STATEMENT BY

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AT THE SECOND REVIEW CONFERENCE TO THE UN PROGRAMME OF ACTION TO PREVENT, COMBAT AND ERADICATE THE ILLICIT TRADE IN SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS IN ALL ITS ASPECTS

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Madam President,

I wish to congratulate you and the Members of the Bureau on your well-deserved election. My delegation assures you of our unqualified support and confidence in your ability to steer this meeting to its desirable and successful conclusion. Your submission to us of the draft outcome document, and the efforts you judiciously undertook to spearhead dialogue through the successive "zero drafts" of this document in the past months, need to be dully hailed for their essence of providing basis for the negotiations to follow.

My delegation aligns itself with the statements made earlier in this meeting, on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and the African Group of States, by the Distinguished Representatives of Indonesia and Nigeria, respectively. I will however add a few remarks in my national capacity.

Madam President,

A decade ago, in 2001, when we adopted the UN Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Weapons and Light Weapons, we dully and prominently expressed our "grave concern" regarding "...the illicit manufacture, transfer and circulation of small arms and light weapons and their excessive accumulation and uncontrolled spread in many regions of the world, which [had] a wide range of humanitarian and socio-economic consequences [...even as they] continued to pose a serious threat to peace, reconciliation, safety, security, stability and sustainable development at the individual, local, national, regional and international levels..."

To-date, those facts remain as stark as they were a decade ago, if anything, much worse. For us in the United Republic of Tanzania, the specter emanating from this sad and totally unacceptable phenomenon of impunity in the illicit manufacture, transfer and distribution of small arms and light weapons within our region, is not a matter of abstract debate. It is as concrete as when looked at in terms of the hundreds of thousands of the innocent civilians, most of them women, children and the elderly, who only too often are confronted with situations of no choice of options - but face deaths and wholesome uprooting of populations into refugee status, that is, if they are that "lucky" enough to not have been mowed down by the time they are able to cross the border into another state. Even when they may have escaped from the mayhem which usually would have befallen many more of their loved ones, those fellow beings usually still face many years of poverty, malnutrition, and social depravity.
Madam President,

It is no light matter therefore that Tanzania has had to provide support to hundreds of thousands of refugees from neighboring countries. While we have always been willing to help to save lives by not turning away peoples seeking safety from the armed violence in some of our neighboring countries, the socio-economic and security impact caused by such influx have in many ways victimized both the population seeking refugee and those hosting them.

For the refugees, it is usually the hardships of beginning totally new lives from scratch, whose implication for poverty, malnutrition, disease and general depravity need not be overstated here, while for the host population, it is usually cause for concern in terms of the increased scarcity of meager resources to service a sudden population influx, overwhelming the local socio-economic infrastructures, and the proliferation of illicit arms in host areas which were formerly only peaceful neighborhoods, to mention but only a few. Indeed, since most of the small arms and light weaponry which continues to be in rampant use in many conflicts especially in Africa have their origins elsewhere, other than the localities of their illicit operations, ensuring and enhancing sustainable capacities to identify and trace those harbingers of death to their very sources can only be successful through concerted international action.

It is on that basis that my delegation reaffirms the full validity and importance of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace in a Timely and Reliable Manner, the Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons. We strongly believe that, their full and effective implementation, by both the developed and developing states, would immeasurably contribute to regional and international peace and security, while sparing innocent civilians from the scourge and menace of armed violence and conflicts, which these weapons exacerbate.

Towards that end, international cooperation and assistance is essential for the full implementation of the Programme of Action. For us in Tanzania, we acknowledge the support extended thus far by, including in regard to the recent regional meeting held in Nairobi in preparation of this Review Conference. We encourage further cooperation and assistance in areas identified by the recipient countries themselves. We especially encourage the major arms exporting countries and states in a position to do so to continue enabling capacity-building and in acquisition of technologies and equipment for marking, tracing, record-keeping and destruction of small arms and light weapons, which in Tanzania we are already widely employing.
Madam President,

My delegation emphasizes the importance of addressing the close linkage between the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and armed violence, terrorism, piracy, transnational organized crime, trafficking in humans and drugs as well as the plundering and exploitation of natural resources- otherwise known as resource curse. We thus appreciate that there is a need to strengthen national, regional and international efforts with a view to combat this trade, focusing on both the supply and demand sides.

Madam President,

We are concerned with the widening asymmetry in conventional arms, especially small arms and light weapons between the developed and developing countries. The excessive accumulation and uncontrolled spread of these weapons is undoubtedly a major threat to peace, security and development around the world, especially in Africa. In that regard, we support the idea of establishing and maintaining controls over private ownership of small arms. We call on the major producers of small arms and light weapons to ensure that the transfer of these weapons is limited only to governments and entities duly authorized by them under their national laws. Also to unreservedly implement legal prohibitions preventing the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

Madam President,

I wish to reiterate that the United Republic of Tanzania remains fully committed to the realization of the objectives of the Programme of Action. Since the last Review Conference in 2006, we have undertaken several measures domestically, in translating the Programme of Action, in tandem with the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Protocol of 2001 and the Nairobi Protocol of 2004, whose origin is indeed the UNPoA. Those measures include, the establishment of national focal points and undertaking a review of current legislation on small arms and light weapons, thereby bringing it in line with the UNPoA and other regional instruments.

In 2009, the Government began a full-fledged marking of firearms exercise. To-date, we have thus far marked over 38,000 state and civilian-owned firearms in more than 12 regions of Mainland Tanzania. This on-going exercise will eventually involve all the 30 regions of the country. In addition, the Government, in partnership with the regional entities including RECSA and the GIZ, is continuing to build the capacity of its officials through regular tailor made training. We have resolved to stay the course of these efforts and know that regional and international cooperation should eventually make the lasting dividends we seek in preventing, combatting and eradicating the illicit arms trade truly achievable. The UNPoA is one among the most realistic vehicles towards that end.

I thank you.