



Control and Regulation of Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Implementation of UNSC Resolution 1265 in North Kivu in the DRC

Thomas Ntamwira

Doctoral School of the University of Burundi, Bujumbura, Burundi

Email: thomasntamwira2@gmail.com

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Abstract

The proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW) in North Kivu, Democratic Republic of the Congo poses a major challenge to civilian security and exacerbates an already complex humanitarian crisis. This article examines arms control and regulation in the implementation of UNSC Resolution 1265 in North Kivu, with a focus on its effectiveness in combating the uncontrolled circulation of SALW and protecting civilian populations. The article is based on a literature review methodology. By examining the factors that contribute to arms proliferation, such as weak governance, corruption, lack of border control, and the presence of armed groups, the study assesses the actions already in place. It focuses in particular on MONUSCO interventions and disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) programs. The results show that successful implementation of the resolution relies on improved traceability of SALW through digital databases and strategic partnerships with local and international actors. In conclusion, the article proposes recommendations to improve the implementation of Resolution 1265, including the creation of a regional SALW registration system, strengthening the training of security forces, and the inclusion of community leaders in DDR initiatives.

Subject Areas

International Law

Keywords

Proliferation of Small Arms, Protection of Civilians, Resolution 1265, UN Security Council, North Kivu, Corruption, Armed Groups

1. Introduction

The North Kivu province of the DRC is experiencing a worsening security crisis, largely due to the uncontrolled circulation of SALW. This region, long mired in conflict, is bearing the brunt of the proliferation of these weapons. Their easy accessibility and light weight make them widely used tools by armed groups, increasing instability and putting civilians at risk. Local institutions are failing to curb this resurgence due to corruption undermining their mandate and weak border control mechanisms. However, the problem can be addressed through United Nations Security Council Resolution 1265 of 1999, which provides significant scope to address this situation by focusing on the protection of civilians in conflict settings. This can be achieved by strengthening the security of civilian populations within Member States as well as between the parties involved, as well as by reducing the violence and suffering caused by hostilities [1]. The resolution also calls for enhanced cooperation between nations to limit the circulation of SALW, identified as aggravating factors of violence and human rights violations. The aim is to prevent civilians, who are not involved in conflicts, from being targeted and to encourage conflict management that reduces the impact on non-combatant populations [2].

2. Research Problem

The circulation of weapons in conflict areas is a major problem that exacerbates violence and civilian suffering, particularly in the North Kivu province of the DRC, where the problem of controlling SALW is acute. Due to their low cost and easy transport, SALW spread rapidly to non-state armed groups, local militias and sometimes even among civilian populations. For example, an AK-47 assault rifle, one of the most widely used weapons in Africa, can be purchased for a few hundred dollars on illicit markets, around \$830 [3]. This affordability allows non-state armed groups and civilians to obtain these weapons in large quantities [4]. This situation creates an environment where violence is endemic, conflicts become more deadly and the ability of local authorities to protect civilians is seriously compromised. The uncontrolled circulation of these weapons contributes to the chronic instability of the region, both by fueling hostilities between armed groups and by exposing civilians to direct and indirect violence [5].

How can the implementation of Resolution 1265 contribute to curbing the circulation of SALW and improving the protection of civilians in North Kivu? This question is central for assessing the effectiveness of the protection mechanisms provided for by the resolution in the face of the specific challenges of the region. The Resolution 1265, adopted by the United Nations Security Council, aims to strengthen the protection of civilians in times of armed conflict, with an emphasis on the regulation of weapons and the safety of non-combatants. However, in North Kivu, where SALW are virtually everywhere and local institutions are practically weak, the implementation of such measures faces many obstacles. The situation is attested by certain major indicators which prove that SALW are virtually

everywhere in North Kivu. For example, the growing number of non-state armed groups and local militias, such as the M23 and the FDLR, which use these weapons on a large scale, control natural resources and commit violence against civilians [6].

Secondly, the reports from MONUSCO and the National Commission for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons (CNC-ALPC) reveal that thousands of illicit weapons are circulating in the region, fueled by cross-border trafficking networks with Rwanda and Uganda. Third, data on armed violence show that SALW are responsible for the majority of civilian deaths, forced displacement and human rights violations, including sexual violence and the recruitment of child soldiers. This issue must be analyzed through the examination of the implementation of international commitments prescribed by Resolution 1265 in the region and their effective impact on the security of civilians. This concerns the efforts to regulate SALW as well as the actions of international peacekeeping forces, in this case MONUSCO. It also includes the capacity of the Congolese authorities to implement the recommendations of the resolution. The specific challenges in North Kivu must also be taken into consideration, for example, the problems of coordination between international and local actors, the challenges related to corruption and the weakness of state institutions. A thorough analysis of these aspects will help determine whether and how Resolution 1265 can effectively contribute to curbing the circulation of SALW and improving the protection of civilians in this crisis-ridden region.

3. Objectives and Structure

The objective of this article is to determine how the implementation of Resolution 1265 can be optimized to control the circulation of SALW and strengthen the protection of civilians in North Kivu. First, it will examine the legal framework established by Resolution 1265, detailing the obligations of Member States and the implementation mechanisms provided for. The second part will analyze the specificities of SALW proliferation in North Kivu, identifying the factors contributing to their spread and the consequences on the security of civilians. This section will address institutional and practical means to address the implementation mechanisms, assessing the challenges encountered and the opportunities presented for better implementation. The last section, in conclusion, will provide recommendations to improve the protection of civilians, among others, improvements in the control of SALW and better coordination between national and international actors.

4. Methodology

This article draws on a literature review methodology, covering the period from 2010 to 2024, marked by persistent armed conflict, stabilization efforts and international interventions in North Kivu province. The study first examines the legal framework of Resolution 1265, detailing the obligations of Member States and implementation mechanisms. It then analyses the proliferation of SALW in North Kivu, identifying

factors such as weak governance, corruption, lack of border control and the presence of armed groups, while assessing the actions already in place. It examines the ways in which institutions operate, with or against the different challenges faced by civilians in the course of their activities, highlighting MONUSCO, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes. The final section makes recommendations for strengthening the protection of civilians, improving SALW control and coordinating national and international actors.

4.1. The Resolution 1265 and the Legal Framework for the Protection of Civilians

After having presented the Resolution 1265 in the overall context of the protection of civilians, it is now appropriate to examine its specific legal basis in order to understand the principles and standards that underpin its application.

4.1.1. The Legal Basis of the Resolution 1265

The Resolution 1265, adopted on 17th September 1999 by the United Nations Security Council, marks a substantial step forward in the field of protection of civilians in armed conflict, by establishing a robust and clear normative framework. This resolution represents a decisive turning point in international humanitarian law, by emphasizing the need for enhanced protection of civilian populations who undergo the devastating effects of armed conflict. Indeed, one of the fundamental objectives of the Resolution 1265 is to guarantee the security of civilians by imposing on parties to the conflict, whether State or non-State, respect for universal humanitarian principles. This legal framework directly addresses the inadequacies of pre-existing protection regimes, by calling for a more systematic and integrated approach to prevent civilian suffering [7]. The commitment of UN Member States, as stipulated in the Resolution 1265, includes several crucial dimensions. Member States are called upon to adopt all necessary measures to protect civilians from the effects of hostilities, which includes establishing effective mechanisms to monitor and report human rights violations. This vigilance is essential to detect and respond quickly to abuses and violence inflicted on non-combatant populations [8]. In addition, the resolution requires States to support humanitarian initiatives on the ground, by facilitating access for humanitarian agencies to conflict-affected areas. This obligation of support strengthens the effectiveness of humanitarian interventions and ensures a more coordinated response to the needs of civilians in crisis situations [2]. The Resolution 1265 also clarifies the obligations of Member States in implementing international humanitarian provisions. It creates a standard rule that requires States to integrate ideas of support into their military work plans. This rule covers the need to find better ways to protect people and to encourage real measures to end targeted attacks on the vulnerable. The emphasis is on not allowing indiscriminate attacks and also highlights how essential it is to take active steps to ensure the safety of people, rather than waiting to react after mistakes have occurred. The implementation of Resolution 1265 requires close international teamwork. Member States must join international organizations and humanitarian

agencies to ensure the safety of people. This work includes providing information, organizing aid efforts, and supporting disarmament and peacebuilding plans. In addition, the resolution assists States by strengthening their local capacities to ensure the safety of people and to support means that respect humanitarian rules. This collaborative dimension is crucial to ensure that the commitments made in Resolution 1265 translate into concrete and effective actions on the field, thereby providing enhanced protection to civilian populations affected by armed conflict [9].

4.1.2. The International Humanitarian Law and the Regulation of Small Arms

The Resolution 1265, adopted on 17th September 1999 by the United Nations Security Council, marks a significant step forward in the protection of civilians in armed conflict by establishing a strong normative framework. This text, both ambitious and imperative, aims to fill the gaps in existing protection regimes by insisting on respect of universal humanitarian principles by all stakeholders to the conflict, whether State or non-State [10]. Before 1999, there was no specific UNSC resolution dedicated to the protection of civilians in armed conflict. Existing texts, such as the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their Additional Protocols of 1977, although fundamental, did not comprehensively cover contemporary challenges, including the proliferation of non-State armed groups and systematic violations of the rights of civilians [11]. However, Resolution 1265 reaffirmed the importance of respect for international humanitarian law, in particular, the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols. Furthermore, it called on all parties to a conflict, including non-state armed groups, to respect these obligations. Furthermore, the resolution recognized the destabilizing impact of SALW on civilians and called for measures to limit their illicit circulation. This has helped to better address the challenges related to SALW in regions such as North Kivu. This resolution recognizes that civilians are the first victims of armed conflict and calls for a systematic approach to prevent violence and suffering of civilians. In this, it introduces clear principles, obliging warring parties to respect strict standards of humanitarian protection [12].

The commitments of UN Member States under the Resolution 1265 have several essential dimensions. They are required to implement effective mechanisms to monitor human rights violations, to promptly report abuses and to support humanitarian initiatives on the field [13]. This commitment includes facilitating access for humanitarian agencies to conflict-affected areas, an essential measure to coordinate and make relief interventions more effective. States are also called upon to integrate humanitarian principles into the conduct of their military operations, thereby avoiding targeted attacks against civilians. This obligation reinforces the role of States in preventing violence against vulnerable populations, while promoting greater respect for fundamental rights in war situations [14].

The implementation of the Resolution 1265 relies on sustained international cooperation. Member States must work closely with international organizations and

humanitarian agencies to ensure the protection of civilians. This includes sharing information, coordinating humanitarian efforts, and supporting disarmament and reconciliation initiatives.

In North Kivu, these efforts face major challenges. Information sharing is hampered by the fragmentation of actors and the lack of trust between local communities and security forces, which limits the effectiveness of interventions [15]. The coordination of humanitarian efforts is also affected by persistent insecurity and lack of resources, which makes access to vulnerable populations difficult [16]. Furthermore, disarmament and reconciliation initiatives are struggling to make progress due to the low level of commitment by armed groups and the absence of effective reconciliation mechanisms [17]. Despite these obstacles, efforts are underway to strengthen collaboration between Member States, international organizations and humanitarian agencies, in order to ensure more effective protection of civilians and reduce the illegal circulation of SALW [18]. Furthermore, States must strengthen their national capacities to effectively protect civilians and adopt policies that comply with international standards of international humanitarian law. This aspect of cooperation is crucial to translate the commitments of the resolution into concrete actions on the field, and thus offer civilians in conflict zones truly enhanced protection.

4.2. The Problematic of the Circulation of SALW in North Kivu

After having addressed the general problem of the circulation of small arms and light weapons in North Kivu, it is now appropriate to examine the different factors which encourage their proliferation in this province.

4.2.1. Factors Favoring the Proliferation of SALW in North Kivu

The proliferation of SALW in North Kivu is the result of a confluence of legal and socio-economic factors that compound the challenges of security and the protection of civilians. First, internal and cross-border armed conflicts are a major factor in this proliferation. Indeed, the persistence of conflicts between local armed factions and cross-border rebel groups creates a context conducive to the accumulation and illicit circulation of SALW [19]. This situation is exacerbated by the fragility of arms control and regulation mechanisms, which fail to contain the uncontrolled spread of SALW within conflict zones. The resolution of armed conflicts and the regulation of arms flows must be considered within a legal framework that integrates international commitments on disarmament and non-proliferation [20]. In parallel, institutional weaknesses, such as corruption and the lack of state control, contribute significantly to the proliferation of SALW. The absence of robust state structures and the lack of institutional capacity to ensure arms control facilitate the illegal circulation of SALW [21]. Corruption within state institutions allows criminal networks to infiltrate arms regulatory systems, thereby facilitating the acquisition and transfer of SALW. Effective implementation of arms control regulations requires strengthening institutional mechanisms and promoting transparency within institutions responsible for security and arms control [22]. The role of armed groups

in the proliferation of SALW cannot be underestimated. These groups, often well-organized and with access to sophisticated smuggling networks, exploit weaknesses in regulatory systems to procure and spread SALW. Their ability to acquire weapons through illicit channels is facilitated by the persistent demand for weapons in conflict zones [23]. Regulating and limiting access to SALW requires enhanced international cooperation and coordination between Member States and regional actors to put in place more rigorous monitoring and control mechanisms.

4.2.2. Consequences of the Proliferation of SALW on the Protection of Civilians

The effects of the spread of SALW on the protection of civilians are enormous and varied. First, the increase in violence against civilians is a clear and real result of the easier access to SALW. The common use of SALW in wars leads to an increase in targeted violence against civilians, who are often designated as targets in indiscriminate attacks. This situation creates serious breaches of international law to assist the civilian population, including the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols, which impose duties of protection on parties to the conflict. The proliferation of SALW greatly complicates this duty, putting civilians at greater risk of losing their fundamental rights [24].

Second, the proliferation of small arms creates a major obstacle to the implementation of the protection measures decided by UN Security Council Resolution 1265. The resolution aims to keep civilians safe and reduce the effects of war, but the uncontrolled presence of SALW jeopardizes this mission [25]. The means of protection provided for by the resolution, including peacekeeping missions and humanitarian actions, are blocked by the constant threat of small arms.

Indeed, the effect of the growth of small arms on peace initiatives is very threatening. The constant presence of small arms in conflict zones makes it harder to plan to collect weapons, end the war and help these former combatants. Actions taken to restore calm and security are stopped because of these remaining weapons, which make it difficult to end peace and reconciliation processes. The multitude of small arms also harms peacekeeping attempts by preventing everything from returning to normal economic and political life in the affected areas.

4.3. Mechanisms for Implementing Resolution 1265 in the Context of North Kivu

Having examined the main challenges and opportunities related to the implementation of Resolution 1265 in the specific context of North Kivu, it is now appropriate to analyse the institutional and operational mechanisms put in place to ensure its effective application.

4.3.1. Institutional and Operational Mechanisms for the Implementation of Resolution 1265

The implementation of Resolution 1265 is based on a series of institutional and operational mechanisms aimed at strengthening the protection of civilians during

armed conflict in North Kivu. One of the main mechanisms is MONUSCO, which, in accordance with Security Council resolutions, has a mandate to ensure the protection of civilian populations [26]. MONUSCO, through its military deployments and protection teams, conducts regular patrols in risk areas and intervenes in the event of imminent threats to civilians. Its action not only secures the affected areas, but also facilitates access for humanitarian organizations, a crucial aspect in regions plagued by protracted conflicts [27]. At the same time, other United Nations institutions, such as the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), have an important role in the implementation of this resolution [28]. OCHA gathers resources and verifies that actions follow international rules. The OHCHR, for him, keeps an eye on human rights violations, makes accurate reports and helps judicial institutions in favor of people who suffer because of conflicts. This work of different United Nations institutions helps to guarantee a more equal and united protection of citizens, while also providing a place for humanitarian aid [11]. Regional actors, such as the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) and the African Union (AU) also contribute to the implementation of Resolution 1265. The ICGLR, above all, has established regional security systems to combat cross-border trafficking of SALW. Among these systems is the Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region, adopted in 2006, which seeks to strengthen cooperation between member countries to prevent the proliferation of weapons and promote peace [29]. This pact includes special measures such as increasing border controls, setting up weapons tracking systems. In addition, the ICGLR has created a Regional Certification Mechanism (RCM) for natural resources, which seeks to stop the financing of armed groups through the illegal trade in minerals, a major source of revenue for the purchase of arms. This mechanism includes common regional rules for the clarity and tracking of minerals, thus reducing illicit financial flows that fuel arms trafficking. These actions are complemented by efforts to strengthen the capacities of security forces and judicial institutions to better combat arms trafficking networks and improve cooperation across borders. The African Union (AU) also takes part in mediation and dispute resolution processes, thus supporting peace and civilian protection organizations in areas such as North Kivu. The support of these local actors is crucial to complement international efforts and ensure a more comprehensive approach to the protection of civilians [30].

Specific Examples of Implementation

MONUSCO: Conducts disarmament and protection missions, such as Operation “Safe Corridor” in 2022, which resulted in the voluntary surrender of 800 combatants [31].

- P-DDRCS: In December 2024, this program successfully retrieved 1300 war munitions in Butembo, supporting voluntary disarmament efforts [32].
- ICGLR’s Arms Control Mechanisms: The Pact on Security, Stability, and Development (2006) enhances SALW tracking across borders, reducing illicit arms flows [33].

Roles of Institutions and Overlaps

- MONUSCO secures risk areas and provides logistical support for humanitarian operations [22].
- CNC-ALPC (National Commission for the Control of SALW) leads national disarmament programs but struggles with enforcement due to funding constraints [34].
- ICGLR & AU facilitate regional collaboration to combat illicit SALW trade but often lack synchronization with national efforts [35].

Finally, NGOs and community organizations have a major role to play in the implementation of Resolution 1265. Their initiatives include community disarmament programs and awareness campaigns on the consequences of SALW proliferation.

In North Kivu, the P-DDRCS recently conducted weapons collection operations. For example, more than 1300 pieces of war ammunition were returned by former combatants in Butembo in December 2024, which is a good sign for voluntary disarmament [36].

Similarly, NGOs such as Cordaid with the ESPER program are involved in awareness campaigns and mobile justice to build community confidence and reduce impunity for armed violence.

However, these initiatives face major challenges, such as lack of funding, persistent insecurity, and weak coordination between local and international actors [37].

Despite these obstacles, these local actions remain crucial to raise awareness of the dangers of SALW and encourage their active role in disarmament and reconciliation [32].

By directly involving the local population, these voluntary disarmament programmes contribute to reducing armed violence at the local level.

However, despite these efforts, coordination between the different actors remains a major challenge. The divergence of priorities between United Nations agencies, Congolese authorities and non-governmental organisations limits the effectiveness of interventions on the ground. These divergences hamper the implementation of coherent measures for the protection of civilians and disarmament and prevent the achievement of the objectives set by Resolution 1265.

4.3.2. Challenges and Limitations of the Application of Resolution 1265 in the Face of the Circulation of SALW

The implementation of Resolution 1265 in North Kivu faces many challenges, especially in terms of cooperation between the actors involved. The large number of international, national and local actors, with quite different goals, leads to inconsistencies in the strategies used. The divergent priorities between United Nations agencies, the Congolese government and non-governmental organizations limit the effectiveness of actions on the ground. These differences in points of view prevent the application of clear measures regarding the protection of civilians and disarmament, making it difficult to achieve the goals established by Resolution 1265.

Another major challenge is the lack of financial and logistical means to properly support initiatives for the protection of civilians and disarmament. Peace missions often suffer from limited resources, which reduces their capacity.

For example, despite efforts to monitor the displacement of civilians and provide humanitarian assistance, humanitarian organizations face major challenges related to persistent insecurity.

In addition, constraints affect the implementation of disarmament programs, such as the P-DDRC-S, which struggles to achieve its objectives due to insufficient funding and the complexity of local dynamics. These limitations reduce the scope of interventions and exacerbate the suffering of civilians while compromising efforts to reduce the proliferation of SALW [35].

Economic Incentives and Disincentives

- **Illegal mining:** The trade in conflict minerals (gold, tin, tantalum) funds armed groups that purchase SALW [38].
- **Weapons trafficking networks:** Cross-border smuggling routes through Uganda and Rwanda allow cheap acquisition of arms [39].
- **Economic policies for mitigation:** Implementing formal taxation in artisanal mining zones and enforcing cross-border customs inspections can reduce SALW financing sources [40].

Budgetary constraints hamper the capacity of international and local organizations to carry out disarmament actions and respond to the needs of affected populations. This lack of resources hinders the implementation of the measures provided for in Resolution 1265 and reduces real results on the reduction of violence and the protection of civilians [41].

Attempts to disarm armed groups, a key aspect of the solution, also encounter great resistance. These armed groups, which often operate with the support of arms sales networks, are well equipped and difficult to dislodge. Their resistance to the P-DDRC program worsens insecurity in the region and blocks the real implementation of SALW reduction measures. The persistent presence of these armed groups continues to threaten the civilian population, making it difficult to implement the provisions of the resolution [42].

Finally, the weakness of local institutions is a major obstacle to the control of small arms. The Congolese authorities, who face problems of corruption, lack of funds and weakness of the judicial system, struggle to effectively control the circulation of SALW, thus exacerbating ethnic and socio-economic conflicts in North Kivu. To improve the implementation of Resolution 1265, it is essential to strengthen local capacities, coordinate efforts between the different actors and mobilize the necessary resources to overcome these challenges.

5. Prospects for Better Protection of Civilians in the Framework of Resolution 1265 and the Fight against SALW

Strengthening the implementation of Resolution 1265 for better protection of civilians inevitably requires a rigorous approach to the control and regulation of SALW,

due to their direct involvement in the dynamics of violence.

5.1. Strengthening Mechanisms for the Control and Regulation of SALW

The issue of strengthening the mechanisms for controlling and regulating SALW is fundamental for the effective implementation of Resolution 1265. The first part of this strengthening lies in improving the capacities of the Congolese State in regulating SALW. According to international standards, a solid legal framework must be established to govern the production, acquisition, possession and transfer of SALW. For example, the Congolese legal framework for regulating SALW is based on several international and regional instruments, including the Kinshasa Convention, adopted in 2010 by the member States of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS). This convention imposes strict obligations in terms of controlling SALW, including the marking of weapons, securing stocks, and prohibiting transfers to non-State groups [43]. However, these rules remain a dead letter in the DRC due to problems with national laws and the lack of harmony between the rules and regional ones. For example, although the DRC has ratified the Kinshasa Convention, it has not yet fully integrated its provisions into its legal system, which hampers efforts to control SALW. In addition, the Nairobi Protocol, signed by the DRC, attempts to improve cooperation between countries to combat the growing proliferation of SALW, but its implementation is blocked by logistical and financial challenges. In short, although the DRC has a formal legal framework, its effectiveness depends on better coordination of national laws with international laws and strengthening institutional means to ensure their effective implementation [44].

Existing SALW Traceability Systems & Failures (Expanded)

- Marking and registration: The DRC ratified the Kinshasa Convention, which mandates marking of all state-owned firearms, but poor enforcement limits impact [45].
- Stockpile management: The CNC-ALPC oversees stockpile security, but theft and mismanagement remain high [46].
- Proposed improvements:
 - Implementing digital firearm registration with biometric tracking.
 - Strengthening community-based reporting systems on illegal arms flows.
 - Enhancing cross-border cooperation through ICGLR's arms certification mechanism [47].

Specific Partnerships for SALW Control (Newly Added)

- EU's Security Sector Reform (SSR) Program: Supports Congolese military training to improve stockpile security and arms tracking [48].
- Interpol & UNODC Collaboration: Enhancing intelligence sharing on arms trafficking routes in the Great Lakes region [49].
- Local Civil Society Engagement: NGOs such as Cordaid run community-led disarmament campaigns to discourage arms possession [32].

This legal framework must have clear provisions on permits and registrations as well as fair sanctions in the event of non-compliance with established standards.

Indeed, the lack of an adequate rule is a major gap, allowing the uncontrolled proliferation of SALW, which compromises the protection of civilians. Strengthening national institutional capacities also requires necessary reforms within the institutions responsible for weapons management [32].

Specific training for security forces and judicial authorities is important to have an understanding and strict application of international standards on SALW. In addition, setting up complex tracking systems is essential to monitor the circulation of weapons and facilitate their recovery. Centralizing data on SALW and creating interconnected databases could allow for more effective monitoring of arms flows.

In addition to these national rules, international cooperation is a key pillar of SALW regulation. Partnerships with international organizations, such as the UN and the European Union, can provide very useful technical and financial support to help improve each country's regulatory capacities. Security support programs, assistance for security sector reform and capacity building initiatives are among the tools that these organizations can offer. For example, the European Union has made sufficient efforts to support security and security sector reform in North Kivu. These funds were able to help establish the humanitarian airlift that brought 260 tons of necessary goods to civilians in difficulty in North Kivu in 2003 [50].

Finally, agreements with local and international NGOs, such as Cordaid, helped to conduct awareness campaigns on the risks related to SALW, and to enhance the capacities of local communities through mobile justice and voluntary disarmament programs. These attempts, although facing logistical and financial concerns, have contributed to reducing the illegal circulation of weapons and increasing the security of civilians in the region [51].

In addition, regional cooperation, especially through multilateral agreements, is necessary to combat arms trafficking that crosses borders and ensure a common approach to SALW control.

5.2. Strengthening the Implementation of Resolution 1265 for Better Protection of Civilians

For helping to implement the Resolution 1265 and better protect civilians, local institutions and disarmament projects must be supported. These institutions have a key role in implementing civilian protection strategies, facilitating the implementation of the resolution's provisions on the field. Increased support for these institutions can be demonstrated by providing additional resources, training staff and strengthening organizational capacities. In addition, community initiatives to raise awareness of the risks posed by SALW and encourage participation in the disarmament process are essential to achieve a positive impact on the field [2].

Practical Steps for Implementation

- Strengthening border control: Deploying advanced scanning technologies at key

entry points to disrupt illicit arms trafficking [52].

- Increasing financial resources: Mobilizing international funding to support CNC-ALPC's operational capacity [53].
- Integrating local perspectives: Engaging traditional leaders and civil society in disarmament dialogues to encourage voluntary surrender of weapons [54].

Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programs must also be supported to address the challenges posed by SALW. These programs must include clear actions to collect weapons in circulation, and psychosocial support mechanisms for individuals and people affected by conflict. Voluntary weapons collection mechanisms with strict incentives and controls can help reduce the presence of SALW and advance peace. Finally, working with NGOs and international agencies can help to set up these projects and ensure a coherent and coordinated approach [55].

It is also important to ensure that local actors are well involved in protection work. Local actors, such as local leaders, local NGOs and civil society organisations, must be effectively integrated into the planning and implementation of civilian protection initiatives.

Their participation helps to tailor interventions to the specific needs of communities and to ensure that the solutions proposed are useful [56]. In addition, consulting local authorities and taking their opinions into account in the selection and decision-making process helps to ensure that interventions take into account local contexts and power dynamics in place [57].

Finally, an integrated and coordinated approach is essential to address the complex challenges related to the circulation of small arms and the protection of civilians. Efforts should aim at coordinating national and international actions, ensuring that policies and programmes are based on the objectives of Resolution 1265. Strengthening coordination between different actors, consolidating disarmament efforts and promoting enhanced international cooperation are substantial elements in ensuring an effective response to the challenges posed by SALW and in improving the security of civilians.

6. Conclusions

The circulation of SALW in North Kivu poses a major threat to the security of civilians and complicates stabilization efforts. These weapons, which are easily accessible and easy to handle, fuel armed conflicts and exacerbate violence against populations. The proliferation of SALW is explained by the weakness of local institutions, endemic corruption and ineffective state control, which reinforce the presence of armed groups and lead to massive human rights violations. This weakness of local institutions is demonstrated by their inability to enforce laws, control borders and effectively regulate the circulation of weapons. For example, the Congolese Armed Forces are often criticized for their lack of coordination and their role in corruption networks, which facilitate arms trafficking.

In addition, the absence of solid governance mechanisms in eastern provinces such as North Kivu gives armed groups the opportunity to obtain weapons with-

out hindrance. Corruption within Congolese institutions, including the army and security services, is a key factor. FARDC military leaders have been accused of embezzlement and selling military equipment to militias, which directly fuels the illegal circulation of arms [58]. For example, reports have shown cases where weapons provided by the government have been resold to armed groups, thus reinforcing their capacity for violence against civilians. In this case, the security of civilians becomes a sensitive issue. The implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1265 adopted in 1999 is important to address these problems. This resolution establishes a normative framework that requires States to take action to protect civilians and prevent targeted attacks against them. However, the effective implementation of this resolution depends on concrete actions, such as the disarmament of armed groups, the limitation of the circulation of SALW and the increase of humanitarian aid [59]. This requires good collaboration between international and national actors to ensure that the commitments made translate into concrete results on the field.

To combat the illegal circulation of SALW and better protect civilians, several recommendations can be made. It is important to strengthen the regulatory capacities of the DRC with regard to the acquisition of these weapons.

At the same time, there is a need for good cooperation between States to stop arms trafficking with increased support from regional, international and local actors.

Finally, it is necessary to promote better inclusion of local actors in disarmament and reintegration initiatives by providing them with technical and financial support adapted to the realities on the ground. An integrated and harmonized approach is necessary to reduce the proliferation of SALW, secure civilians and build a solid foundation for lasting peace in the region.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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