

12 November 2003

**The United Nations First Biennial Meeting of States  
to consider the Implementation of the Programme  
of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the  
Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in  
All Its Aspects**

New York, 7-11 July 2003



**Report addressed by the Permanent Mission of the Republic of  
Equatorial Guinea to the United Nations on the Programme of  
Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small  
Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects**

## **Report of the Government of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea**

The term small arms and light weapons should not be misunderstood, much less treated lightly at a time when provisions and strategies are being adopted to achieve definitive solutions to eradicate them since they have consequences which are as negative and harmful as those of high-calibre weapons, including nuclear weapons, above all when they are in irresponsible hands.

Like any other phenomenon, the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in the third world, in Africa more than in other continents, is a crucial problem. In order to eradicate it, it is essential to analyse its causes, which are both internal and external.

The internal causes resulting from the tribal civil wars within countries may be attributed largely to poverty, not only material poverty, but above all spiritual poverty, hence the lack of the necessary awareness among the people of the concept of the State; social injustices lead inexorably to the break-up of society and consequently to the struggle for power. This situation is at times exacerbated and manipulated from a neighbouring country, often one with which a country shares the same ethnic group. Only with the establishment of democratic regimes deeply rooted in principles and values which will bring about an awareness of the concept of the State, respect for the human person and the equitable distribution of economic resources can the policies designed to combat this phenomenon achieve the desired results.

The external causes are none other than those deriving from the policies of the producer developed world in its relations with the consumer third world, in this instance aimed firmly at guaranteeing the profitability of its armaments industry. Here again, there is a clear lack of awareness in the third world countries which, manipulated by the powers in their dual interests of maintaining them in their current state of underdevelopment, conduct themselves more in terms of the interests of the industrialized countries.

Although this is a complex situation, the people and Government of Equatorial Guinea have become aware of it through the establishment of a multiparty system in the country. This process is developing without social unrest, and this has helped to strengthen the State institutions.

In the interests of consolidating this islet of peace which is the Republic of Equatorial Guinea in a region where there is widespread violence, the Government of Equatorial Guinea, independently of the good-neighbourly agreements signed with countries with which Equatorial Guinea shares a border, is playing an important role in the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa and its instruments, the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa (COPAX), the Early-Warning Mechanism for Central Africa (MARAC) and the Multinational Force for Central Africa (FOMAC). The necessary human and financial resources must be given to those instruments since they are the instruments designed to guarantee peace, security and stability in the Central African subregion. It should be pointed out that the fact that the Republic of Equatorial Guinea is one of the architects of the implementation of the aforementioned mechanisms in our countries is a reflection of the importance which Equatorial Guinea attaches to the maintenance of peace and security in the zone.

The Republic of Equatorial Guinea, like other countries in the Central African subregion, is faced with a problem which it is not easy to resolve. As will be appreciated, the Central African subregion, which, thanks to Divine Providence, is relatively rich in natural resources, is unfortunately a region which in the past few years has experienced and is still experiencing the most armed conflicts in Africa, owing to the uncontrolled availability of small arms and light weapons which endanger the stability and security which are so necessary for the economic and social development of our peoples. That availability is essentially and to a large extent promoted by the permeability of our borders, inhabited by the same ethnic groups which, prompted by ethnic and tribal identity to the detriment of the interests of the State, make it difficult to find definitive solutions to this phenomenon.

The Republic of Equatorial Guinea is therefore following attentively the efforts that are being made to put an end to this situation, contributing by complying with the provisions and resolutions of the United Nations on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects, as well as the recommendations and decisions taken at the United Nations Conference on this subject which took place in New York from 9 to 20 July 2001.

The Republic of Equatorial Guinea, which does not manufacture small arms and light weapons, has taken steps to control the illicit entry into the country of all types of weapons, with the adoption of provisions and monitoring mechanisms such as laws, decree-laws and disciplinary regulations and the creation of a National Coordination Commission which is responsible for ensuring compliance with the legal provisions and for investigation and monitoring of activities designed to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects. With the adoption of the aforementioned provisions and instruments, Equatorial Guinea believes it has adopted a political legal basis that will guarantee peace and security in its territory and in the subregion. It also subscribes to and endorses all initiatives designed to put an end to this phenomenon, since the accumulation and transparency of and illicit trade in such weapons threatens the stability of the countries of the subregion. The phenomenon is therefore a legitimate collective concern of all the countries of the Central African subregion in particular, and of the international community in general.

It is well known that such weapons are not the cause of the conflicts in which they are used, but rather constitute a deadly instrument in those conflicts, causing civilian victims among the most affected and vulnerable sections of the population, mainly women and children.

---