Statement by H.E. Mr. Robert G. Ali
Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Papua New Guinea
at the First Committee under Agenda Item 97 (z)
19 October 2010, UN Headquarters, New York

Mr. Chairman,

I congratulate you on your election as Chair of this important Committee. We pledge our support to you and your Bureau.

Mr. Chairman,

Like other member States who spoke before us, we reaffirm the centrality of the UN Charter and its principles to promote and strengthen international peace, security and stability through cooperative arrangements and measures.

Mr. Chairman,

We stated during the Fourth Biennial Meeting of States on the Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons held in June this year that while Papua New Guinea does not manufacture and export small arms and light weapons, we unfortunately suffer greatly from their use, misuse and abuse. This situation continues to hamper our development, causing untold economic and social damage, the latter through deaths.

In an effort to address this challenge, stringent firearms control measures were instituted in 2003-2004 for the PNG Defence Force through the Papua New Guinea-Australia Defence Cooperation Programme for refurbishment of our armories as well as the installation of computerized systems for monitoring access and issuance of firearms.

While this has contributed significantly to the reduction of firearms loss and theft, weapons continue to be “leaked” from these sources including from private companies that provide security services.

We are also aware that there continues to be illegal trafficking of small arms and light weapons across our very lengthy and porous land and sea borders which seriously undermines our national security and poses serious threats to our development. It has been said that these threats may increase given the current resource boom in the mining and petroleum sector of Papua New Guinea.

Mr. Chairman,

In 2005, the Government established a Guns Control Committee which was mandated to review the guns situation in Papua New Guinea and report back with recommendations on how to best address the illicit trade and proliferation of small arms and light weapons.
The same Committee furnished a final report containing 244 recommendations which were then accepted by the National Parliament in August 2009. Efforts are currently underway to prepare an implementation matrix of the recommendations including a proposal for the establishment of a national institutional framework to coordinate implementation of the recommendations.

Mr. Chairman,

Papua New Guinea is in the final stages of drafting a "Counter-Terrorism and Trans-National Organized Crime Bill". When enacted, this will give effect to the eight (8) UN Counter-terrorism Conventions which Papua New Guinea has ratified. While we are confident that this new piece of legislation will provide the necessary policy framework to address, inter alia, matters relating to illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, we are also aware that actual implementation of the UN Programme of Action and enforcement will require effective collaboration with our regional and international partners.

While we have strong regional coordination through the Pacific Islands Forum Regional Security Committee as well as the Pacific Islands Chiefs of Police, more needs to be done in the region to strengthen our collective efforts and we call for renewed international cooperation and assistance.

Mr. Chairman,

We welcome and support New Zealand’s role as the upcoming Chair of the 2011 Open-ended Meeting of Governmental Experts (MGE) to facilitate discussions on follow-up and 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. We reiterate our support for the inclusion of “international cooperation and assistance” on the agenda of the MGE.

Finally Mr. Chairman, we thank our development partners including the United Nations as well as regional and international NGOs and civil society organizations who have and continue to assist us in our efforts to address the illicit trade and proliferation small arms and light weapons.

Papua New Guinea stands ready to cooperate with other likeminded countries in eradicating the illicit trade of small arms and light weapons including through the sponsorship and support of relevant General Assembly resolutions and initiatives.

Thank you.