



PERMANENT MISSION OF NIGERIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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STATEMENT

BY

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MINISTER

PERMANENT MISSION OF NIGERIA TO THE UN, NEW YORK

ON BEHALF OF THE AFRICAN GROUP

ON THE

CLUSTER II OF THE THEMATIC DEBATE ON NORMS,
REGULATIONS AND ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES

AT THE

PREPARATORY COMMITTEE FOR FIRST REVIEW
CONFERENCE OF UN PROGRAMME OF ACTION ON SALW

NEW YORK, 16 JANUARY 2006

Mr. Moderator,

I have the honour on behalf of the African Group to take the floor on Cluster II and to respond to some of the questions you raised in relation to that Cluster.

Let me, first of all, reiterate the belief of the African Group that the full implementation of the 2001 UN Programme of Action on Illicit Trade in SALW remains a key element in promoting long-term security and for creating conditions for sustainable development in affected States and regions especially in Africa. In response to your question relating to actions that have been taken since 2001 towards the implementation of the UNPoA, we have the following comments to make.

The Constitutive Act of the African Union and the Protocol on the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union of July 2002, have reaffirmed the need to develop and promote peace, security and stability as a prerequisite for the implementation of Africa's development and integration. In the Protocol, African Heads of State and Government expressed concern about the impact of the illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons in threatening peace and security in Africa and undermining efforts to improve the standards of living of the African people. They noted that this threat could only be resolved within the framework of increased and well-coordinated continental cooperation. Similarly, the Solemn Declaration on a Common African Defence and Security Policy adopted by African leaders in Sirte, Libya, on 28 February 2004, identified the illicit proliferation, circulation and trafficking in SALW as a major factor responsible for insecurity in the continent. From 18-21 March 2002, the African Conference on the Implementation of UN Programme of Action on Small Arms: Needs and Partnerships, was held in South Africa. More importantly, the Second Continental Conference of Governmental African Experts on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons was held in Windhoek, Namibia, from 14-16 December 2005, and adopted the African Common Position on the 2006 Review Conference which the Group introduced at this Preparatory Committee last Monday.

Efforts have also continued to be made at sub-regional levels in Africa towards the implementation of the Programme of Action. On 20 April 2004, Ministers from the Great Lakes and the Horn of Africa adopted the Nairobi Protocol for Prevention, Control and Reduction of SALW in the sub-region. The Third Ministerial Review Conference of the Nairobi Declaration on the Problem of the Proliferation of Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Great Lakes and the Horn of Africa took place in Nairobi, Kenya from 20 to 21 June 2005 with the admission of Somalia as the 12th Member State. In addition, the Governments in the region committed themselves to fully implement the Nairobi Protocol, establish Regional Centre for SALW and further enhance the capacity at the sub-regional and national levels to continue with the implementation of the Nairobi Declaration. They further reiterated their commitment and determination to prevent and eliminate illicit SALW in the entire sub-region. It is in the light of these important commitments that we consider as very positive and significant development the admission of Somalia as it could contribute in reducing SALW in that country as it emerges from conflict. The First and Second Ministerial Review Conferences of the

Nairobi Declaration of 2000 were held in Nairobi from 7-8 August 2002, and 20-21 April 2004, respectively. Also, the Dar Es Salaam Declaration on Peace, Security, Democracy and Development in the Great Lakes Region was adopted at a Conference held in Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania, from 19-20 November 2004.

In the Southern African region, the Protocol of the 14-Member SADC on the Control of Firearms, Ammunition and Other Related Materials signed in August 2001, entered into force in July 2004. Also, the Regional Consultative Workshop of Governmental Experts of the Southern African Region on the Implementation of UNPoA met in Windhoek, Namibia, from 23 to 24 May 2005 and agreed on recommendations regarding national and regional reporting by the States in the region to the UN biennial process as well on preparations for the 2006 Review Conference. A four-nation consultative mechanism, to be hosted by Tanzania, was established under a Task Force with a view to further promoting the disarmament objectives of the sub-region. An International Workshop on Global Principles for Arms Transfers was held in Dar Es Salaam from 20-22 February 2005.

In the West African region, the ECOWAS Moratorium on the Importation, Exportation and Manufacture of Small Arms and Light Weapons in West Africa, originally signed in 1998 for three years and renewed in 2001 for another three years, is currently being considered for transformation into a legally binding instrument. The Moratorium has continued to be a useful instrument for coordinated and sustainable regional approach in controlling the illicit proliferation of small arms in the sub-region, and has led to the establishment of focal points or national commissions in Member States of ECOWAS. States in the sub-region also attended an ECOWAS Workshop on International Arms Brokering held in Abuja, Nigeria, in March 2004 under the sponsorship of the governments of Norway and Netherlands. Furthermore, the Regional Consultation of Governmental Experts on SALW took place in Bamako, Mali, from 28 to 29 April 2005 and agreed on the mode of reporting to BMS.

In the Central African sub-region, the 11-member United Nations Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa continues to make efforts to promote arms restraint, disarmament and confidence-building measures in the region. The 22nd Ministerial Meeting of the Committee took place in Brazzaville, Republic of Congo, from 14 to 18 March 2005, where they reviewed the geo-political and security situation in some member States and the threat of mercenaries in the sub-region as well as their preparations for Second Biennial Meeting States. The African Group wishes to recall the past achievements of this Committee including, among others, the adoption of the Non-Aggression Pact designed to prevent future armed conflicts and strengthen confidence among States in the sub-region. The Group regrets that the Committee has not received sufficient international assistance and attention in recent years to enable it to continue to execute its mandate, and in this regard, calls for greater assistance to States in the sub-region. It is, however, noteworthy to mention that Central Africa is one of the sub-regions most affected by illicit small arms proliferation and conflict including the Democratic Republic of the Congo where an estimated 3 million people have lost their lives as a result of an armed conflict fuelled by illicit small arms trafficking.

At the national level, individual African countries have continued to take various measures towards the implementation of the PoA. As at today, 30 African States have improved the operational capacity of their law enforcement agencies to assist in national implementation process on SALW issues; 28 have institutionalized national commissions or national focal points on SALW; and 25 have commenced cross-border operations to reduce illicit small arms trafficking. Furthermore, 24 African States have signed or ratified the Firearms Protocol of the UN Convention Against Trans-national Organized Crime, thus facilitating its entry into force in May 2005; 20 have or are in the process of revising or harmonizing legislation governing firearms; 10 have developed national conferences, campaigns and collection and destruction programmes for firearms and ammunition; and another 10 have updated their national registers, improved their record-keeping and/or computerized their central registers. Also, eight African countries have undertaken stockpile reviews, management and destruction of surplus SALW from their armouries while 6 have commenced sustainable action plans for the implementation of SALW initiatives and conventions between 2001 and 2005. Moreover, 3 African sub-regions have developed dedicated SALW coordination units to improve information exchange.

Mr. Moderator,

These efforts notwithstanding, illicit small arms and light weapons have continued to have devastating impact on the African region. The response to your second question, therefore, is that the expectations of the African States have not been met. With regard to your question on what should be done to foster progress on this issue, the African Group has some preliminary comments to make for the consideration of the Review Conference.

The Group requests that multilateral and regional financial institutions should include provisions for small arms and light weapons programmes, where appropriate, in the reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts in post-conflict areas, in the consolidation of governance issues, and in the area of strengthening legislation and improving operational capacity of law enforcement agencies on small arms and light weapons. We also request them to include those programmes in the promotion of socio-economic development agendas that include public awareness on small arms and light weapons.

There is the need to encourage regional support for national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes, particularly in post-conflict situations, with specific reference to the introduction, adherence to, implementation or strengthening of relevant laws, regulations and administrative procedures. There is also need to promote effective stockpile management and security, especially physical security measures, and to encourage regions to develop measures, on a voluntary basis, to enhance transparency to prevent, combat and eradicate illicit SALW in all its aspects.

There is need for all States and appropriate international and regional organizations, upon request of the relevant authorities, to seriously consider rendering assistance, including technical and financial assistance where needed, such as small arms funds, to

support the implementation of the measures to prevent, combat and eradicate illicit SALW as contained in the PoA.

States and international and regional organizations should cooperate, develop and strengthen partnerships to share resources and information on illicit trade in SALW in all its aspects.

In addition, States and international and regional organizations should seriously consider assisting interested States, upon request, in building capacities in different areas including the development of appropriate legislation and regulations, law enforcement, tracing and marking, stockpile management and security, weapons collection and destruction as well as exchange of information. This is important so as to emphasize the responsibility of States in ensuring the sustainability of national initiatives in the implementation of all UNPoA undertakings.

Member States should affirm at the Review Conference that ensuring the reduction of the availability, supply and demand for SALW is critical to the well being of the affected States. They should consider and agree on actions and initiatives by which such reduction and eventual eradication could be achieved at national, regional and international levels. Such actions and initiatives should include political commitment and action to address the root causes of conflicts in a comprehensive manner; a strong commitment to preventing, combating and eradicating the illicit manufacture, possession, stockpiling and trade in SALW; and placing of emphasis on public awareness and education. It should include an undertaking to engage in effective collection and destruction mechanisms for both surplus and illicit arms as well as effective DDR measures in peace agreements as may be applicable. It should further include an obligation to provide for the rehabilitation and reintegration assistance to demobilized soldiers, ex-combatants and in particular child soldiers. Finally, it should include a recognition of the need for SALW programmes to continue beyond post-conflict and transitional stages by mainstreaming small arms reduction and management in all national and local plans related to development, crime prevention and reconstruction.

I thank you, Mr. Moderator.