



IANSA

STATEMENT BY THE MI-RPD (initiative for search of peace and development mechanism) FOR THE GLOBAL WEEK OF ACTION AGAINST GUN VIOLENCE FROM 2ND TO 9TH JUNE 2019

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As a member of the International Action Network on Small Arms IANSA, MI-RPD (Mécanisme pour l'Initiative de la Recherche de la Paix et le Développement) (*Initiative for Search of Peace and Development Mechanism*) has joined the campaign to advocate collectively for an end to illicit trade and misuse of small arms and light weapons.

It is sad news that every day, hundreds of lives are lost due to gun violence worldwide, guns being responsible for about half of all violent deaths nearly a quarter million each year. But the dire consequences of gun violence are not limited to those slain by guns. For every person killed by a gun, many more are injured, maimed, and forced to flee their home and community, not forgetting the number of widows and orphans left in desperation. Still many more live under constant threats of gun violence especially in the countries of the Great Lakes region, the horn of Africa and the neighboring countries in general and in East African Community in particular.

Here we could mention among others the conflicts between Burundi and Rwanda and those between Rwanda and Uganda where some citizens of small condition are dying or see their businesses ruined due to the prevailing disagreement between the leaders of these countries. This could constitute an open door for armed groups that have been living for decades in DRC forests that could profit from that situation to infiltrate easily. In case these conflicts are not resolved as soon as possible, these countries are at great risk of falling into armed conflict or open warfare and other atrocities that may arise around common borders, which could lead to armed violence.

We should also note the wars that intensify in South Sudan between the government and rebel groups, attacks by terrorist groups in Kenya, armed groups in the DRC who loot and kill using firearms, specialized groups of armed burglars who are often apprehended in Tanzania, especially near the NDUTA and NYARUGUSU refugee camps. All this could hinder the actions of the intergovernmental organization established in June 2005 RESCA, (Regional Centre on Small Arms in the Great Lakes region, the Horn of Africa and Bordering States which all these countries are members.

One of the objectives of the MI-RPD is to bring forth its contribution to the governments of the Great Lakes region in their peace building and security programs through specific actions to significantly address the problems of firearms

and to help ensure that there is strong arms legislation in all countries, explain it to the citizens and help in its implementation.

It is in that line that the MI-RPD has decided to join other IANSA member organizations and **wear orange** in the current Week of Action (from 2nd to 9th June 2019) to advocate for an end to the illicit trade and misuse of small arms and light weapons around the world.

Being the occasion to appeal to all those concerned with weapons issues namely the weapons manufacturers, buyers, sellers and their users, the legitimate users and those who misuse them around the world, it is a wonderful opportunity to address the harm of firearms in this region.

Considering that firearms constitute one of the major threats to peace, security and development in the Great Lakes region, the Horn of Africa and in the neighboring countries,

Considering that different governments have a greater role to play in the control of the spreading of illicit arms and in the reduction of the harm related to them,

Considering that the participation of the different governments in such campaigns will save many lives and hence foster the region's peace, security and development,

MI-RPD has come up with the following propositions for an effective participation to the week of action campaign:

1. We ask the parliamentarians of these countries to respond to the activities planned during this week by constantly inviting the ministers in charge of the SALW issue to share their contributions in order to significantly eradicate the harm caused by small arms and light weapons in this region.
2. We urge journalists of all the media operating in the Great Lakes region to organize programs during which the Civil Society organizations and National Focal Points will be invited to explain to the public the actions that are being undertaken in the process of implementing the project to silencing all weapons in 2020.

3. The MI-RPD urges motorists and motorcyclists from the Great Lakes countries that every day during this Week of Action, precisely at noon, they could honk for one minute in order to challenge all illegal weapon holders and the legal holders who abuse them, to say no to the evils caused by firearms.

4. We ask our members, our friends, our acquaintances and anyone who would like to join us in this week's activities, that from June 7 to 09 June they join the **Wear Orange Campaign** as a way of raising awareness of gun violence. Orange is the color that Hadiya Pendleton's friends wore in her honor when she was shot and killed in Chicago at the age of 15 just one week after performing at President Obama's 2nd inaugural parade in 2013. After her death, there was a request to stand up, speak out, and Wear Orange to raise awareness about gun violence.

In this way let everyone, in that period, put on an orange cloth, take a picture of him or herself and post it on his or her profile or status of social networks and put the following comment "**WE CAN END GUN VIOLENCE**"

We conclude by reminding everyone that weapons-related harms are a concern for all people, great and small, public officials as well as the private, the rich and the poor, with no consideration to ethnicity or religion all of us we have to Fight for a future free from gun violence.

It is for this reason that you must all join us to work together regardless of our differences to fight this plague together without anyone neglecting it.

We comfort the many families who have lost their members because of firearms, especially in the countries of the Great Lakes region, the horn of Africa and the neighboring countries in general and in East African Community in particular and we ask them to restrain themselves and be indulgent.