



**PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF
SIERRA LEONE TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

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STATEMENT

BY

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TO THE

**SECOND BIENNIAL MEETING ON THE IMPLEMENTATION
OF THE UN PROGRAMME OF ACTION ON THE ILLICIT TRADE
IN SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS IN ALL ITS ASPECTS**

TUESDAY, 12TH JULY 2005

Mr. Chairman,

The Sierra Leone delegation would like to assure you of its cooperation as you fulfill your responsibilities for directing the affairs of this biennial meeting.

Mr. Chairman, Sierra Leone recently submitted a national report on action it has taken to implement the 2001 UN Programme of Action. The report covers, among other things, our successful Community Arms Collection and Destruction (CACD) initiative which was conducted under the aegis of the Sierra Leone Police outside the conflict related Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) exercise; the on-going Arms for Development (AfD) programme; efforts already underway to amend and update the country's firearms legislation (the Arms and Ammunition Act No. 14 of 1955); and activities of civil society in raising awareness about the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Sierra Leone and the West African sub-region as a whole.

Other Member States have reported or will report on similar action they have taken to implement the Programme of Action. These reports are expected to demonstrate that much has been achieved over the past four years at the national and regional levels to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. However, the situation at the global level may not show such signs of progress.

We must remember that while the Programme of Action does recognize the primary responsibility of States to solve the problems associated with the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, it does make clear the need for international cooperation and measures at the global level. It will be recalled that Sierra Leone joined in the consensus for the adoption of the Programme of Action primarily because of the explicit assurances and commitments contained in Parts III and IV of the document. That is, the provisions for international cooperation and assistance, and the steps for effective follow-up to the 2001 Conference. We also joined in the consensus because of the provisions for measures to be undertaken at the global level because we maintained and continue to maintain that the scourge of the illicit trade or circulation of these so-called small but deadly weapons, is an international problem.

Therefore, my delegation believes that this meeting provides an opportunity not only to speak about the laudable action taken within our respective countries and at the regional level, but in particular to seriously address the international or global measures that should be undertaken to deal with this international phenomenon.

Most or all of the States that manufacture or sell small arms and light weapons continue to assure us with pride that they have effective national gun laws as well as appropriate enforcement and monitoring mechanisms in place, in the areas of export control, marking, licensing, brokering. In addition to arrangements and moratoria there are various legally-binding instruments related to small arms and light weapons at the regional level. Others such as the ECOWAS Moratorium to which Sierra Leone subscribes, are being transformed into legally-binding instruments. However, my delegation is of the view that unless these are matched by strong legally-binding

international instruments we cannot expect any significant reduction in the human suffering caused by the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

In this regard, Mr. Chairman didn't we the Member States express in the Preamble to the Programme of Action our determination to reduce the human suffering caused by the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and thereby enhance the respect for life and dignity of the human person? To paraphrase the Preamble, the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons not only sustains conflicts, exacerbates violence, fuels crime and international terrorism, it also, as Sierra Leoneans know so well and have experienced, exacerbates the illicit trafficking in diamonds and undermines respect for international humanitarian law.

Recognizing the international dimension of the problem, we the Member States resolved in the Programme of Action, to implement agreed international measures to prevent, combat and eradicate illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in small arms and light weapons. Consistent with its strong belief in the important role that legally-binding international instruments can play in this regard, Sierra Leone has signed the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition, supplementing the UN Convention against Transnational Crime. Sierra Leone will soon initiate the process for ratification, preferably before the end of the current Parliamentary session.

Mr. Chairman, we also resolved in the Programme of Action four years ago, to develop new international measures, and to encourage negotiations aimed at the conclusion of relevant legally binding instruments. Unfortunately, last month our hopes for a legally-binding international instrument on marking and tracing were dashed when at 15 minutes past midnight we adopted a so-called political instrument. In the view of my delegation the instrument is tantamount to a declaration of intent, one which merely succeeds in complementing or articulating the provisions of 2001 UN Programme of Action.

As far as Sierra Leone is concerned, the Programme of Action was, and remains a solid foundation on which we should build instruments of commitment and obligations. It prods us to take a more proactive approach and more effective measures, including legal action to deal with the scourge of the illicit trafficking and use of small arms and light weapons. Having adopted resolutions, declarations and programmes of action, moratoria and codes of conduct, is it too much to ask for tough measures in the form of relevant protocols, conventions and treaties aimed at combating a scourge that persists and continues to take a heavy toll of human life and incalculable physical destruction in many areas of the world, including our West African sub-region?

In this regard, my delegation would like to acknowledge with appreciation the assistance of the European Union in our efforts not only to upgrade the ECOWAS Moratorium to a legally-binding instrument on small arms and light weapons, but also for the part it played in our struggle to secure a legally-binding instrument on marking and

tracing. Such support is consistent with our collective international responsibility to implement the Programme of Action.

Also in this regard, Sierra Leone fully endorses the proposal of the United Kingdom for an international Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) negotiated in and concluded by the United Nations. Of course it is our hope that it would contain adequate and appropriate provisions for small arms and light weapons. Such a legally-binding global instrument would, on the one hand, become an important and practical contribution to the implementation of the Programme of Action. At the same time, it would be consistent with the need to uphold the principle of the rule of international law in meeting the threats and challenges of our times, including the threat to human security.

As the Foreign Secretary of the United Kingdom put it a few months ago, “we have global, legally-binding international treaties covering chemical, biological and nuclear weapons and global mechanisms to implement them. Yet, we still have no such legally-binding international treaty on conventional weapons...which account today for more misery and destruction across the world.”

Mr. Chairman, allow me to reiterate that as far as Sierra Leone is concerned, and based on the magnitude of the consequences of the conflicts in West Africa, illicit small arms and light weapons have become weapons of mass destruction.

The Programme of Action that we are reviewing is not an end itself. It is a means to an end, a means which must be strengthened through internationally legally-binding commitments to achieve the ultimate end or objective of eradicating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, these ‘other weapons of mass destruction’.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.
