



JOINT AU-UN SUPPORT TO THE AFRICA AMNESTY MONTH 2020 GUIDANCE FOR KEY MESSAGING

1) Context - Silencing the Guns: a pledge to our future generations on the continent

1. In 2013, at the African Union's 50th anniversary, African States committed to "Silencing the Guns in Africa by 2020" and achieving a conflict-free Africa, build a sustainable peace and sow sustainable development on the continent¹.
2. African leaders made the commitment "for peace to become a reality for all by ending civil wars and conflicts, human rights violations, humanitarian disasters, and genocide".
3. The commitment has since transformed into a flagship initiative for the first ten-year implementation plan of Agenda 2063. This is in alignment with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular, target 16.4 on the significant reduction of illicit arms flows.²
4. The African Union in 2016 prepared a Master Roadmap of Practical Steps to Silence the Guns in Africa by Year 2020 that should help regions and States to achieve the goal.³
5. A campaign to accelerate progress for "Silencing the Guns" in 2020 was launched earlier this year in Addis Ababa during the African Union Summit under the theme: "Silencing the Guns in Africa: Creating Conducive Conditions for Africa's Development"⁴.
6. The AU Youth Envoy also launched the Youth Silencing the Guns campaign at the end of July 2020. One of its aspects is to foster intergenerational co-leadership, and further concrete activities have been developed for the regional unfolding of the campaign:

¹ Assembly/AU/Decl.3 (XXI) (2013), Solemn Declaration on the 50th Anniversary of the OAU/AU, available from https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/36205-doc-50th_anniversary_solemn_declaration_en.pdf.

² <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/peace-justice/>.

³ African Union Master Roadmap of Practical Steps to Silence the Guns in Africa by Year 2020 (Lusaka Roadmap) (2016), available from https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/37996-doc-au_roadmap_silencing_guns_2020.pdf.en_.pdf.

⁴ Remarks by Ambassador Ramtane Lamamra, High Representative for Silencing the Guns, 33rd Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the Union on the Implementation of the AU Flagship Initiative on Silencing the Guns within the AU theme for 2020, Addis Ababa February 2020, available from: https://au.int/sites/default/files/speeches/38101-sp-remarks-au_high_rep_silencingguns9_2_2020.pdf

- a. A toolkit on Intergenerational dialogues has been developed for young people to organize dialogues in communities, schools, and organizations
- b. Regional intergenerational dialogues will be held
- c. Grants will be mobilized and seed funding for youth-led peace organizations through Youth Silencing the Guns Awards
- d. Trainings will be run because young people asked the AU for skills in mediation, negotiations and community engagement

For more information go to: <https://auiouthenvoy.org/>.

2) Context - Africa Amnesty Month 2020

What is it?

1. In 2017, the AU Assembly (Decision 645 (XXIX)) declared the month of September each year until 2020 “Africa Amnesty Month” for the surrender and collection of illegally owned weapons, in line with the African and international best practices.⁵
2. The Africa Amnesty Month helps to collect some of Africa’s millions of illicit small arms and light weapons.
3. This is an opportunity for anyone with a weapon, particularly illegally-acquired ones, to voluntarily, safely and securely hand them in to the authorities, without fear of disclosure of their identity, arrest or prosecution.

Why do we need it?

The devastating impact of illicit small arms and light weapons

1. Civilians in Africa hold more than 40 million small arms, which is almost 80% of all small arms on the continent.⁶
2. Of these, only 14,6 per cent (or 5,841,200) are recorded as being officially registered, while 40 per cent (or 16,043,800) are unregistered. The status of the remainder remains unclear.⁷
3. Small arms are enablers of violence. They constitute a serious threat to peace, security, and stability in Africa.
4. The scourge of illicit weapons, their illicit proliferation and use in various parts of Africa contribute to the disruption of livelihoods and economic activities and the destruction of infrastructure.
5. They render inter-communal conflict and competition over natural resources increasingly deadly and hinder peace and prosperity for communities.
6. Small arms have been used to commit serious human rights violations, acts of gender-based violence, and attacks on peacekeepers and humanitarian workers.
7. According to recent data, worldwide, small arms are responsible for the deaths of nearly a quarter of a million people each year—representing more than 35 percent of all victims of deadly violence globally.⁸

⁵ Assembly/AU/Dec. 645 (XXIX) (2017, page 2, para. 9, available from https://au.int/sites/default/files/decisions/37294-assembly_au_dec_642_-_664_xxix_e_1.pdf)

⁶ 2019 Small Arms Survey and African Union study, *Weapons Compass: Mapping Illicit Small Arms Flows in Africa*.

⁷ <http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/fileadmin/docs/U-Reports/SAS-AU-Weapons-Compass.pdf>

⁸ www.smallarmssurvey.org/fileadmin/docs/U-Reports/SAS-Report-GVD2017.pdf.

8. Especially young people suffer from gun violence: homicide is the fourth leading cause of death in people aged 10-29 years, and 84% of these homicides involve young men as victims.⁹
9. Even when it is not fatal, youth violence has a serious, often lifelong, impact on a person's physical, psychological and social functioning.
10. Across the world women and girls remain the primary victims of homicides resulting from violence perpetrated by their husbands, boyfriends or partners.¹⁰ Access to firearms in the home greatly increases the risk of a deadly outcome.¹¹
11. For every person killed by a gun, many more are injured, maimed, and forced to flee their home and community. Still many more live under constant threats of gun violence.
12. Women, men, girls, and boys all deserve to live in safe, non-violent homes and communities. Helping to remove (illicit) weapons from circulation is an important way to achieve this.
13. As long as the guns are not silent in many parts of Africa, it is the future generation, the youth, that is suffering. It is their future at stake.

What are we asking you to do?

1. Join this unique opportunity to safely and securely hand in your guns. No penalty, no prosecution.
2. Be part of the initiative, join the Amnesty Month in September 2020: spread the word in your communities and help to raise awareness on handing in weapons without fear of prosecution or harm.
3. To help silencing the guns, and make the Africa Amnesty Month a success, all of us as government, civil society organizations, communities, and individuals have to come together: Help spread the word in your community.
4. Everyone has a role to play to end the crisis of gun violence and to silence the guns.
5. We urge everyone who illegally owns weapons to voluntarily hand them in during Africa Amnesty Month in September 2020.
6. We encourage any other person who may wish to voluntarily give up their weapons to join and hand them over as well.
7. To all women: You play a significant role as agents for peace and drivers of prosperity in your communities around the world and in Africa. Encourage everybody within your household and your community to join the movement and hand over the guns.
8. To all young people: You have a key role to play as peacebuilders in your communities. You can help create a peaceful and hopeful future for you, your family and everyone. Encourage everybody in your community to join the movement and hand over the guns.

⁹ <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/youth-violence>.

¹⁰ <http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/fileadmin/docs/U-Reports/SAS-AU-Weapons-Compass.pdf>

¹¹ www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1447915.