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STATEMENT
BY

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MINISTER, PERMANENT MISSION OF NIGERIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS AT THE HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT OF THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON THE ARMS TRADE TREATY (ATT)

NEW YORK, MONDAY 9TH JULY 2012.
Mr. President,

On behalf of the delegation of Nigeria, I congratulate you on your election as well as members of the Bureau. Nigeria commends your efforts and methods with which you have objectively managed the process so far. Allow me, Mr. President, to also commend the Secretariat for their efforts.

My delegation aligns itself with the Statement read by Nigeria on behalf of the African Group and strongly identifies with the Statement delivered on behalf of Economic Community of West African States. We wish to, in addition, highlight the following in our national capacity.

The primary objective of the General Assembly Resolutions 61/89, 63/240 and 64/48 was the need to establish common international standards for the import, export and transfer of conventional arms. This objective would appear plausible for the purposes of promoting international peace and security by regulating such trade with a view to preventing, combating and eradicating the diversion of conventional arms into the illicit market.

Mr. President,

As a co-sponsor of Resolution 61/89, Nigeria promises to effectively participate in negotiating a Treaty which greatly contributes to preventing the diversion of conventional weapons to the illicit market. In this respect, Nigeria considers a legally-binding Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) the only option to transparently promote accountability in the global transfer of conventional weapons.
Our sub-region (ECOWAS), the African continent, the CARICOM, and indeed the entire world could relate to the devastating effect of uncontrolled access to and indiscriminate use of conventional weapons. We listened intently at the beginning of the Conference, to the remarks by the Secretary-General, on how uncontrolled conventional weapons that otherwise fuelled conflicts, insurgencies and utter mayhem, have devastated the West African sub-region and most of the continent of Africa socially, politically and economically. This much was reinforced in the message conveyed in the Statement read yesterday by the President of the ECOWAS Commission.

Small Arms and light Weapons have shattered the dream of nations and led to unnecessary displacement of persons across the continent and in particular, our region. My delegation would support sub-regional and regional aspirations in line with Nigeria's national interests, including working closely with the CARICOM to achieve the goals of eradicating the illicit transfers of conventional weapons and in particular, Small Arms and Light Weapons.

It is in view of this that my delegation considers the inclusion of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs), their ammunitions and component parts in the Chair's paper of July 2011, as well as the discussion paper you distributed on 3rd July 2012, the right step in the right direction. My delegation wishes to state, unequivocally that, SALWs is an integral and inalienable part of the scope of an ATT.

Mr. President,

The issue of trafficking in SALWs must be frontally tackled, if our idea of resolving conflicts through mediation and the realization of the goal of living in peace and harmony, including the objectives of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are
to be achieved. We are concerned with the onerous challenges of SALWs, in view of their easy accessibility and availability to unauthorized persons and groups. These weapons readily constitute, for us in Nigeria, as well as in the ECOWAS sub-region, the perfect instruments of mass destruction, mayhem and destabilization. In the circumstance, women, children and the aged are not spared the brunt occasioned by the misuse of these weapons. We are hopeful that the ATT would address some of these challenges.

The implication of this fact must not be lost on us. The world needs to act to arrest the obvious threat of these weapons. Nigeria hereby calls for a direct, unambiguous and precise inclusion of SALWs in the scope of an ATT. In short, we do not see an ATT without the inclusion of the most basic of all arms (small arms and light weapons).

Mr. President,

My delegation supports your efforts and leadership for a comprehensive and robust ATT - one that addresses the perils of illicit trade in conventional weapons. No useful purposes would have been served for member-States to commit more than three years to a wasted project, in the name of consensus.

Nigeria believes in your experience, expertise and goodwill to steer the course of our negotiations. We say this with all diligence and sense of purpose. We are also hopeful that with a robust and comprehensive ATT, our children, your grandson, including other children the world over would, one day, point to this collective efforts and commend such worthy achievement.

I thank you, Mr. President.