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STATEMENT

BY

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BEFORE THE FIRST COMMITTEE

OF THE 65th SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY
THEMATIC DEBATE CONVENTIONAL WEAPONS

NEW YORK, 20th OCTOBER, 2010
STATEMENT OF NIGERIA ON CONVENTIONAL WEAPONS AT THE THEMATIC DEBATE OF THE FIRST COMMITTEE

The Nigerian delegation considers as positive the recent trends in the disarmament negotiations in general and in particular, the development on the preparatory committee for the United Nations Conference on the Arms Trade Treaty held July 2010, under the chairmanship of Ambassador Roberto García Morán of Argentina, who ably chaired the Open-ended Working Group last year and the Group of Governmental Experts in 2008. Nigeria participated actively in all the relevant meetings on the ATT. It is envisaged that this process should lead to the Conference on the Arms Trade Treaty in 2012 aimed at elaborating a legally binding instrument on the highest possible common international standards for the transfer of conventional arms.

On the issue of scope of the ATT, we believe as most other UN Members States, that there should be clarity in the definition of arms. It should also be flexible to take care of new developments in warfare technology. The need for an International Arms Trade Treaty must not be trivialized. Nigeria also believes that ATT should contain provisions that will ban accessibility of SALWs to non-state actors and any group or groups, whether armed or not, that operates outside Government authority or control. We agree on the seven plus one plus one configuration of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms,

Nigeria is nevertheless deeply concerned that Small Arms and Light Weapons have continued to destabilize the African continent and a large number developing nations, it has continued to fuel and prolong conflicts, as well as obstruct international humanitarian programmes. They have also undermined peace initiatives; increased human rights abuses; hampered development; and perhaps more worrisome, they have fostered a culture of organized crime and violence. Indeed, for us, they constitute weapons of mass destruction because they are the weapons that are actually killing people in Africa. We are, however, often disappointed by the failure of the
international community to accord attention to the urgent need to combat and eliminate illicit trade and proliferation of small arms and light weapons commensurate with the devastating consequences of their use on the affected countries and peoples. We, therefore, call on all Member States to pay greater focus to the need to reduce and eventually eliminate the threat to humankind of illicit proliferation of SALW in all its aspects. In doing so, less premium should be placed on commercial benefits of arms trade in preference to value of human life.

As Chair of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Nigeria is pleased to report that we have made substantial progress in bringing peace and stability to countries in the sub-region that were until recently embroiled in one form of political crisis or the other. This has greatly improved the political environment across the sub-region, which in turn has enhanced peace and security that are critical for development. Nigeria will continue to build on these achievements to consolidate peace and stability and engender prosperity in the sub-region.

The amnesty programme extended by the Federal Government to the militants of the Niger Delta area of the country had led to the recovery of thousands of illicit weapons. Nigeria has thus achieved tremendous success in disarmament, disarmament and reintegration of the militants in that part of the country.

Mr. Chairman,

The ECOWAS convention on SALW entered into force on 29th September 2009 following its ratification by the eleventh of its fifteen member states. ECOWAS member states have established national commissions as required by the instrument which would function as national focal points towards the full implementation of the Convention. ECOWAS member states have collaborated closely with ECOWAS small Arms programme (ECOSAP), a successor to the Programme of Coordination and Assistance for Security and Development (PCASED), established by the UNDP. ECOSAP has worked so hard with civil societies providing them with the requisite institutional facilities including sponsorship of small arms pilot projects. The ECOWAS commission has sponsored and encouraged interstate services and Interpol to combat trans-border SALWs crimes considering that the vast territories of the sub-region constitute a serious challenges to the prevention of illicit circulation of SALWs.
Some of the areas of assistance in tackling illicit small arms menace will include:

- Assistance in monitoring technology for border control within the framework of the provisions of the UNPoA;
- Border equipment relating to sea and airport scanners and training of personnel; among others.

I thank You.