STATEMENT BY

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On behalf of the Southern African Development Community (SADC)

Delivered Before the

Fourth Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects

New York, 14 - 18 June 2010
Mr. Chairman,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen

On behalf of the Southern African Development Community allow me to congratulate you, Ambassador Pablo Macedo on your election as chair of this forth biennial meeting of states to consider implementation of the UN Programme of Action. I am confident that under your leadership our deliberations will produce successful outcomes.

The Southern African Development Community wishes to align itself with the statements made by the African Group and the Non Aligned Movement.

Mr. Chairman,

The issue of small arms and light weapons in each states of the SADC region reflects our varied regional history namely arms remaining after conflicts, arms passing across borders and arms purchased and used illegally for the perpetration of violent crime.

Despite the various origins of small arms within the region, the negative impact of usage of these weapons represents a common threat and therefore requires joint efforts in addressing the problem.

In this regard the SADC Protocol on the Control of Firearms, Ammunition and Other Related Materials as a legally binding instrument is based on the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects, and in so doing obliges signatories to implement the UN Programme of Action.
SADC is pleased to report that since the Third Biennial Meeting of States, Member States have continued to implement highly successful joint arms collection and destruction operations. Since then, thousands of small arms, light weapons, as well as hundreds of thousands of rounds of ammunition have been collected and destroyed. Further joint operations are planned for the future.

In terms of the legislative basis, member states have passed new, more stringent Arms and Ammunition legislation. This revision of the normative framework of each country represents harmonization of existing national legislation while reflecting each government's obligations under major regional and international conventions. These initiatives have yielded remarkable progress in the entire region.

Mr. Chairman,

Building on the responsibilities outlined in both the Geneva Declaration of 2006 and the 2010 Oslo Commitments, states including The Republic of Malawi have set a new standard for integrating armed violence reduction and development programming, through the creation of Millennium Development Villages.

Recognizing that one of the main drivers for armed violence is underdevelopment and economic hardship, this programme promotes both conflict prevention through civic education and promotion of traditional methods of conflict resolution, while at the same time offering sustainable livelihoods thereby reducing the need to resort to armed violence for financial gain.

Civil Society across the SADC region continues to play a vital role in the fight to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons. In this regard, the Institute for Security Studies has been helpful with technical support. The depth of experience of nongovernmental organizations, for
example in the Republics of Mozambique and Angola, particularly in the areas of community mobilization through civic education to return weapons, are bringing encouraging results that can be shared with other regions.

From an Africa wide perspective, cooperation between SADC and the East African Community has also born fruit in 2010. As an example, a delegation from the Government of Kenya visited the Republic of South Africa during the first quarter of this year as part of a South-South cooperation initiative to share lessons learned and best practice in the areas of stockpile management and destruction. In terms of international cooperation, for example the Government of Mozambique continues its cooperation with the Civilian Police Force of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil and the NGO Viva Rio, to develop and roll out its online firearms register.

Mr. Chairman

Cooperation and collaboration between SADC member states are proving a stronger contribution to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in Africa. In order to promote continued progress, there is an ongoing requirement to develop and promote the technical capacity which already exists within states and regional bodies. For example, great progress has been made between SADC states regarding the harmonisation of national firearms licence databases. Such a regionally harmonised system will prove a cornerstone for successful implementation of the International Tracing Instrument, through tracing of weapons across the region, the continent and beyond. However, currently only one SADC state, namely the Republic of South Africa has an online database of the kind that will facilitate effective tracing and thus the successful implementation of the International Tracing Instrument. There are of course the financial restrictions to the development and roll out of online, regionally integrated databases across SADC. However, other challenges exist: firstly the quality of information which is entering the database and therefore the
quality of analysis which can be produced; secondly, specific technical training required for managers of such online resources and finally there is a need to change from systems which have been in place for a number of years.

There is also a pressing need for increased technical and operational capacity in the area of weapons marking. The SADC Protocol, Article 9 obliges signatories to undertake to establish agreed systems to ensure that all firearms are marked with a unique number, at the time of manufacture or import and to undertake to keep proper records of the markings. At present the lack of required equipment and training for staff is considered as the most pressing of issues for SADC states to successfully implement the International Tracing Instrument. Moreover, as highlighted by the delegate from Nigeria speaking on behalf of the African Group, there is a need for frankness and broadmindedness regarding the exchange of information and ideas at the most fundamental level.

In recognising that one of the main restrictions to progress in implementing the UN POA and the International Tracing Instrument by states of the SADC is financial, SADC calls on United Nations member states and international organisations in a position to do so, to provide further financial as well as technical assistance, where appropriate. Such financial and technical support is concomitant with "The way forward" section of the report adopted at the Third Biennial Meeting of States to consider the implementation of the Programme of Action regarding International cooperation, assistance and national capacity-building.

Mr Chairman,

In conclusion, the Southern African Development Community has, and continues to believe that cooperation, be it regional or global is a vital contribution to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons. We also acknowledge, however, that states themselves are the key
stakeholders in the fight against the proliferation of small arms. The issue of small arms and light weapons control in the SADC region requires a reinforcing of structures within states to manage legally held state and civilian held firearms and in so doing create greater control and reduce the likelihood of diversion to the illegal market. Therefore SADC encourages all member states to prepare and implement successfully their national action plans to address the challenges posed in their specific national contexts. Such national action plans will provide a source of information for prospective donors and partners. They also will provide a road map for fulfilling obligations under the SADC Firearms Protocol, UN Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument, and as such must contain indicators and realistic milestones for achievement. Such plans will also provide a mechanism through which not only national but also regional development initiatives can be taken into account, fostered and promoted.

Thank you