PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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STATEMENT

BY

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DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
(LEGAL AFFAIRS)

AT THE

UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE

ON

ARMS TRADE TREATY (ATT)

NEW YORK, 10TH JULY 2012

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY
Mr. President,

At the outset, my delegation would like to congratulate you for the excellent manner in which you have led and continue to lead this important Conference. We have no doubt in your ability to stir this Conference to a successful adoption of a robust Arms Trade Treaty that would undoubtedly contribute immensely to the maintenance of global peace and security.

If there was an ATT in existence before the outbreak of our civil war in Sierra Leone, an obligation would have compelled some countries to look at the consequences of allowing arms to cross their country borders.

Mr. President,

There is an intrinsic relationship between misguided arms trade and internal political crisis in Member States. Political crises in most countries in the sub-region are fuelled by easy access to arms entering the sub-region. Armed conflicts in the sub-region are largely linked to uncontrolled access to arms by rebel groups which invariably lead to internal displacement of persons where most vulnerable are women and children.

In this respect Sierra Leone believes in the provision of a legal framework that will respond to the challenges of an Arms Trade. It is our belief that Arms Trade Treaty, if properly crafted, will provide relief not only to the sub-region but to the world at large. A global ATT has the potential to reduce human right abuses and conflict thus making the world a safer place.

Mr. President,

It is also viewed that in Africa, small arms and light weapons are the real weapons of mass destruction as these arms have had the most devastating effects on Africa, fueling all types of conflicts and insecurity. As such Sierra Leone is in support of its inclusion in the scope of conventional weapons. Our eleven years war was fought with these small weapons and not guided missiles or nuclear neither heads nor war tanks. Sierra Leone believes that the object of the treaty is to regulate arms transfer and to prevent diversion of weapons to the illicit market.

We believe in the development of a comprehensive, legally binding instrument establishing common international common standards for the import, export, and transfer of conventional arms.

.../...
Mr. President,

Sierra Leone believes that the Arms Trade treaty must legally bind states to deny arms transfer where there is a substantial risk that the Arms: will be used to facilitate serious violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law; will impair activities related to substantial development or will perpetuate a pattern of gender-based armed violence; will risk diversion of the arms, including diversion to illicit markets, unintended uses or unauthorized end-user or non-state actors.

In order for the treaty to be effective, it must be based on existing obligations of States under international law and should reflect the inherent right of all states to acquire legitimate arms for self-defense and security needs under the UN Charter. An ATT will aim at creating a level playing field by requiring all States to abide by a set of standards for transfer controls, which will ultimately benefit the safety and security of people everywhere in the world.

The consequence of inadequate controls on arms transfer and the widespread availability and misuse of weapons is the frequent obstruction of life-saving humanitarian operations. Threats and actual attacks on staff of United Nations staff and from other humanitarian organizations have multiplied. Between the year 2000 and 2010 around 800 humanitarian workers were killed in armed attacks and close to 7000 were injured.

Repairing the damage caused by crime, gang violence or piracy often fueled by reckless arms and ammunition transfer-vastly exceeds the initial financial profit of selling weapons. UN Peacekeeping alone costs the world $7 billion per year and the global annual burden of armed violence stands at $400 billion. Without adequate regulation of international arms transfer and high common standards to guide national export decisions, the human tolls and financial cost will remain colossal.

Sierra Leone therefore strongly supports the adoption of a comprehensive and effective ATT.

I thank you Mr. President.