STATEMENT

BY

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IN THE

FIRST COMMITTEE

THEMATIC DISCUSSIONS
CLUSTER 4: CONVENTIONAL WEAPONS

DURING

THE SIXTY-EIGHTH SESSION OF THE
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

29 OCTOBER 2013
NEW YORK

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Mr. Chairman,

I thank you for giving me the floor. I align myself with the statements delivered by the distinguished Representatives of Nigeria and Indonesia on behalf of the African Group and the Non-Aligned Movement, respectively.

Mr. Chairman,

The subject of Conventional Weapons is a priority for Lesotho as it is for many developing Countries. These weapons are easily accessible and account for loss of lives of many people on a daily basis. Women and children are often the primary victims, while peace, security and development are always negatively affected by the use of illicit small arms and light weapons.

Yet, the path towards regulating these weapons has always been fraught with difficulties. It is in this context that we welcome the adoption of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), by the General Assembly in April this year. The long negotiations that led to the adoption of the ATT were by far not easy. However, a strong desire by all of us to put humanity first ultimately prevailed. This was a clear manifestation of what the international community could achieve through effective and people centered multilateralism.

It is important to note, Mr. Chairman, that the adoption of the ATT was not an end in itself. We are yet to pass the real test of our resolve to save humanity from suffering as a result of irresponsible international trade in conventional weapons. Thus, ratification, entry into force and implementation of the ATT are the next critical steps that must be undertaken.

We call on all member states to consider signing and ratifying the Treaty at the earliest opportunity. Our efforts to fully implement the Treaty in a balanced and effective manner should be propelled by a strong vision to enhance international, regional and national security. For our part, we have
singed the Treaty as testimony of our resolve to contribute to a safer world. National efforts towards ratification of the ATT will be undertaken in the fullness of time.

Mr. Chairman,

The ATT may not be a panacea for all the problems associated with illicit trade in conventional weapons. However, it is the conviction of my delegation that a global instrument, such as the ATT, that regulates the international trade of conventional weapons, is essential for collaboration in the arms industry. This Treaty will undoubtedly lead to huge reductions of diversion of conventional weapons to the illicit market.

Mr. Chairman,

Despite the fact that the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (PoA), remains the only universally agreed instrument to combat illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, its implementation continues to be a challenge. The urgent need for the implementation of the PoA at the international, regional and national levels cannot be overemphasized. We call for renewed political will in the implementation of this Programme. In the same token, we view increased regional and international cooperation as vital for successful implementation of the PoA. Equally important is the need to come up with new ways for strengthening the PoA.

Allow me to assure you at this juncture, Mr. Chairman, that my Country is committed to fully implementing the PoA. Within our means, and in cooperation with relevant sub-regional organizations, we are endeavouring to improve our capacity on small arms and light weapons control. Illegal arms are routinely confiscated and their destruction takes place on a yearly basis. Nevertheless, challenges still remain. Proliferation of small arms and light weapons persists. Border control, marking and tracing as well as stockpile management, are some of the chronic constraints that Lesotho
faces. As such, we call on member states in a position to do so, to consider partnering with us towards the aforementioned goal.

Mr. Chairman,

Sustainability of funding for the implementation of the PoA has always been a concern to my delegation. It is in this context that we welcome various mechanisms launched by the UN, including the United Nations Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation (UNSCAR), that promote and coordinate funding for the implementation of the PoA. In the same token, we commend the development partners for their generosity towards ensuring that the PoA becomes a success. We can only hope that those countries in a position to provide funding for the said implementation would consider doing so.

Mr. Chairman,

Cluster munitions as well as anti-personnel land mines have been banned. But, these weapons continue to indiscriminately kill innocent people. The devastating humanitarian impact of the use of these weapons is known to all. We condemn the use of these weapons. Allegations of their use must be fully investigated. States Parties to these must fulfill their obligations and those that remain outside the instruments must do the right thing and join the treaties without further delay.

Mr. Chairman,

Let me conclude by pointing out that our desire to increase security and reduce impact of weapons on people is not difficult to achieve. If we remain focused on our goal and act in one accord, victory will be on our side.

I THANK YOU