



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

ON BEHALF OF THE AFRICAN GROUP

DELIVERED AT THE

**SECOND BIENNIAL MEETING OF STATES TO CONSIDER THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME OF ACTION TO PREVENT,
COMBAT AND ERADICATE THE ILLICIT TRADE IN SMALL ARMS AND
LIGHT WEAPONS IN ALL ITS ASPECTS**

NEW YORK, 11 JULY 2005

Mr. Chairman,

On behalf of African Group, I join previous speakers in congratulating you on your election as chairman of the Second United Nations Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons. We also convey our congratulations to the members of the Bureau on their election. The Group wishes to assure you of its support in achieving a fruitful outcome from this meeting.

Mr. Chairman,

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 Africa.

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 can 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.

At the national level, individual African countries have continued to take various measures towards the implementation of the PoA in recognition of the consequences of illicit circulation of small arms on peace, security and stability of their countries, including on the leadership themselves. This matter has, therefore, always received priority attention.

The same motivation has guided efforts at regional or sub-regional levels in Africa at implementing 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.

In the Southern African region, the Protocol of the 14-Member SADC on the Control of Firearms, Ammunition and Other Related Materials 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.

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 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 this Biennial Meeting. 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.

Mr. Chairman,

Since the First Biennial Meeting in 2003, the self-motivating efforts by African States in stemming illicit small arms trafficking in the region have met with tremendous difficulties arising mostly from the need for capacity building and different forms of assistance as well as lack of meaningful international cooperation in promoting effective controls on the supply side of small arms trade. The Group urges Member States to pay special attention to these main concerns. The Group underscores the need for cooperation in the establishment of necessary structures for promoting durable peace, security and stability. We also reiterate the need for effective DDR programmes in post-conflict areas to be implemented under UN regular budget and as part of the mandate of its peacekeeping operations.

The Group welcomes the agreement reached last month in New York on an international instrument on tracing illicit small arms and light weapons as a basis for the emergence of a stronger instrument in future that will more effectively tackle the problem of tracing these weapons. Cognizant that arms brokering plays a significant role in illicit arms trade, the African Group calls for the establishment of an effective international regime to control the practice. The Group expresses support for the establishment of a Group of Governmental Experts towards this end. To achieve the desired results, it is imperative that the international community should deal with the threat posed by illicit small arms trade in a comprehensive and action-oriented manner.

In line with the 2000 Bamako Ministerial Declaration containing African Common Position on the issue of illicit small arms trade, the African Group urges Member States to agree to limit trade in small arms and light weapons to governments and authorized registered licensed traders. This is the most effective way to control the diversion of such weapons into illicit networks. Finally, the Group believes that more progress would be made in controlling illicit small arms trade if it is approached more as a global humanitarian challenge than as opportunity for profit from arms deals.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.