;

- Development and application of prioritization tools and matrices based on similar ongoing projects and best practices.

In response to these proposals, the meeting participants stated that needs articulation is often adversely affected by donor influence, not least because national actors often have little choice but to take what donors are offering. The meeting participants also stressed the importance of recognizing national-level needs, even when working at the regional-level and cited ECOWAS as an example of best practice in this regard. ECOWAS holds annual meetings in which the needs of its member states are assessed, and in which these states are informed about ECOWAS' available resources.

The discussion also turned to an ongoing project on needs articulation currently being developed by the Small Arms Survey and funded by the US Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement (WRA). This project acknowledges that, while Greater Sahel states are able to articulate their needs to donor governments via the national Programme of Action (PoA) reporting process, current PoA reports do not provide sufficiently adequate information to enable donors to effectively channel their assistance. Consequently, the Small Arms Survey has developed a "prioritization template" based on the IATGs which is designed to help states identify their small arms control needs and to rate those needs in terms of importance. While, at present, the prioritization template will be rolled out only in Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso, the WRA representative present in New York indicated that the US would welcome the possible expansion of this project. Other meeting participants also acknowledged the usefulness of such a tool, yet cautioned that needs articulation must be the result of an open and patient dialogue. One further suggestion on this point was the need to integrate training on needs articulation into courses on small arms control and PSSM. An open question remains as to whether such training should constitute one of the criteria necessary for certification as an AU PSSM trainer (on this point, see "section a." above).

d. Enhancing information sharing and coordination among all stakeholders.

In order to support the implementation of the project and ensure that information can be shared quickly and easily among all stakeholders, the co-organizers proposed the development of an online platform. This online platform would include country profiles, assessment reports, a database of ongoing and completed PSSM/SALW projects, guidelines and best practices, monitoring and evaluation reports, and stakeholder contact information. The online platform would also facilitate access to the roster of experts.

In response to this proposal, the meeting participants emphasized that any such online platform should be regularly updated and maintained. The participants also reiterated the need for the new website to complement (rather than duplicate) existing databases. In this latter regard, the NATO and UNODC representatives in attendance shared information on their own existing databases, the latter of which will be broadened to include an online directory of competent national authorities dealing with firearms and law enforcement.

Conclusions and the way forward

Taking into account the aforementioned discussions, the co-organizers and meeting participants agreed to establish a technical working group composed of PSSM training providers. As currently envisaged, this technical working group will have three aims:

- To compare and contrast the different PSSM courses currently on offer and to identify the minimum qualifications required for eligibility to the proposed AU roster. These criteria may be distilled into a formal AU accreditation if desirable. The working group should also discuss whether training on the identification and prioritization of SALW/PSSM needs should be mandatory for certification as an AU instructor.
- To generate closer collaboration between the many different PSSM course providers by standardizing minimum requirements, in terms of hours/modules, for different types of PSSM courses (strategic, operational, tactical), focusing on different target groups.
- To identify the necessary prerequisites for a successful PSSM intervention, not only in terms of capacity, infrastructure and legislation, but also in terms of stipulating selection criteria for trainees and identifying “low cost – high impact” activities to be prioritized in contexts of resource scarcity. This information will then be compiled into an AU Operational Guidance Note.

The first meeting of the technical working group on PSSM is tentatively planned for September/October 2016, and will address one or more of the aforementioned points. Further meetings of the technical working group will then be convened on an “as necessary” basis, to ensure progress on both the AU PSSM roster and Operational Guidance Note. Work on the proposed online platform will begin in the second half of 2016, at which time the co-organizers will also approach the US Office on Weapons Removal and Abatement regarding the possible expansion of its ongoing needs articulation project to other Greater Sahel countries within the framework of the AU-Germany project. Member states and regional organizations will also be asked for input concerning logistical issues pertaining to the AU roster (particularly concerning the release/deployment of service personnel on active duty), and for quarterly contributions to the proposed online database of PSSM/SALW projects.

These activities will be complemented by a series of meetings which will act as a forum to share project progress updates, to receive feedback, and to foster support and collaboration. The first of these meetings will bring together regional organizations covering the Greater Sahel region, and is scheduled to be held alongside the meeting of the AU-Regions Steering Committee on SALW and DDR later this year. This will be followed by a meeting of donors in Berlin - tentatively scheduled for early 2017 - in which the topic of potential additional support for the AU-Germany project will be raised. Finally, the second meeting of the AU-Germany Coordination Platform will be held in mid-2017, and will be used as an opportunity to share first results on the four action areas outlined throughout this summary report.

2016-06-11

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