Statement

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Mr. Chairman

At the outset allow me to congratulate you on your assumption of the chair of the First Committee. I would like to assure you of my delegation's readiness to extend its support to you in guiding the work of the Committee. Our heartfelt tribute also goes to other members of the Bureau for having assisted and facilitated the work of this Committee.

We also congratulate Ambassador Sergio Durate on his appointment by Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon as the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs.

Mr. Chairman,

Ethiopia would like to associate itself with the statement made by Indonesia on behalf of members of the Nonaligned Movement (NAM) as well as the statement made by Nigeria on behalf of the African Group. Although my Government is concerned with the various issues of disarmament, as are tabled before this Committee, I would wish to focus on those issues that are most relevant to my country as well as its sub-region.

First and foremost is the issue of landmines. It is very well understood that antipersonnel landmines are still being laid today in many parts of the world. These mines, and mines from previous conflicts, continue to claim victims in every corner of the globe each day. Though the situation has improved in recent years, there is still a lot to be done before we live in a mine-free world.

Mr. Chairman

Ethiopia, as one of the countries with landmine problems, still continues to remain seized with the seriousness of the matter. As my Government attaches
 paramount importance to the addressing of the issue, the utmost possible endeavour is being exerted in encountering the danger caused by land mines in an effective and timely manner. To this end, the Ethiopian Mine Action Office (EMAO) was established in the year 2001, so as to effectively deal with the situation. Consistent with the firm commitment of my Government to the global initiative in this sphere, Ethiopia has also ratified the Ottawa Mine Ban Convention in 2004.

Mr. Chairman,

The Ethiopian Mine Action Office commenced its mine clearance activities with two demining companies in 2002 and, at present, the clearance capacity has grown to 6 companies. One community liaison officer is assigned to each of the demining companies with the responsibility of liaising between deminers and the mine-infested communities and disseminating mine-risk education to members of these communities.

Mr. Chairman,

Currently, based on the Ethiopian Landmine Impact Survey (ELIS), five technical survey teams are assessing the impact of landmines in 900 communities in different parts of the country and are marking danger sites so as to warn the local people of the presence of mines in a specific area. As of June 2007, a total area of 33,830,071 square meters of land has been cleared from landmines in the highly landmine impacted regions of the country, namely: Tigray, Afar, and Somali regions. More than four thousands mines and nearly forty thousand items of Unexploded Ordnance (UXO) have thus been retrieved and demolished in the process of this exercise. As a result, an estimated area of 116.57 square kilometers has been released for development use by the local communities in these regions.
Mr. Chairman,

The Ethiopian Mine Action Office, in its continued effort in raising the awareness of the local population to reduce mine-induced accidents and risks, has given mine-risk education to nearly 300,000 people, hence enabling community members to be in a position of reporting any suspicious object to community liaison officers or to deminers on their own. Consequently, 364 anti-personnel mines, 80 anti-tank mines and 36,463 items of UXO have been reported by such community members to be eventually demolished by explosive ordnances disposal experts.

Mr. Chairman,

The abovementioned positive efforts have brought about a significant impact in the struggle to overcome the problems of landmine in Ethiopia. However, it is well understood that the sole effort of my Government may not achieve the expected outcome in time unless it is coupled with a strong financial and technical backing from the international community. Moreover, it is the firm belief of my Government that the Mine Ban Treaty would be fully implemented with the continued and stronger commitment of all the concerned parties in order to create a mine-free-world, as envisaged by us all. We also believe that a stronger mechanism should be put in place to buttress the land mine victim assistance program, whose full implementation would no doubt enable the Mine ban Treaty to achieve a complete success.

Mr. Chairman,
The second area of my country's concern relates to the issue of illicit trade and trafficking in Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW). As we have stated in the past before this august body, Ethiopia is committed to the effective implementation of the UN Program of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in all its Aspects. Consistent with this, my country is also duly committed to the Bamako Declaration, at the African region level, as well as to the Nairobi Protocol for the Prevention, Control, and Reduction of Small Arms and Light weapons, at the sub-regional level.

Apart from creating a conducive environment for regional cooperation in this field, there is an ongoing process to revise the existing national legal framework, rules and regulations with the aim of bringing the illicit transfer of Small Arms and Light Weapons under a more strict control. Moreover, based on the exiting policy and legislations, my Government has made a significant effort in collecting around 11,000 illegal Small Arms and Light Weapons, of which about 1700 have already been demolished.

In general to find for sustainable solution to the problem related to SALW international community should support the national as well as regional effort.

Mr. Chairman,

Ethiopia vehemently supports the new process launched last year by the General Assembly to pave the way for a global Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) believing that it would prove to be an important step towards the control of import, export and transfer of conventional weapons. Out of this conviction, therefore, Ethiopia had cosponsored the resolution 61/89 when adopted for the first time last year. Ethiopia
will continue to extend its unreserved support and cooperation to the successful conclusion of this important treaty.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, let me reassert Ethiopia's hope that this session of First committee will play its due role in strengthening the international peace and Security regime; and, to this end, my delegation remains committed to work together with other delegations to achieve our common goals.

I Thank You.