



PRESS RELEASE

THE AU COMMISSION, LCBC AND MNJTF CONCLUDE CONSULTATIONS ON STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES FOR HANDLING PERSONS ASSOCIATED WITH BOKO HARAM AND MANAGING RECOVERED ARMS

N'Djamena, 12 August 2019: From 6 to 9 August 2019, the Commission of the African Union (AU) supported the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) and the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) in convening consultations among national authorities of the member countries, towards improving and harmonizing practices in handling persons associated with Boko Haram and managing Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) recovered during MNJTF operations.

The workshop was organised as part of the efforts to enhance compliance of the MNJTF with international best practices in the management of SALW; and in the treatment and handling of persons associated with Boko Haram. The workshop was also in line with the Regional Strategy for the Stabilization, Recovery and Resilience of the Boko Haram affected areas of the Lake Chad Basin (RSS). It complemented efforts to implement the relevant pillars of the RSS, particularly those relating to Disarmament, Demobilisation, Rehabilitation, Reinsertion and Reintegration of Persons associated with Boko Haram, as well as Humanitarian Assistance. The workshop was attended by key stakeholders in the region, particularly senior officers from the MNJTF Mission Headquarters and the Sectors, representatives of national commissions and focal points on small arms and DDR, as well as international partners.

During the first segment of the workshop, held on 6-7 August, participants shared information and discussed current practices in managing recovered SALW at the sector level, as well as existing national laws and programs for controlling the circulation of illicit small arms. Discussions enabled the stakeholders assess gaps and opportunities to improve management of recovered SALW at the sector level and determine potential approaches and mechanisms to improve cooperation between and among the sectors and the mission headquarter, and among the sectors and the respective national authorities.

Participants were also introduced to the Provisional AU Policy on the Management of Recovered SALW in Peace Support Operations which constitutes a guidance tool to the MNJTF to harmonize practices in line with international best practices. In this respect, the stakeholders recommended the development of MNJTF –specific Standard Operating Procedures on managing recovered SALW and proposed potential mechanisms for information sharing, coordination and oversight.

The stakeholders further shared information on the threat and impact of improvised explosive devices (IED) in the mission areas and current response measures in place. In view of the challenges confronted in this respect, the stakeholders recommended a set of measures to improve sector-level capabilities, as well as modalities for cooperation with national law enforcement agencies to curb the flow of explosive materials. The recommendations set forth by this first workshop will be considered by the MNJTF Force Commander and Head of Mission for further action.

The second segment of the workshop, held on 8-9 August, came in follow up to the consultations initiated earlier in the year, and which considered in depth the similarities and differences in practices among the LCBC member countries in handling defectors and captured persons associated with Boko Haram. This consultative process aimed to improve national practices in line with international DDR best practices, bearing in mind the particularities of the situation in the region and the need to strengthen compliance with human rights standards as well as create the conditions for long-term reintegration and reconciliation. The consultative process resulted in the draft *MNJTF Standard Operating Procedures on handling Persons Associated with Boko Haram*.

In this regard, the second segment of the workshop aimed to finalize and validate the draft SOP, and discuss the implementation mechanisms required to apply them. The SOP codifies instructions and standards regarding all steps to be taken from the moment of capture up to transfer to the competent national authority. Its provisions include grounds for detention, processing and registration, conditions of detention, interrogations, handling foreign individuals, and procedures for transfer to the competent authorities.

At the end of the workshop, the *MNJTF Standard Operating Procedure on Handling of Persons Associated with Boko Haram* was signed by the MNJTF Force Commander, Major General Chikezie Ude.

[Photos: group photo / photo of deliberations / photo of FC signing the SOPs]