



MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, ABUJA

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MFA, NCCSALW STRENGTHEN INSTITUTIONAL COLLABORATION TO COMBAT TRAFFICKING AND PROLIFERATION OF ILLICIT ARMS

The Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Bianca Odumegwu-Ojukwu, has described illicit trafficking and proliferation of small arms and light weapons as serious threats to national security, regional stability and sustainable development, underscoring the need for enhanced international cooperation to address the challenges.

The Minister stated this during her meeting with the Deputy Inspector General of Police (DIG) Johnson Babatunde Kokumo (rtd)., mni, Director-General of the National Centre for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons (NCCSALW), and members of his delegation in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Abuja, on Wednesday, 21 October 2026.

Ambassador Odumegwu-Ojukwu acknowledged the Centre's strategic importance in coordinating national efforts to prevent and control the proliferation of illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW), and appreciated its initiative to formally engage the Ministry for a briefing on its mandates, activities and strategic priorities.

She highlighted terrorism, banditry, kidnapping and communal violence as ills fuelled by illicit weapons. She underscored the importance of combatting their circulation; including through addressing cross-border arms trafficking, local artisanal production and the theft or diversion of weapons from government stockpiles; to protect Nigerians, restore livelihoods and create the security needed for investment and development.

Reaffirming Nigeria's commitment to the Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), African Union's *Silencing the Guns* initiative, the Arms Trade Treaty, the United Nations (UN) Programme of Action (PoA) and the International Tracing Instrument (ITI), the Honourable Minister urged closer international cooperation in tackling challenges associated with SALW.

In this connection, Ambassador Odumegwu-Ojukwu called for enhanced cross-border coordination on weapon tracing and intelligence sharing with neighbouring countries and partners across the Sahel and the Lake Chad

Basin. She reiterated Nigeria's optimism on the dialogue recently launched between the ECOWAS and the Confederation of Sahel States (AES) in Dakar, Senegal, and urged that arms control and tracing cooperation be built into the framework that emerges from their ongoing engagement.

Speaking on strategic priorities, the Minister emphasised the importance of coordination among relevant agencies for effective weapons tracing, secure arms storage, timely investigations into diversion of weapons and strengthened end-user verification. She encouraged greater public sensitisation on SALW, involving traditional institutions, community leaders and women groups. While recognising women's contributions to peace and security efforts, she stressed the need to further prevent youth recruitment into criminal networks and strengthen support for de-radicalisation efforts.

In response to the Centre's request for diplomatic support, the Minister pledged closer consultation with the Centre in preparing Nigeria's positions for relevant international meetings, and assured the delegation that the Ministry would facilitate appropriate engagement with international partners in advancing Nigeria's priorities on SALW.

Earlier in the meeting, the Director-General outlined the Centre's mandate, identifying external sources, local artisanal production and diversion from authorised government stockpiles as major causes of illicit arms proliferation. He highlighted efforts to trace intercepted weapons, investigate trafficking networks, secure government stockpiles and destroy recovered illicit weapons to prevent their recirculation. DIG Kokumo (rtd.) also acknowledged the Ministry's support for international training and engagements, and requested enhanced diplomatic cooperation in the implementation of NCCSALW's mandate.

The Honourable Minister and the DG agreed on the importance of strengthened institutional collaboration, enhanced technical responses and coordinated diplomatic engagement in combatting illicit arms trafficking and proliferation. The Ministry reaffirmed its readiness to support the Centre in advancing its mandate through necessary diplomatic engagement, enhanced international cooperation and sustained inter-agency coordination

Signed:
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Wednesday, 21 October 2026