STATEMENT

BY

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MINISTER, PERMANENT MISSION OF NIGERIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS
ON BEHALF OF THE AFRICAN GROUP
AT THE
SECOND REVIEW CONFERENCE OF THE UNITED NATIONS PROGRAMME OF ACTION TO PREVENT, COMBAT AND ERADICATE THE ILLICIT TRADE IN SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS IN ALL ITS ASPECTS

NEW YORK, MONDAY 27 AUGUST 2012
Madam President,

On behalf of the African Group, I join previous speakers to congratulate you, a daughter of Africa, on your election as President of the Second Review Conference of the Programme of Action on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons.

We also congratulate other distinguished members of the Bureau. We assure you and the Bureau of our support throughout the period allocated to this Conference. We consider the success of the Conference an important task for all member States of the UN. The African Group aligns itself with the Statement earlier made by the distinguished Representative of Indonesia, on behalf of the Member States of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). The Group also wishes to seize this opportunity to extend condolences to the Government and People of Ethiopia on the recent death of Prime Minister Menes Zenawi.

The Group reiterates its readiness and full commitment to support the PoA process and assures you that we will work with you, to effectively realize the objectives of the 2001 Programme of Action. We recognize the significance of the Biennial Meeting of States as well as the Meeting of Governmental Experts, including the omnibus UNGA Resolution 66/47 on small arms, which outlines the mandate of this Review Conference. In spite of their perceived imperfections, there is a challenge for us to build on the modest gains of BMS3 and BMS4, including the conclusions of the 2011 MGE and lay a solid foundation for the future through this Review Conference.

We note the draft outcome document, borne out of numerous consultations and submitted by the President as the basis for our negotiations at this Review Conference and hope for a positive outcome as we commence deliberations in the coming days. Member States of the African Group have been supportive of the Programme of Action since its adoption in 2001 and, as stakeholders, look forward to its full implementation as well as that of the International Instrument to Enable
Madam President,

The African Group remains deeply concerned over the illicit manufacture, transfer and circulation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW), including their excessive accumulation and uncontrolled spread across the world and our region in particular. However, we reaffirm the right of each State to manufacture, import and retain small arms and light weapons for its self-defense and security needs, in exercising its inherent right to individual or collective self-defense in accordance with Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations.

We view the full implementation of the 2001 UN PoA as a significant element to promoting enduring security, stability and for creating conditions for sustainable development in Africa. In this regard, African States have remained guided by efforts to address the menace of the illicit trade in SALWs on the continent, within the framework of the PoA. The further development of the region is therefore tied to the effective prevention of the diversion of such weapons into illicit networks.

We re-affirm the need for proper coordination at the national level to ensure that the transfers of Small Arms and Light Weapons is limited to Governments, constituted authorities or entities duly authorized by Governments. It is through our adherence to this undertaking that we can truly rid our world of the illicit trade in these arms and can justifiably claim ownership of the PoA and ITI.

In the light of the above and based on national, regional and continental experiences, member-States of the African Group have established a number of measures and mechanisms to coordinate the prevention of illicit firearms, including a constant review of national legislation on firearms control and effective stockpile management for the safe storage of State-owned firearms.
Madam President,


We also wish to highlight the significance of the Nairobi Protocol; the ECOWAS Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and Other Related Materials in 2006; the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Protocol on the Control of Firearms, Ammunition and Other Related Materials which entered into force in July 2004. All these noble steps variously taken on the continent of Africa did reinforce the need to develop and promote peace, security and stability as a prerequisite for the implementation of Africa’s development and integration. In addition, there was also the Regional Consultative Workshop of Government Experts of Southern African Region on the Implementation of UN PoA in Windhoek, Namibia in 2005.

African Heads of State and Government have, on numerous occasions, expressed concern about the impact of the illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons in threatening peace and security in Africa and undermining efforts to improve the standards of the African people. It was in response to this that the aforementioned instruments and initiatives have sought and continue to seek to control the illicit accumulation, trade and circulation of firearms and to further broaden the objectives of UN PoA.

Madam President,

Despite these efforts on the continent of Africa, there is an inescapable fact that international assistance and cooperation, on a
broader scale, remains an essential ingredient to the full implementation of the Programme of Action. In view of this, the African Group wishes to call on developed Member States of the UN to render cooperation and more technical and financial assistance to developing countries in the realization of the overall objectives of the UN PoA with a view to eradicating, the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. We believe such efforts will complimentarily promote national and regional initiatives and assist our efforts at the global level.

Madam President,

The African Group is of the view that much has been achieved in the implementation of the UN PoA, but it remains concerned that there are still numerous challenges and obstacles that remain. Many of these implementation challenges are at the respective national levels, which in many cases are too complex for developing, in particular, for African States to overcome on their own.

The African Group, therefore, continues to emphasize that International cooperation and assistance remains a key parameter to the full implementation of the Programme of Action. The Group wishes to highlight the past efforts of our partners and notes the remaining challenges faced by Africa with regards to the impact of illicit SALW. We note the wide range of commitments to assist member-States to implement the PoA and stresses that the availability of international assistance to support the implementation of the Programme of Action in Africa, as one of the most affected regions in the world, remains inadequate. We therefore wish to also stress the need for a concrete and comprehensive response to the challenges across the continent, with a view to effectively manage the structure of international assistance.

We stress that, aside from the efforts being made at both national and regional levels in Africa; this Review Conference should consider strengthening the substantive issue of implementation, international
cooperation and assistance, as significant requirements to strengthening the on-going efforts at national, regional and continental levels.

We believe cooperation and assistance, particularly technical and financial assistance as well as capacity-building, training and equipment should be rendered without conditionalities. We wish to suggest that, if need be, there should be reports by major arms exporters on their PoA-implementation; specific financial and technical assistance, including the provision of relevant equipment, provided to developing countries.

The Group also calls for the full implementation of the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons. We believe that this could further assist the promotion of international cooperation and assistance in marking and tracing and thereby enhance the effectiveness of existing bilateral, regional and international agreements to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects.

*Madam President,*

The African Group believes that more successes in combating illicit small arms trade could be achieved through our combined efforts at this Conference and assures you of our support throughout the process.

I thank you for your attention.