

‘We Will Pass Firearms Act’ - Rep. Koiwood Tells LiNCSA



Monrovia - The Chairman of the House Committee on National Security, Hon. Alfred Koiwod, has said that he would do everything to ensure that the House passes a concurrence with the Senate on the Fire Arms Act.

Speaking at the 1st quarter review meeting of national partners of the Liberia National Commission on Small Arms (LiNCSA), Rep. Koiwood’s statement was in response to an appeal from LiNCSA Chairman, Hon. Jams Fromayan.

The meeting which was supposed to have been a review of the first quarter activities of the Commission in the implementation of the ECOWAS-EU Small Arms Project, took a twist when Chairman Fromayan in his welcome address thanked the Senate for passing the Firearms Act and appealed to the Lower House to do the same

In his welcome remarks, Chairman Fromayan provided the participants a history and update of the ECOWAS-EU Small Arms Project." He thanked all the partners for their support and assured them that the Commission had made significant progress towards the objective of the Project.

The LiNCSA Chairman also expressed thanks to the Senate for Passing the Firearms Act, and paid special recognition to Senator Steven Zargo for his leadership in ensuring that the bill was passed at the Upper House. He then called on the Lower House to act on the Bill which is currently awaiting their concurrence.

Following up on Chairman Fromayan's appeal to the Lower House, the EU representative at the program, Emma Sunnblad called on the Lower House to pass the Act, warning, "When it comes down to it, Liberian security is in the hands of Liberians."

Similarly UNMIL's Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Political and Rule of Law, Waldemar Very, encouraged the Lower House to pass the Act ."Remember, the UN still has sanctions imposed on Liberia, probably the passage of the Act could be a good sign that it is time to lift the sanctions," he cautioned.

Senator Zargo in his remarks called on the Lower House to concur with the Senate on the Firearms Act and follow their example on this very important national security matter.

In response, the Chairman of the House Committee on National Security, Hon. Alfred Koiwood assured the audience that he would do all within his power to ensure that the Lower House concur with the Senate on the passage of the Firearms

Act. But he was quick to point out that the Senate membership is smaller than the House.

“They are only thirty in the Senate, but we are seventy-three in the House. That is a difference,” he added.

ECOWAS-EU Small Arms Project is a regional initiative by ECOWAS and funded by the European Union (EU) to pilot "Weapons Collection Programmes" within the broader context of "Disarmament and Community Development" or "Weapons for Development.

The Liberian component of the project is being implemented by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in collaboration with the Liberia National Commission on Small Arms (LiNCSA) in selected communities in Grand Gedeh, River Gee and Maryland Counties.

The project has four outputs which, among other things, seek to create and enhance community awareness on the dangers associated with the illicit proliferation of small arms and armed violence as well as strengthening the capacity of security institutions and communities to enhance safety; and above all, encourage voluntary weapons surrender/collection in return for community based development projects.

Meanwhile, the Liberian National Commission on Small Arms (LiNCSA) will host the annual meeting of National Commissions on Small Arms and Light Weapons from ECOWAS countries from May 30-April 1.

The two-day conference will focus on the status of implementation of the ECOWAS convention of SALW, their ammunition and other related materials. Participants at the meeting will also focus on adopting the 5-Year Priority Plan of the ECOWAS Convention, 2016-2020 and elaborate a common regional position to be presented at the 6th UN Program of Action on SALW Biennial Meeting of States, scheduled for June this year in New York.

The meeting in Liberia will bring together two representatives of the National Commissions as well as representatives from UNDP, UNREV, African Union, ICRC, UNDIR and the West African Network on Small Arms (WAANSA). It is expected that Her Excellency, Madam Ellen Johnson Sirleaf will officially open the meeting.

Specific objectives of the conference include a review of the implementation of ECOWAS Convention at national and regional levels; discussion of the new 5-year Priority Action Plan (2016-2020), updates on SALW activities to be implemented, ATT Implementation at the regional and international level and also discuss a common position towards the 6th Biennial Meeting of States.

It may be recalled that during the 1999 ECOWAS Summit of Heads of State and Government, a decision was made to implement Article 24 of the ECOWAS convention.

That Article mandated every member country to form a National Commission on Small Arms. These national commissions meet annually under the auspices of the ECOWAS Commission as a forum for the exchange experiences and to review the status of the ECOWAS Convention. In 2006, Liberia became compliant with Article 24, when an ACT to establish the Liberian Commission was passed.

