



PERMANENT MISSION OF NIGERIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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STATEMENT

BY

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DELIVERED DURING THE

GENERAL DEBATE

AT THE

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

NEW YORK, 11 JULY 2005

Mr. Chairman,

I wish to congratulate you on behalf of the Nigerian delegation on your election as Chairman of the 2nd Biennial Meeting on the Implementation of the UN Programme of Action. I assure you and members of the bureau of my country's support in addressing the task ahead of us.

Mr. Chairman,

Nigeria remains committed to the fight against illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons and the 2001 UN Programme of Action, and had taken steps and major initiatives in that direction. Apart from being a principal motivator behind the generally well-acclaimed ECOWAS Moratorium on the Importation, Exportation and Manufacturing of Small Arms and Light Weapons in West Africa, Nigeria scrupulously abided by the stipulations. She has spent a substantial sum of money, that is, more than \$12 billion in the last 15 years in different efforts to stem the tide of recurrent conflicts in the West Africa, fuelled by illicit circulation of an estimated 8 million small arms and light weapons in the sub-region. In the process, thousands of Nigerian soldiers and civilians have lost their lives as participants in peacekeeping endeavours in the affected countries. It is also noteworthy that Nigeria continues to provide sanctuary to refugees fleeing from these conflicts at enormous financial cost to the Federal Government.

Nigeria's support for international efforts to control the circulation of these small arms and light weapons to non-State actors is, therefore, not in doubt. We, therefore, view as positive development, the recent agreement, by the Open-Ended Working Group on an international instrument that would enable States to identify and trace illicit small arms and light weapons in a timely and reliable manner. It is indicative of a political will to confront this pernicious menace which has continued to threaten the peace and security of countries in

our region as well as jeopardize the activities of UN peacekeepers. This should, however, be considered as only a stopgap measure, for we believe that it is only through a legally binding international instrument that the transfer of small arms and light weapons to non-State actors can be controlled, and criminalized. We should not in the name of filthy lucre allow non-state actors to play havoc with the lives especially of the vulnerable sectors of our societies, such as women, children, and the aged, who are victims of the conflicts.

On our part, the Nigerian Government has constituted the National Committee on Small Arms since 7 May 2001 to confront this problem. As a result, there now exists a national arms register database which we have found useful in our policy formulation. Among its activities is the organization of several training workshops and seminars for stakeholders to sensitize them on the problems of small arms for national development, and security.

Mr. Chairman,

Nigeria operates a strict firearms regime as a further proof of her determination to keep these weapons out of circulation in the country. Under the Firearms Control Act, possession or acquisition of firearms for personal use requires approval of the highest authority in the land, an approval which has been given only in exceptional cases.

Efforts at controlling illicit small arms have been extended to the nation's borders with our immediate neighbours. For example, in November 2003, Nigeria hosted the First Tripartite Seminar on Enhanced Border Control and Security among the border operatives of the Republics of Benin and Niger. Their recommendations have been approved for implementation. An important fallout of this cooperation is the institution of regular joint border patrol which have enabled the three countries to keep track of the influx of illicit small

arms into, and across the borders. Indeed, it has led to the apprehension and prosecution of the lynchpins behind trans-border trafficking in SALW. Nigeria's cooperation has extended beyond the African region. Under a three-phase training cooperative programme with the United States, relevant agencies of the Nigerian Government have, in collaboration with the US Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, trained over 200 border security personnel on modern methods of interdicting concealments by traffickers and smugglers. Similarly, Nigerian Police has intensified its cooperation with their counterparts from other West African countries in tracing the movement of illicit arms across borders through the Interpol Bureau in West Africa in which she has strong representation.

As a country that cherishes peace and security, Nigeria has fought unrelentingly against illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons. These efforts bore fruit with the recovery and confiscation of 2,564 illegal firearms and 118,574 assorted ammunitions in the second quarter of 2004. Of these, 2204 assorted small arms and 15,080 rounds of ammunition have already been destroyed with the rest to follow. Nigeria also participated in a three-day ECOWAS Conference on Combating Illicit Small Arms Brokering and Trafficking held in Abuja, from 22 to 24 March, under the sponsorship of the governments of the Netherlands, Norway and the United Kingdom. The Conference was meant to sensitize ECOWAS Member States on the problem of illicit brokering as well as develop common understanding on the most efficacious ways to address the problem, including through sub-regional coordination mechanisms. I should also underscore the fact that Nigeria is one of the 10 African countries participating in the pilot project of the Small Arms Transparency and Control Regime in Africa (SATCRA) towards eliminating illicit small arms and light weapons in the continent.

Mr. Chairman,

Nigeria is of the view that support of the international community for the UN Programme of Action on small arms and light weapons should be reflected in the adoption and implementation of practical measures to eliminate the threat of illicit small arms. These should include genuine attempts to prevent conflicts, and where this is unsuccessful support negotiated solutions. There is also the need to create political atmosphere that is conducive to harmonious relationships at national and sub-national levels as well as foster a sense of belonging among all populations in affected countries or regions. We should aim for and encourage structures and processes that strengthen democracy, human rights and rule of law. But above all we should address the economic challenges faced by the victims to enable them to have a stake in their polities. This is in consonance with the spirit of NEPAD and the Constitutive Act of the African Union. It is the hope of the Nigerian delegation that our development partners will re-commit themselves to this approach, and that all nations will be guided by, and pursue the principle of pacific settlement of disputes as enshrined in the UN Charter. This in the end will obviate the needless recourse to acquisition of small arms and light weapons.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.