STATEMENT BY

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FIRST SECRETARY

ON BEHALF OF THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY

ON

AGENDA ITEMS 85-105:
GENERAL DEBATE ON ALL DISARMAMENT AND INTERNATIONAL SECURITY AGENDA

AT THE FIRST COMMITTEE
OF THE 60TH SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

NEW YORK, 4 OCTOBER 2005

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Mr. Chairman,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the following Member States of the Southern African Development Community; Angola, Botswana, The Democratic Republic of Congo, Lesotho, Madagascar, Mauritius, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

As this is the first time I have spoken, allow me to express a word of congratulations to you on your election, as well as to the bureau. We have the utmost confidence that your extensive experience dealing with Disarmament and Non-Proliferation issues, both within the United Nations system and beyond will serve the work of our Committee well. The Member States of the Southern African Development Community assure you of their fullest support and cooperation.

The SADC Member States align themselves with the statements delivered by Indonesia on behalf of the Non Aligned Movement and by Nigeria on behalf of the African Group. We also take this opportunity to condemn in the strongest possible terms Saturday’s heinous terror attacks carried out in Bali and extend our condolences and commiserations to the families of the deceased and the injured. SADC reiterates its unequivocal condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, committed by whomever, wherever and for whatever purposes.

Mr. Chairman,

The SADC Member States believe that there is a connection between Disarmament and Development. The SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security was established primarily because the region recognized that no socio-economic development could be achieved, without the achievement of peace, security and political stability. SADC therefore drew up the Strategic Indicative Plan for the Organ (SIPO) to promote peace and security in the region. The Plan would safeguard the development of the region against instability and thus help implement the Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP), which provides Member States with a coherent and
comprehensive development agenda. The two exist side by side as one seeks to ensure that an enabling environment is created for the achievement of the goals of the other.

Despite the demonstration in recent years of the political will of our Member States to cooperate on political, defence and security matters, we still face potential and actual military threats within our region. Some of our states are still grappling with armed conflicts, unfinished demobilisation, disarmament, and reintegration, and monitoring of former military personnel, terrorism, and the prevalence of illicit arms and landmines.

The SADC Member States can thus broadly support the consideration by the Group of Governmental Experts of the relationship between disarmament and development on issues such as, inter-alia;

1. The pivotal role that security plays in defining the relationship between disarmament and development,

2. The importance of addressing the multifarious threats to development posed by illicit small arms and light weapons, and

3. The importance of preventing conflict in order to avoid the debilitating financial, economic and social costs associated with civil conflicts and with armed conflicts between states.

In this regard SADC is also committed to the wider continental establishment and consolidation of the Africa Union as well as its institutions and programmes such as the Peace and Security Council and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

Mr. Chairman,

One of the most negative effects on our economies and on the sense of peace and security of our citizens, are the prevalence and proliferation in our societies of small arms and light weapons. Our region is inundated with these weapons following many decades of inter-and- intra state conflicts in some of our States. As a region, we clearly have much cause for concern and have a clear incentive to arrest their illicit spread.
SADC has been a strong advocate in the fight against this scourge. Internationally, in July 2001, SADC Member States actively participated in the UN Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons, and in the adoption of the Programme of Action. At the continental level, SADC Member States were instrumental in the development and adoption of the 2000 Bamako Declaration on Small Arms and Light Weapons. Additionally through our own Southern African Regional Police Chiefs Cooperation Organization (SARPCCO), SADC prepared the Protocol on Firearms, Ammunition and Other Related Materials. The Protocol was adopted and signed at the Blantyre Summit on 14 August 2001.

The contribution of these arms to high levels of instability, extended conflicts and social dislocation and their link to drug trafficking, terrorism, trans-national organised crime, mercenary and other violent criminal activities is recognised by many SADC Member States. There can be little doubt that combating the spread of such weapons can only be achieved through effective international cooperation and by developing strong mechanisms to exchange information, keep records for effective tracking, consider the issue of proper marking of such weapons to guard against illegal ownership, and development of structures that would effect the expedient response to tracing requests.

While SADC was disappointed that the Open-Ended Working Group to Negotiate an International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons, could not agree on a legally binding instrument, we are however heartened that the politically binding instrument due to be presented to this Sixtieth Session of the General Assembly, contains provisions that we feel will effectively combat their illicit trade.

We would like to urge the membership of the United Nations General Assembly to adopt the draft instrument, and to demonstrate the political will necessary to enact its provisions. Our disappointment at the failure to negotiate a legally binding instrument will not dampen our resolve to see this issue through to its natural conclusion.
Mr. Chairman,

Allow me to briefly comment on the issue of the implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personal Mines and on their Destruction. The entire SADC membership is committed to the provisions of the Mine Ban Treaty as we recognise the extraordinarily hazardous nature of these arms on innocent citizens. The SADC Member States attach great importance to strong national and regional commitments. The Common African position on Anti-Personnel Landmines is a powerful message of the priority that the African region attaches to the implementation of this issue. This is translated in our commitment to the non-use of anti personnel landmines, and the non-development, production, acquisition, stockpiling, retention or transfer, and destruction of all anti-personnel mines, in compliance with the Convention.

Mr. Chairman,

The SADC Member States would like to take this opportunity to echo the disappointment expressed by the Secretary General at the failure of our collective membership to agree on language on Disarmament and Non-Proliferation in the World Summit Outcome Document. History will not judge us kindly and correctly so, for failing to reach agreement on language on an issue of such magnitude. There should be no doubt that the potentially destructive impact of a nuclear explosion on our entire globe deserves at the very least some mention in such a document.

SADC believes that the Non Proliferation Treaty represents the cornerstone of the Disarmament and Non-Proliferation treaty regime and therefore calls for its universality. In that regard we urge that all commitments contained in the decisions emanating from the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference, and those contained in the Final Document of the 2000 NPT Review Conference should be abided by.

The ongoing concerted efforts in combating terrorism, albeit necessary, should not deflect from the necessity for renewed and genuine efforts towards the implementation of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. SADC Member States view the total elimination
of nuclear weapons by Nuclear Power States, as the best safeguard against their acquisition by terrorists, and against their use or threat of use against Non Nuclear Power states. However in lieu of their total elimination, we urge that Nuclear Power States commit themselves to the conclusion of a legally binding instrument on security assurances to Non Nuclear Weapon States at the soonest.

SADC urges all negotiating partners to approach future discussions on Disarmament and Non Proliferation in good faith. The world community whom we represent deserve more, and should expect no less from us as custodians of this process. Any future repeat of the failures of the disarmament machinery can only bring us into even further disrepute. That could represent a failure of apocalyptic proportions.

I thank you.