STATEMENT BY

AMB. PATRICK S MUGOYA
DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF UGANDA TO
THE UNITED NATIONS

FIRST COMMITTEE
THEMATIC DEBATE ON CONVENTIONAL WEAPONS

65TH SESSION OF THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

New York, October 19, 2010

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Mr. Chairman,

The first decade of the 21st century has witnessed complex and profound changes in the international security environment, with both challenges and opportunities to deal with security threats. There have been regional hot-spots and regional conflicts that have continued to emerge.

Africa, the Great Lakes region and Horn of Africa in particular, have had persistent conflicts perpetuated by illicit trade and proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW). These conflicts continue to negatively impact on economic, political and social development.

The countries in the Great Lake region as well as the Horn of Africa, and Uganda in particular attach great importance to the fight against illicit trafficking and proliferation of Conventional Weapons. We are convinced that illicit arms and weapons are an impediment to peace, security and development in the region. Therefore there is urgent need for cooperation by all member states to combat their proliferation, including by destroying them.

To date, under the EAC-Small Arms and Light Weapons programme, the five Partner States have destroyed more than 14,600 small arms and five tones of explosives in an effort to make the East African Community sub region secure and peaceful.

We support the UN Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons and consider it as a useful mechanism in the efforts to eradicate illicit trade and proliferation of arms. Uganda welcomes the outcome document of the Fourth Biennial Meeting of States held in June 2010 and look forward to the Experts Group meeting in 2011 and the UNPOA Review Conference in 2012. The Great Lakes Region and Horn of Africa adopted a strategy that complements and reinforces National, Regional and Global efforts in the Prevention and Combating of the proliferation and trafficking of illicit arms. The Region has a Centre on Small Arms and Light Weapons in Nairobi to guide the National and Regional efforts in this endeavour.

Mr. Chairman,

Uganda launched her National Action Plan (NAP) on Small Arms and Light Weapons in 2005 which focused on three key areas namely, the control and management of existing SALW; the Reduction of the number of SALW in circulation; and prevention of proliferation.

In accordance with the requirements of the Nairobi Protocol, the UN Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instruments, Uganda is currently engaged in a nationwide firearms marking exercise including firearms in the hands of the Uganda Police Force and the military. The marking exercise will help determine surplus stock, facilitate decommissioning of surplus SALW and their disposals.
Uganda has been working closely with the Civil Society Organizations in the implementation of Uganda's national Strategy to combat Proliferation of illicit SALW. The Civil Society Organizations are particularly important in the areas of institutional capacity building and sensitizations of the public on the dangers of illicit SALW.

In our view, the most effective way of combating the proliferation of small arms is through conflict prevention and resolution. It is well known that the small arms corridors in the Great Lakes region and the Horn of Africa have links to conflict situations which perpetuate trafficking of arms. The Great Lakes, EAC and IGAD sub-regions have therefore prioritized and intensified efforts towards conflict prevention and resolution.

Mr. Chairman,

Uganda has made tremendous progress in the fight against illicit arms. It is essential that stakeholders in the arms Industries cooperate in the global efforts towards the implementation of initiatives directed at combating illicit trafficking and proliferation of Conventional Arms.

It is also important to reiterate that international measures to combat illicit trade in arms and trafficking should not be used by any State to deny another the right to exercise their sovereign rights to legally acquire arms for self defence.

Another area of concern to Africa is the presence of unexploded ordinances including land mines left behind from previous conflicts on the continent, which have resulted in the deaths and maiming of others. We commend the efforts of international organizations; the NGOs and development partners towards helping national and regional efforts in getting rid of these dangerous materials.

The use of Cluster Munitions in armed conflicts also continues to pose a major challenge to the international community. Uganda has been a victim of the use of cluster munitions with devastating effects on her population in areas where it has had armed conflicts. Uganda therefore welcomes the entry into force of the Convention on Cluster Munitions in August this year 2010 of which Uganda is a signatory. Uganda is also a signatory to the Anti-Personnel Land Mine Ban Treaty. We remain committed to the full implementation of these instruments.

Mr. Chairman,

In conclusion, we stress the need to move forward on the multilateral, regional and sub-regional disarmament and non proliferation and nuclear disarmament agenda.

I thank you.