



PERMANENT MISSION OF NIGERIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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STATEMENT

BY

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TO THE UNITED NATIONS, NEW YORK**

ON BEHALF OF THE NIGERIAN DELEGATION

DELIVERED AT THE

**THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE TO REVIEW PROGRESS MADE
IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME OF ACTION TO
PREVENT, COMBAT AND ERADICATE ILLICIT TRADE IN SMALL ARMS
AND LIGHT WEAPONS IN ALL ITS ASPECTS**

NEW YORK, 28 JUNE 2006

Mr. President,

On behalf of the Nigerian delegation, I wish to congratulate you on your election as President of the first Review Conference of the UN Programme of Action to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. It is our expectation that under the leadership of the Bureau, the Conference will achieve the desired results. I assure you of the support and cooperation of the Nigerian delegation in this task.

The Nigerian delegation wishes to align itself with the African Common Position on the Review Conference introduced by Zimbabwe.

Mr. President,

The UN Programme of Action has been a useful instrument for addressing the threat that illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons (SALW) poses to international peace and security, rule of law and democratic governance. While noting the substantial progress made in the follow-up provisions of the 2001 Conference, Nigeria is, however, deeply concerned that little progress has been made in controlling the illicit circulation of these weapons which, as we all know, has continued, and indeed intensified, calling into question the political will of the international community to take a decisive step on that issue.

Millions of people worldwide live every day under the fear and threat of armed violence, especially in Africa. Today, small arms and light weapons are the preferred weapons in conflicts between groups and among States. The situation is especially grim for Africa where we daily face the devastation of illicit circulation of SALW in fuelling and prolonging conflicts, destruction of valuable infrastructure, accentuation of illicit drug trafficking and other trans-national organized crimes, which in turn negate the enjoyment of our people's human rights to live in peace. In terms of consequences, inter-State and intra-State conflicts constitute the greatest obstacle to economic growth and development in Africa, including the achievement of the MDGs.

This Review Conference, therefore, presents an excellent opportunity not only to take stock of what has been achieved in the areas covered by the Programme of Action (PoA) but more importantly to map out effective strategies for addressing many areas of failure and areas not covered by PoA that from experience has continued to impede its implementation. One such area is the ubiquitous existence of armed non-state actors, who as entities operating outside State control often act with impunity and utter disregard for international humanitarian law. This Conference must recognize the change in the nature of conflicts, by which civil conflicts fought mostly by armed non-state actors have replaced the declining inter-State conflicts, thus exacerbating illicit arms transfer, the main source of arms supply for these actors. This current state of affairs sends a clear message to the members of the global community that illicit arms trade may not stop unless they act in concert to control its transfer to these unauthorized recipients. The Nigerian delegation, therefore, strongly urges this Conference to agree on elaboration of a legally binding international instrument to ban the transfer of all small arms and light weapons to these non-state actors. By so doing, we will have limited transfer of arms to

only governments for their legitimate purposes. Nigeria believes that weapons of all types, nuclear as well as conventional, are dangerous in the hands of non-state actors, in particular terrorists.

Our experience in West Africa as elsewhere in Africa, has shown that illicit exploitation of natural resources, such as diamond and timber, and crude oil, among others, has helped fuel illicit proliferation of dangerous weapons denying victim States, including our country Nigeria, of substantial resources needed for development, apart from its contribution to insecurity and instability. This Conference must make far-reaching recommendations on this problem considering particularly that no effective action has been taken by the appropriate organ of the UN on the findings and recommendations of the various panels of experts and other bodies established to investigate the role of such activities in illicit arms trade. Similarly, this Conference should ensure that arms embargoes imposed by the Security Council are no longer ignored by Member States. In this regard, an effective monitoring mechanism to prevent the cross-border movement of arms, combatants and mercenaries would be invaluable.

It has long been recognized that States most affected by illicit small arms trade are usually the ones least able to solve the problems associated with such trade in terms of financial and other resources. This places huge responsibility on States participating in this Conference to strengthen international cooperation and provide necessary assistance as well as enhance coordination of efforts to address the needs of the affected States. But we can only do so if we begin to see the problem as essentially of humanitarian character just as a similar endeavour by States in addressing global problems created by landmines.

The Conference must confront the enormous challenges before it, including holding manufacturers, suppliers and States to account, as well as imposing appropriate sanctions on them, whenever their arms exports are found to be diverted into illicit networks. Efforts in this regard should be strengthened through the establishment of a common international standard that strictly regulates the activities of arms brokers, so critical to the success of our efforts in curbing the proliferation of illicit small arms. We must reflect measures to eliminate SALW in national plans on security, development, poverty reduction, crime prevention and post-conflict peace-building. We also need to make progress on special needs of women and children affected by armed conflict, and child soldiers. We need to further agree on common standard for end-user certification, stockpile management and security, strengthen national legislation as well as enhance the operational capacity of our respective law enforcement agencies.

Mr. President,

The foregoing challenges facing the Review Conference should not overshadow the significant strides that have been made in this area in the past year. The entry into force on 3 July 2005 of the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition, which sets out a comprehensive system to control their movement is indeed noteworthy. As a demonstration of Nigeria's strong commitment to the fight against illicit small arms and light weapons, I am pleased to inform the Conference that the Government of Nigeria deposited the instrument of ratification of the Firearms Protocol on 3 March 2006. While reaffirming our

commitment to fulfill our obligations under the Protocol, we urge all States that have not already done so to ratify or accede to this important instrument in order to ensure its universal application. Similarly, the adoption in 2005 of the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons is welcome but only as a stop-gap measure. We believe that it is only through a legally binding international instrument that the illicit movement of weapons across borders can be effectively controlled and criminalized. In this regard, this Conference should recommend the conversion of this political document into a legally binding instrument at its next biennial review meeting.

Mr. President,

I wish to draw specific attention to an important milestone in the bid to firmly deal with the issue of combating and eradicating the illicit trade in SALW in the West African sub-region. Following the adoption of the Programme of Action five years ago, ECOWAS Member States began the process of transforming the 1998 ECOWAS Moratorium into a legally-binding Convention. Today, I am happy to report that ECOWAS Heads of State and Government, in demonstration of leadership in addressing small arms problems, and with the strong support provided by Nigeria, signed in Abuja, Nigeria, on 14 June 2006 a landmark legally-binding Convention on small arms. The Convention, whose ultimate objective is the consolidation of peace, security and stability in the sub-region, is the first of its kind as most comprehensive conventional disarmament instrument ever established in the world. It is a demonstration of the determination of West African States to stem the tide of armed violence that has plagued West Africa for decades and a major contribution to the maintenance of international peace and security.

By the Convention, no ECOWAS Member State shall import or export small arms and light weapons except for legitimate defence and security needs. It totally bans the transfer of small arms to non-state actors not authorized by the importing Member State, and also regulates the artisan arms manufacturers. The Convention contains other useful provisions such as those regulating civilian possession of arms which under extant law of Nigeria can only be approved by the highest authority. The Convention also contains elaborate provisions on stockpile management and security, transparency and exchange of information, marking and tracing, brokering, as well as follow-up, monitoring and implementation mechanisms. This Conference can draw useful lessons from the Convention as a guide for a forward-looking outcome document, in particular on the stringent control on arms transfers. Nigeria has always expressed support for proposals on initiatives on transfer control as well as for an International Arms Trade treaty provided that they include references to banning such transfers to non-state actors.

Mr. President,

Since her last report to the Biennial Meeting of States last year, Nigeria has taken further practical measures towards the implementation of the Programme of Action as a demonstration of her commitment to the document. We are currently undertaking the inventory of local artisans that manufacture small arms and light weapons and assessing their capabilities to enable Government evolve a regulatory framework for their operations. Last month Nigeria organized a national workshop on enhanced stockpile

management and control for the Nigerian arms-bearing services. In our statement and report to the last Biennial Meeting, we reported on the training programme of our security operatives for enhancing border control and security. The three-phase training programme has now been completed with the cooperation of the Government of the United States. Furthermore, over the past year, large quantities of illicit arms and rounds of ammunition were destroyed. Many more of these illicit arms and live ammunitions recently seized are similarly scheduled for destruction.

Finally, the Nigerian delegation believes that we should use the opportunity of the Review Conference to agree on a follow-up arrangement that will guarantee the full implementation of the Programme of Action. It is by so doing that we can sustain the momentum generated by the adoption of the PoA and thus work towards satisfying the yearnings of millions of people worldwide trapped in the insecurity created by the web of international small arms trafficking.

I thank you.