STATEMENT

BY

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CHARGE’ D’ AFFAIRES OF THE KINGDOM OF LESOTHO TO THE
UNITED NATIONS

IN THE
FIRST COMMITTEE

ON
THEMATIC DEBATE ON CONVENTIONAL WEAPONS

DURING THE
SIXTY-SIXTH SESSION OF THE
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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Mr. Chairman,

Thank you for giving me the floor. I congratulate you for the excellent manner in which you continue to guide our deliberations.

Mr. Chairman,

The subject of Conventional Weapons is one of the top agenda items for Lesotho. Conventional weapons are easily accessible. They are responsible for the daily loss of lives in many countries. They also contribute to political instability, and are used in the commission of many crimes, including, drug trafficking and terrorism.

The International Community has spared no effort in the search for a solution to the proliferation of conventional weapons. Progress has been made in addressing the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. Preparations for the negotiations on the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) have started to take shape. There are encouraging developments in the implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction, as well as on the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM). Nevertheless, much still remains to be done.

Mr. Chairman,

Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) continue to pose a major security threat to many developing countries, including Lesotho. Most of these weapons easily find their way into the illicit market. The UN Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and
Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (POA), is a critical frame-work for addressing the proliferation of these weapons, and their illicit trade. The 2012 Review Conference of the POA should give us an opportunity to explore all possible ways of strengthening the Programme. Lesotho stands ready to constructively participate in that Conference. And, we hope that the Conference will be a success.

Furthermore, cooperation and assistance is of vital importance in implementing the POA, and building capacity of States. Hence, we reiterate the request to States, in a position to do so, to render technical and financial assistance in building national capacity in record keeping, border control, marking and tracing.

We must add, Mr. Chairman, that it is in this context, that Lesotho continues to co-sponsor the resolution entitled: Assistance to States for Curbing the Illicit Traffic in Small Arms and Light Weapons and Collecting Them.

Mr. Chairman,

The UN Register on Conventional Weapons is another instrument that must be fully utilized. A vast majority of official transfers of conventional weapons are captured in this report. This register provides transparency. Reporting there-under must be seen as a confidence building measure, and not as a way of diminishing the security of States. We encourage more states to consider submitting their annual reports under this mechanism.

It is well known that the Register does not cover all categories of conventional weapons, such as SALW. However, we note with appreciation, that some States include SALW in their reports submitted under the
Register. This is a welcome move. We encourage others to follow suit, as this further enhances transparency.

Mr. Chairman,

The General Assembly (GA) Resolution 61/89 recognized that the absence of common international standards on the import, export and transfer of conventional arms is a contributory factor to conflict, the displacement of people, organized crime and terrorism. In order to address this concern, we engaged into substantive discussions on the elements and scope of a comprehensive, robust and legally binding Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), in the Preparatory Committee Meetings. Our efforts are nearing fruition, as the United Nations Conference on the ATT will be held in July 2012. Let us use the Conference as a platform where we will translate our words into action.

The Non-Paper produced by the Chair Designate of the Conference, provides a good basis for our negotiations in the ATT Conference. We must ensure that the Conference produces a legally binding instrument, based on the highest possible common international standards, for the international transfer of conventional weapons.

We realize that the ATT may not be a panacea for the illicit trade in conventional weapons. But, it is important to realize that we live in an increasingly interdependent and interconnected world, where the supply chains have become global. An instrument that regulates the global trade of conventional weapons is essential for collaboration in the arms industry. This will, obviously, lead to huge reductions in the diversion of conventional weapons to the illicit market.
Mr. Chairman

The Anti-Personnel Land Mines are among the most dangerous conventional weapons. Their use results in dire humanitarian consequences. The Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction (Mine Ban Treaty), has extensively addressed the impact of these weapons on civilians. We call on State Parties to the Convention to fully discharge their obligations under the Treaty. We recognise that the universalisation of the Mine Ban Treaty is of paramount importance, and we, therefore, appeal to States not Party to the Treaty, to consider ratifying it as soon as possible.

The Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) is also a significant instrument in the field of conventional weapons. Though the CCM entered into force in August 2010, less than 70 States have ratified the Convention so far. It would be recalled that this Convention was negotiated to, among others, address unexploded ordnance such as cluster bombs, which the Mine Ban Treaty does not cover. These types of weapons have indiscriminate effect. They remain a hazard for civilians long after the conflict has ended. As a result, States have both a moral and legal duty to clear all mined areas, destroy stockpiles and not to use these weapons. We urge States not party to the CCM to ratify it without further delay.

Mr. Chairman,

Our resolve as the International Community to address the proliferation of conventional weapons, and their misuse must not waver. We will be able to
effectively discharge our primary duty to provide security for humanity, if there is adequate regulation of conventional weapons, within the confines of the UN Charter.

I THANK YOU