

# GHANA



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First Committee

STATEMENT BY

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PERMANENT MISSION OF GHANA TO THE UN

AT THE GENERAL DEBATE OF THE FIRST COMMITTEE  
OF THE 58<sup>TH</sup> UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY SESSION

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Mr. Chairman,

I am pleased to join previous speakers in congratulating you on your election to the chair of the First Committee of the 58<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations. My delegation is confident that under your able leadership and guidance this meeting will come to a successful conclusion. You can count on the fullest cooperation of my delegation in the task ahead.

Mr. Chairman,

The proliferation of light weapons and illicit arms trafficking in the world today constitutes a grave menace to the stability, peace, and sustainable development of Africa, particularly in the West African sub-region. Although they do not in themselves cause the conflicts and criminal activities in which they are used, their wide availability, accumulation and illicit flows, especially in conflict zones, tend to escalate conflicts, undermine peace agreements, intensify violence, impede economic and social development, and hinder the development of social stability.

According to available statistics, there are more than 500 million light weapons in circulation around the world (beyond the control of states), with 30 million of them in Africa and 8 million in West Africa alone. There are also an estimated 10,000 mercenaries on the African continent. The easy availability of small arms and mercenaries has helped generate and prolong conflict situations in West Africa.

My delegation believes that this problem should be addressed by tightening legal controls on the manufacture, transfer, dealing, brokering and possession of firearms and ammunitions including those in possession of states. We suggest that a useful approach would be to increase international transparency on the licit trade and to strengthen national legislations governing arms trade and possession of weapons.

Mr. Chairman,

Now that the conflict in Liberia is under control, we should pay attention to the urgent need to curb the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in West Africa. For nowhere have the damaging consequences of those types of weapons been felt more than in Liberia and the Mano River

Union countries where they have done so much harm to innocent people and property:

Ghana would like to cooperate with the international community in order to identify ways in which we can prevent, combat and eradicate illicit brokering in small arms and light weapons. Illicit arms brokering plays a key role in facilitating illegal transfers of arms to groups that are prevented from buying them legally – such as embargoed states and groups, insurgents, organized criminals and terrorists.

Arms producing states should establish a formal register of arms brokers. We see a register as a very useful way of keeping arms brokers informed of their responsibilities. Also, the ability to strike people or companies from the register would be a very strong signal to them that wherever they are operating, governments would be able to effectively monitor and control their activities to ensure that it is in the best interests of Africa's people.

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation actively participated in the 1<sup>st</sup> Biennial Meeting under the UN Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat, and Eliminate the illicit trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons held in July 2003 in New York. At this meeting, we reported on our national position and our efforts to curb this scourge to humanity. We agree with the Chairman's report that the problem of illicit trade in SALW is multidimensional which requires a comprehensive and all-inclusive approach to all its aspects, incorporating national, regional and global dimensions.

My delegation is also proud to have been associated with the work of the 2003 Group of Governmental Experts on the continuing operation and further development of the UN Register of Conventional Arms, which, for the first time since its establishment in 1992, reached agreement on significant technical adjustments to some categories of Conventional Arms.

However, in spite of all efforts by the Government of Ghana to implement the UN Programme of Action on SALW, much is yet to be achieved. We are, therefore, hopeful that the international donor community will provide the necessary financial and technical assistance required to

enable Ghana fulfil its security and developmental obligations in the ECOWAS sub-region.

Mr. Chairman,

On regional disarmament, it is my delegation's view that since the adoption of the United Nations Programme of Action in 2001, there has been a growing need for the development of a regional perspective to combat the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. Consequently, regional initiatives, especially in Africa, have begun to take shape, with regional organizations taking a comprehensive approach in dealing with issues of mutual concern, including ways and means to combat terrorism, transnational crimes and trafficking in drugs.

Mr. Chairman,

Non-Nuclear-Weapons States continue to make compromises and to take concrete steps aimed at achieving the universality of the NPT and at giving credence to its provisions. Since the NPT Review and Extension Conference of April 1995, the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone (Pelindaba) Treaty has become a reality, as has the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone (Bangkok) Treaty. These two treaties, together with the Treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga and the Antarctic Treaty, has prepared the grounds for a nuclear-weapon-free southern hemisphere, which we hope will be supported and respected by all, including the nuclear-weapon States, if the credibility and integrity of the NPT is to be safeguarded.

It is our hope that all other countries will, in the very near future, take practical steps to establish their own nuclear-weapon-free zones, in pursuit of the NPT objectives, which we share with almost all of the States of the region. This will make the world a safe and secure place for all of us to live in.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.