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STATEMENT
ON BEHALF OF THE AFRICAN GROUP
BY
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MINISTER, PERMANENT MISSION OF NIGERIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS, NEW YORK

AT THE
68TH SESSION OF THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY
FIRST COMMITTEE DEBATE ON CONVENTIONAL WEAPONS CLUSTER

NEW YORK, MONDAY 28TH OCTOBER, 2013
Mr. Chairman,

It is my honour to speak on behalf of the African Group. The Group aligns itself with the Statement delivered on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement by the distinguished delegate of Indonesia. The African Group assures you of continued cooperation and support in the course of the remaining debates and deliberations.

The African Group remains deeply concerned with the illicit manufacture, transfer, and circulation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW), including their excessive accumulation and uncontrolled spread in many regions of the world, particularly in Africa.

We view the full implementation of the UN Program of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (PoA) and the International Tracing Instrument (ITI) as key element to promoting long-term security and for creating conditions for security and sustainable development in Africa. African States have indeed been guided by the efforts to address the menace of the illicit trade in SALWs on the continent, within the framework of the Program of Action.

In this regard, we welcome the successful conclusion of the 2nd UN Conference to review progress made in the implementation of the POA in 2012. Having successfully concluded the Second Review Conference therefore, we continue to emphasize the importance of a balanced, full and effective implementation of the consensus outcome of the Conference. The Group also stresses that international cooperation and assistance is essential to the full implementation of the Programme of Action. We indeed look forward to 5th Biennial Meeting of States on UN PoA on SALWs in 2014 and promise full support for the Chair-designate, towards ensuring a successful outcome.

The African Group stresses the urgency of international efforts and cooperation aimed at combating this illicit trade and in this context, reaffirms the total validity and vital importance and the need for full and effective implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (PoA), as the main international framework to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in SALW.
The Group remains seized with the adverse humanitarian impact caused by the use of land mines and cluster munitions, and expresses sympathy with the affected countries. We take note of the convening 5th Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions and the 3rd Review Conference on the Mine Ban Treaty in 2014 respectively. The Group supports the humanitarian objectives of these two instruments.

We seize this opportunity to call upon States, in a position to do so, to provide the necessary financial, technical and humanitarian assistance to landmine clearance operations, the social and economic rehabilitation of victims as well as to ensure full access of affected countries to material, equipment, technology and financial resources for mine clearance.

Mr. Chairman,

The African Group welcomes the adoption of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) resolution on 2 April 2013 "to elaborate a legally binding instrument on the highest possible common international standards for the international transfer of conventional arms", which should be implemented in a balanced and objective manner that protects the interests of all States and not just the major international producing and exporting States. We take note of its signature and ratification by some States and look forward to its future contribution to international and regional peace, security, stability and cooperation.

The full and balanced implementation of the treaty is practically achievable with the cooperation of all. The Group recognizes and reaffirms the sovereign right of States to acquire, manufacture, export, import and retain conventional arms and their parts and components for their self defence and security needs in accordance with the UN Charter.

The Group acknowledges that an unregulated conventional arms transfer system fuels the illicit trade and, in some cases, leads to unfettered access and unauthorized use by non-State actors, where no one may be immune to their indiscriminate use by unauthorized individuals and/or groups. The Group urges major arms suppliers to ratify the treaty and upholds such ratification upon its entry into force. The Group wishes to encourage Member States to address the gaps created by the unregulated transfer of conventional and calls for no undue
restriction to be placed in the way of the sovereign right of States to acquire conventional arms for self-defence.

A veritable confidence-building measure is an actual reduction of military expenditures by major arms producing countries, in accordance with the principle of undiminished security at the lowest level of armaments. In this regard, we urge those countries to devote the resources to global economic and social development, in particular in the fight against poverty and disease.

The Group notes the impact of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa in its assistance to numerous African States on the elaboration of the various Conventions for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and All Parts and Components. Such efforts should correspond to those rendered to its counterparts across other regions.

Mr. Chairman,

On behalf of the African Group, the Nigeria delegation would like to introduce the draft resolution A/C.1/68/L.47 entitled: "United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa". This draft resolution has already been circulated to delegations. We note with satisfaction, the overwhelming support for this resolution in the past sessions of the General Assembly and call on all delegations to continue to support it. The presentation of the resolution is to ensure, among others, the re-doubling of efforts on disarmament education and support for African States to address the challenges of arms proliferation.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.