STATEMENT

BY THE

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OF BOTSWANA POLICE SERVICE

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DURING THE GENERAL DEBATE

OF THE

UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE TO REVIEW PROGRESS MADE

IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME OF ACTION

TO PREVENT, COMBAT AND ERADICATE

ILLICIT TRADE IN SMALL ARMS

AND LIGHT WEAPONS IN ALL ITS ASPECTS

27TH AUGUST -7TH SEPTEMBER 2012, NEW YORK
1. Your Excellency Ambassador U. Joy Ogwu of Nigeria, President of the Second Review Conference on the UNPoA,

2. Allow me to congratulate you on your assumption of the Presidency of this Conference. I assure you of my delegation’s full support and cooperation in the discharge of your mandate. Let me also express Botswana’s appreciation of the effective and able manner in which you led the preparatory process for the Review Conference.

3. My delegation associates itself with the statement delivered by the Federal Republic of Nigeria on behalf of the African Group and by Indonesia on behalf of the Non Aligned Movement.

4. Allow me, at this juncture, to share my delegations views on some of the issues on the agenda of this Conference.

5. Since the adoption of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (UNPoA) in 2001, Botswana has demonstrated tremendous commitment in the implementation of the various provisions thereof, including it’s by product, the International Tracing Instrument (ITI).

6. Addressing the problem of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons is a matter of utmost priority for Botswana, as it is for the African continent as a whole.

7. The use of illicit small arms and light weapons in violent crimes, including robbery, transnational organized crime and piracy, is among the major threats to peace and security in our region.

8. In other words, this class of weapons is a major cause of insecurity in the region and further undermines efforts aimed at achieving sustainable economic and social development, including regional integration.

9. There is therefore need for a stronger and more robust cooperation programme to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons.

10. Therefore, in order to effectively coordinate implementation of the UNPoA, Botswana has established an interagency body responsible for policy guidance and monitoring, with the Botswana Police Service as the lead agency and point of contact on SALW. The interagency body is also responsible for the coordinated implementation of the ITI and other SALW agreements that Botswana is a party to.

11. Botswana has also actively participated at Regional and International levels in efforts to curb the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. Botswana has found value in the outcomes of successive follow-up mechanisms of the UNPoA including the Biennial Meetings of States and the 2011 Meeting of Governmental Experts.
Madam President,

12. In line with provisions of the ITI, Botswana strongly believes that proper marking and record keeping are indispensable in the fight against the illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

13. Through active participation in regional and international initiatives, Botswana acquired two firearms marking machines with the generous support of the Government of the United States, for which we are deeply grateful.

14. As indicated in previous National reports, Botswana does not manufacture arms, nor is she a major importer of weapons. Small arms and light weapons imported into Botswana are pin stamped with two types of markings each, namely, man readable and the machine or scan readable markings. The man readable markings indicate the country code, year of marking, serial number and institution code.

15. To date, seventeen officers have been trained on the operationalization of the machines. Work towards marking of all firearms under the country’s jurisdiction commenced in 2012, and so far 100 % of Botswana Police Service firearms have been marked.

16. The marking machines have proven to be sensitive when transported to different parts of the country during the marking exercise, particularly over rough terrain, hence, requiring resetting prior to use at each location.

17. Our experience has shown the need to have custom built vehicles which would serve as mobile offices during marking campaigns in order to eliminate the need for reinstallation at the various points of use as well as to physically protect the marking machines.

Madam President,

18. Botswana is in the process reviewing the current arms legislation, regulations and administrative procedures to align them with provisions of regional and international agreements on SALW to which Botswana is a signatory, particularly the UNPoA and the ITI.

19. In addition, a National Policy on Firearms, which is a precursor to the intended amendment of the Arms and Ammunition Act, has been drafted.

20. The marking of firearms in civilian possession will only commence after the review of the national legislation.

Madam President,

21. Botswana’s supports and promotes the destruction of surplus, seized, collected, confiscated and forfeited weapons and ammunition in order to reduce stocks of weapons available for illicit circulation, thereby reducing the burden of
managing large stocks and security systems. Since the last Review Conference Botswana destroyed a total of one thousand six hundred and forty six (1646) obsolete and illicit firearms.

22. As indicated in our previous National Reports, Botswana continues to destroy all firearms found within its boundaries that are not marked or not registered with the relevant authority.
24. The Central Arms Registry keeps manual records of firearms held legally by various government Departments and civilians.

25. In order to move away from manual record keeping, Botswana made a request for assistance through the PoA-ISS for the computerisation of the Central Arms Registry. The proposal has since been reviewed in collaboration with UNODA and Botswana has reiterated her commitment to contribute towards the project once partner countries or institutions agree to collaborate with her on the project.

Madam President,

26. Due to the transnational nature of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, Botswana believes that action and cooperation at regional level are critical to combating the illicit trade, in particular, joint cross border operations.

27. To this end, I am pleased to report that the bilateral joint cross border operations that Botswana conducted with neighbouring countries have yielded positive results. It is through such arrangements that a good number of firearms and associated contraband such as illicit drugs, stolen livestock and motor vehicles continue to be confiscated and the peddlers apprehended. The biggest challenge we face however is the cost of undertaking such operations.

28. As a member of Interpol, Botswana benefits from the use of mechanisms for exchanging information such as the Global Police Communication System (I24/7), which is useful for sharing information globally on lost and stolen weapons.

Madam President,

29. With regard to the future of the implementation process, Botswana believes that the mechanisms of Review Conferences, BMS meetings and expert group meetings should be maintained and strengthened. Botswana particularly found the Meeting of Governmental Experts of 2011 to be a useful approach which allows Member States to focus on practical issues of relevance to the implementation of the UNPoA. Botswana therefore supports the convening of that forum on a regular basis.

30. In conclusion, Madam President, I wish to reaffirm Botswana’s commitment to the implementation of the UNPoA and the ITI.

31. However, there are major challenges facing Botswana in our effort to effectively and efficiently implement the National Strategy on Small Arms. These include the need for provision of:
- Technical and financial assistance to implement effective arms control.
- Computerization of recordkeeping to improve the country's stockpile management.
- Capacity building for border operatives to enhance surveillance and detection of SALW trafficking at border posts.
- Harmonization of legislation and regulations at the regional level.

32. These are some of the issues which we hope will be adequately addressed during this Review Conference in order to facilitate effective and successful implementation of the UNPoA by all Member States.

I thank you for your attention.