



Statement

by

Mr. Desalegn Alemu

**Representative of the Federal Democratic Republic of
Ethiopia**

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Check against Delivery

Mr. Chairman,

Allow me to join the previous speakers in congratulating you on your election as the Chair of this committee, and to confirm my delegation's confidence that your stewardship, with the efficient assistance and facilitation of the Bureau will lead the committee's work to a successful conclusion as well as to the fulfillment of its mandates and objectives.

My delegation associates its self with the statements made by the Representative of Nigeria on behalf of African Group, and the Representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-aligned Movement.

My delegation wishes also to express its satisfaction with the report of the Secretary-General regarding the various agenda items set before this Committee for detailed consideration. It is our firm belief that the Committee will exert sufficient time and endeavor to take an in-depth look into, and conduct a realistic appreciation of the many critical issues as well as the stakes involved for the good of our shared lofty aim: the maintenance of international peace and security.

Mr. Chairman,

Multilateralism remains to be the most reliable means to effectively deal with such important global issues as disarmament. Ethiopia firmly believes that multilateral engagements and negotiations are vital instruments to curb the multifarious intricate problems associated with arms proliferation which have increasingly become a real threat to international peace and security.

Although the all-too known danger engendered by the proliferation of weapons, conventional as well as non-conventional menaces peace and security in any part of the globe, its net adverse effects remain to be manifold for the developing world, particularly for least developed countries. Our continent, Africa, which consists of both, has many developmental challenges, which cannot afford to be thwarted by the wanton production, distribution, transfer, use and trafficking of destructive weapons of any sort. It is all the more so at this time when the Millennium Development Goals are ticking the clock fast towards the targeted year of their projected attainment, for which most of us are already behind schedule. The endeavor for real social and economic development, hence improvement in standard of living for the greater poor, cannot go hand in hand with amassing of armaments and sheer weaponization.

Our sub-region, the Horn of Africa, is known to be one of the most volatile and heavily affected regions of the world which continues to bear the multifarious negative effects brought about by the regime of illicit dealings with small arms and light weapons, as well as other conventional arms. Given the ambivalent political and security situation prevailing in many parts of the sub-region, various internal and external actors, including

non-state ones, are using every opportunity to use it as a dumping ground, a conducive trafficking route, or as a conduit for the illicit transfer and usage of various weapons to the further worsening and complication of some of the conflict situations that plague the region.

The assortment of weapons that continue to inundate the sub-region and beyond in such a way have deleterious harmful effects not only on the security of each state, in fueling up old and fresh conflicts, as well as in emboldening organized crimes, but more importantly on the progress of the meager social and economic development endeavors undertaken by each nation within the sub-region. This is the main reason why the Government of Ethiopia attaches great importance to the issue of conventional arms control at the global level in general, and at the regional level in particular.

Mr. Chairman,

In light of the above, my country continues to do its level best to live up to its international and regional commitments and treaty-based obligations particularly in respect of combating illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons. However, its concerns and efforts are not by any means exclusively limited to these types of weaponry per se. It remains equally concerned with the rest of the other types of weapons, both conventional and non-conventional, depending of the magnitude of their spread and effect within the sub-region as a whole, including itself. For the time being, the lion's share of the overall regional concern is, by and large, associated with small arms and light weapons, as well as mines and various types of explosive ordnances.

Accordingly, Ethiopia has persistently tried to play its deserved, and at times pivotal, role in this regard particularly at the sub-regional level, whereby states are coordinating their efforts to combat illicit and small arms within Sub -regional institutions established to implement the United Nations Program of action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects, the Bamako declaration on an African Common Position and at Sub -regional level, the Nairobi Declaration and its Protocol.

In this connection, it is important to underscore that the Regional Center on Small Arms and Light Weapons (RECSA) established under the Nairobi Protocol, of which Ethiopia is a member, has enabled its member states to take some appropriate practical actions aimed at preventing, combating and eradicating trafficking in and proliferation of Illicit small arms, light weapons, ammunitions and other related destructive materials within the confines of their jurisdictions, as well as to bolster the necessary regional collaboration in this regard.

Mr. Chairman.

Considering the situation at the national level, it is important to underline that in Ethiopia, the sole importer of firearms is the Government as provided by law, and the weaponry brought into the country as such is destined for use by law-enforcement agencies. Apart from this, the Government has all appropriate legal mechanisms to deter the possibility of illicit import or transfer of weapons by unauthorized entities to reach other illegal destinations. The Government has also conducted public awareness and confidence building programs so as to properly expose and combat the various problems and adverse effects of illicit trade and trafficking in small arms and light weapons. Furthermore, surplus weapons, confiscated from illegal holders, have been destroyed in public and voluntary surrender, equally encouraged by the Government, has also taken place in an encouraging manner.

In this regard, the Ethiopian Federal Police Commission, which has been designated as coordinating agency on small arms and light weapons by the Government, has carried out a number of activities in this area. Accordingly, from May 2006 up until February 2007 alone, more than 20,000 small arms and light weapons have been confiscated and destroyed. Accordingly, this national accomplishment, including the figure just mentioned, has been duly reported to RECSA.

On the other hand, however, landmines continue to be a cause of serious concern in our sub-region. Ethiopia is one of the most landmine affected countries. This was essentially the very reason why the country was one of the prime negotiators and forerunning parties to the Ottawa Convention on Landmines, which is indeed a matter of record. The Government of Ethiopia has done its utmost on its part to see to it that the commitments entered into under the said Convention would translate into deeds and practical actions. To this end, it has taken successive measures at the national level, including the establishment of a separate government agency by law to serve as a focal point for the implantation and follow up of the country's share of the obligations under the Convention.

In more recent years, as was case in the past, the Government's main focus has been to undertake extensive mine clearing activities. Accordingly, over 5,673,000 square meters of land has already been cleared from landmines and unexploded ordnance. Thanks to the success of this campaign, a number of local communities who had to face the perilous risk of living in those areas previously infested by landmines have now safe lands that can be used for any purpose of development. In terms of creating public awareness, Mine Risk Education has been given to selected landmine-prone local communities, since 2003, and this crucial task is being continued up to now in a sustainable manner.

In this regard, it is indeed gratifying for my delegation to bring to the attention of this august assembly that Ethiopia, in its commitment to the success of global and regional efforts to eradicate landmines, has duly submitted its initial, yet up-to-date, national report on the status of implementation of the Ottawa Convention to the relevant United

Nations agency entrusted with the mandate and responsibility of following up this particular matter.

Mr. Chairman.

Before winding up, my delegation wishes to seize this timely opportunity to state that Ethiopia once again solemnly reaffirms its unreserved commitment to discharge all its treaty obligations as well as to uphold the pertinent United Nations resolutions covering various issues in the realm of disarmament.

And, as I conclude, allow me to thank our partners for their generous assistance in our ongoing efforts to combat and prevent the proliferation arms, particularly the illicit trafficking and transfer of small arms and light weapons, and, at the same time, would also like to call upon the international community to continue assisting our resource-demanding lofty endeavors with more concrete supports, that can help change words and promises into practical deeds and real actions on the ground.

I thank you.