STATEMENT
BY

AMBASSADOR LESLIE GUMBI
CHIEF DIRECTOR: UNITED NATIONS (POLITICAL)
DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND
CO-OPERATION, REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA FOR
THE THEMATIC DEBATE ON OTHER WEAPONS OF
MASS DESTRUCTION

NEW YORK
17 OCTOBER 2011

PLEASE CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY
Chairperson,

Since the last First Committee Session, we note with satisfaction that progress has been made in the field of conventional arms. In some areas, the implementation of existing instruments have been strengthened, while work continues on the elaboration of new international norms and instruments regulating the use, production and stockpiling of such weapons. However, much remains to be done.

Chairperson,

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 (UNPoA). In this regard, we welcome the successful conclusion of the first Meeting of Governmental Experts (MGE) on the UN Programme of Action (UNPoA) on small arms and light weapons that was held here in New York during May this year. This MGE was the first of its kind and provided Member States with an important opportunity to consider the implementation challenges on marking, record-keeping and co-operation in tracing in accordance with the International Tracing Instrument (ITI). South Africa was particularly pleased that pledges were made to assist many developing States to redress their lack of the necessary regulatory frameworks, funding, equipment and capacity in the fields of marking, record-keeping and tracing.

South Africa is also pleased that Ambassador Jim McLay of New Zealand, MGE Chairperson, has prepared a "Chair's Summary" which places on record some of the elements on the more substantive discussions in greater detail. My delegation would be in favour of institutionalising the MGE as a biennial event.

Chairperson,

South Africa has remained an active participant, together with other UN Member States in the process to negotiate the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) during the ongoing Preparatory Committee (PrepCom) process. South Africa believes that, while resolving our differences on certain aspects and draft provisions of the ATT is not going to be an easy task. This notwithstanding, South Africa believes that we must not be detracted from our resolve to adopt a Treaty that makes a real difference in the legal conventional arms trade and in improving the quality of life of all our citizens through the regulation of the arms trade and related transfers.

Whatever the final provisions that will be adopted on issues such as scope, parameters and criteria, my delegation believes that the creation of an Implementation Support Unit will, amongst others, be one of the keys to the successful implementation of the ATT. My delegation is of the view that the Chairperson's latest text is fairly well-balanced and that it represents a good basis for consideration during the July 2012 ATT negotiations.

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 (MBT). We look forward to the consideration of the Phnom Penh Progress Report at our next Meeting of States Parties to the MBT in Cambodia later this year and wish to thank the Kingdom of Cambodia for its generous offer to host the Eleventh Meeting of States Parties to the Convention. My delegation has always highlighted the importance of the text of the MBT as the primary legally binding commitment to the implementation of the Treaty and regards the successive Action Plans that have been adopted since the First Review Conference as being a complementary, practical guide to its implementation in relation to victim assistance, mine clearance, stockpile destruction, co-operation and assistance, as well as on universalisation.

While we welcome the progress that has been made to date, it is clear that much more needs to be done to achieve our goal of a world free of anti-personnel mines. Many mine victims still do not have access to medical care, education, physical rehabilitation, social services, vocational training and subsequent employment. We are also concerned that a number of States Parties have not been able to meet their clearance deadlines and have consequently requested extensions. We continue to believe that early planning and implementation and the allocation of adequate resources will go a long way in addressing problems related to mine clearance.

Chairperson,

South Africa shares the concern about the humanitarian impact of cluster munitions. As a Signatory to the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM), South Africa is fully committed to the ban on the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of cluster munitions. In this connection, South Africa welcomes the entry into force of the CCM on 1 August 2010. South Africa believes that the CCM represents a landmark humanitarian disarmament instrument that sets new standards in our collective commitment to the principles of international humanitarian law. As a former producer of cluster munitions that have an area wide effect, South Africa believes that these weapons have not only become obsolete as weapons of modern warfare, but that their recent use in conflicts have shown them to cause unacceptable harm to civilians, even long after the cessation of active hostilities.

Chairperson,

As a State Party to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects (CCW), South Africa remains committed to the full implementation and universal application of the provisions of the framework Convention and its five Protocols. To demonstrate this commitment, the South African Parliament consented to South Africa being bound by Protocol V and the amended Article I.

In addition, South Africa has also been actively participating in the CCW meetings of the Group of Governmental Experts that has been negotiating a possible protocol on cluster munitions and we look forward to the consideration of this issue during the forthcoming Fourth Review Conference of High Contracting Parties later this year. While we appreciate the efforts that have been made for many years to deal with cluster munitions in the CCW context, we are concerned about the lack of progress
in the CCW towards the finalisation of a credible instrument that will urgently address the humanitarian impact of cluster munitions.

In our view, the latest Chair's text continues to raise concerns, particularly in relation to definitions, prohibitions and restrictions, deferral periods and technical annexes that will, if adopted, reverse the gains made under the CCM. Of particular concern to my delegation is the implicit legitimisation of the continued use and production of cluster munitions that have been banned under the CCM. We believe that it is incumbent on all States Parties and Signatories of the CCM that are also States Parties to the CCW to work towards an outcome to the CCW process does not in any way undermine the letter or the spirit of the CCM. South Africa remains committed to contributing towards that aim.

In conclusion, Chairperson, Colombia, Japan and South Africa – this year under the Co-ordinatorship of Japan – will again submit the annual omnibus resolution on the implementation of the UNPOA. The draft resolution provides an update on the implementation of UNPOA related issues and provides an operational framework for the future implementation of the Programme. My delegation hopes that with its non-controversial nature, the UN General Assembly will be able to adopt the text by consensus. South Africa also looks forward to a successful outcome of the 2012 Conference to review the implementation of the UNPOA.

I thank you.