STATEMENT
BY

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SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL STATEMENT
FIRST COMMITTEE
THEMATIC DEBATE ON
CONVENTIONAL ARMS

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Thank you Chairperson,

My delegation is pleased with the continuing progress that we have been able to make in recent years in the field of conventional arms, both in terms of the implementation of existing instruments and in progress in the development of new legally binding standards relating to these arms.

In this regard, since our last thematic debate on conventional arms, South Africa was pleased to be present in Oslo in December 2008 to be one of the almost one hundred signatories to the Convention on Cluster Munitions. South Africa is fully committed to the full implementation of its provisions. The Convention sets a new international norm on cluster munitions and we are confident that the comprehensive ban that it sets on the vast majority of cluster munitions stockpiled around the world will swiftly lead to their stigmatisation as weapons of armed conflict. We are particularly pleased with the Convention's groundbreaking provisions on victim assistance. South Africa has a fairly small number of obsolete cluster munitions in its stockpile that have in any event been earmarked for destruction and my Government is committed to destroying these stocks well in advance of the destruction deadline set by the Convention. With regards to ratification, South Africa has embarked on the ratification process consistent with my country's Constitutional provisions.

South Africa is pleased to note that a number of States have completed their ratification processes, thus bringing the Convention's entry into force closer. We also encourage those States, particularly African countries that have not already signed the Convention, to do so. South Africa is encouraged by the offer of the Loa People's Democratic Republic, to host the first meeting of States Parties.

Chairperson,

South Africa attaches great importance to the implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. In this regard, we welcome the successful conclusion of the Preparatory Committee process for the Second Review of States Parties to the Mine Ban Convention that will take place in Cartagena, Colombia, later this year. South Africa also welcomes the opportunity that States Parties had to provide inputs for the outcome documents to be adopted by the Review Conference.

South Africa also hosted an African Union Conference on antipersonnel mines in Pretoria from 9 to 11 September 2009. The aim of this Conference was two-fold: Firstly, to assess the developments in Africa since the 2004 AU Conference with a view to updating the Common African Position on Anti-Personnel Landmines. The Conference also gave African countries the opportunity to prepare for the Second Review Conference of States Parties to the Convention.
South Africa looks forward to participating in the Second Review Conference in Cartagena. We hope that the Conference will come out united in its quest for the world free of anti-personnel mines and that it recommits States Parties to the Convention’s implementation provisions relating to victim assistance, mine clearance, cooperation and assistance and stockpile destruction.

Chairperson,

Our discussions on the Arms Trade Treaty have moved forward to the next phase, namely that of preparatory work that will be done for a UN Conference to take place in 2012. SA supports efforts to conclude such a Conference within the framework of the United Nations, which will make it as broad and inclusive as possible. This, my delegation believes, is essential if an ATT is to be truly effective and to make a difference as far as the future arms trade is concerned.

Finally, South Africa continues to attach great importance to the implementation of the UN Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects. Since the adoption of that Programme of Action, we have negotiated and agreed to an International Tracing Instrument on the marking of small arms and light weapons and on tracing illicit small arms and light weapons. A Group of Governmental Experts has also elaborated a set of recommendations on illicit brokering. My delegation therefore believes that these outcomes on the two substantive issues mentioned in the follow-up section of the Programme of Action provide a wealth of measures that will complement our implementation of marking, tracing and illicit brokering.

South Africa continues to believe that ammunition is an integral part of the problems associated with the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. We have noted that we agreed during the process to negotiate the International Tracing Instrument to deal with ammunition as part of a separate process. While we respect that decision, we view the recommendations of the Group of Governmental Experts on ammunition as being complimentary to our work on the implementation of the Programme of Action on small arms and light weapons.

Chairperson,

South Africa, in co-ordination with Colombia and Japan, has the honour to introduce the so-called omnibus small arms resolution this year and hereby wishes to submit the draft resolution entitled “The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects”. The draft resolution contains mostly technical updates from last year’s General Assembly resolution 63/72, adopted during the 63rd Session by a large majority of States. We trust that all Members will be able to join the consensus on this resolution during the current session.

Thank you Chairperson