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**STATEMENT BY H.E. MR. ROBERT G. AISI
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA TO THE UNITED NATIONS
DURING THE GENERAL DEBATE
OF THE FIRST COMMITTEE OF THE 63RD SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
13 OCTOBER 2008, NEW YORK, USA**

Mr. Chairman,

My Delegation aligns itself with the Statement made by Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

As this is the first time that my Delegation is taking the floor, let me congratulate you on your assumption of the Chairmanship of our Committee and assure you and the Bureau of my Delegation's full support and cooperation under your able leadership throughout the course of this session of the First Committee.

Mr. Chairman,

Papua New Guinea remains concerned about the proliferation, among states, of nuclear, chemical, biological, and other weapons of mass destruction. We continue to maintain that there is no real justification for the retention and further development of these instruments of war.

Papua New Guinea therefore encourages open dialogue and supports multilateral negotiations within the framework of international law, relevant multilateral conventions and the UN Charter to address these and other issues of international peace and security.

Mr. Chairman,

Of more immediate concern to Papua New Guinea is the proliferation of illicit small arms and light weapons in our society. The illicit trade of small arms and light weapons has become a critical national security and development concern in Papua New Guinea.

The presence of illicit small arms and light weapons and their use by criminals and armed groups is of great concern to Papua New Guinea. These illicit weapons, to a larger extent, have been instruments of violence, death and destruction. Today, the use of illicit small arms and light weapons has spread across all sections of the country and has left thousands of traumatized victims.

Mr. Chairman,

It is generally acknowledged that illicit small arms and light weapons have the grave potential to bring the country to its knees. This has had a serious and significant impact in Papua New Guinea, with serious implications for the economic, social, and political sectors, and serious consequences for the overall security of Papua New Guinea. Criminal activities, tribal fights and other transnational crime including terrorism, money laundering, illicit drug trafficking, human smuggling and trafficking are also fueled by the use of illicit small arms and light weapons. It is also a major impediment to our national development.

Papua New Guinea therefore welcomes the adoption of the report of the 3rd Biennial Meeting of States (BMS 3) 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 in July this year in support of the global framework for addressing and curbing the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

In the follow-up to the 3rd Biennial Meeting of States, Papua New Guinea also participated at the recent Review Summit on the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development in Geneva on 12 September 2008 in support of global efforts to reduce armed violence and promote development.

Mr. Chairman,

Papua New Guinea also supports the establishment of a legally-binding Arms Trade Treaty to apply common international standards for the import, export and transfer of conventional arms and notes that the Group of Governmental Experts mandated to examine the "feasibility, scope and parameters" of an Arms Trade Treaty completed its work in August 2008 and conveyed its report to the Secretary General which will be introduced during this session of the First Committee.

We also note the recent launch of Oxfam International's report on 8 October entitled, "Shooting Down the MDGs" which illustrates how irresponsible arms transfers can negatively impact the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals.

The fight against illicit small arms and light weapons including irresponsible transfer of conventional weapons cannot be fought by government law enforcement agencies alone such as police or by individual countries, but by and through concerted efforts of all concerned citizens, institutions and nations working in partnership.

Mr. Chairman,

My Delegation therefore looks forward to a productive session of this Committee in promoting our common understandings and in agreeing to concrete and practical measures that will strengthen global standards on these and other important issues of international peace and security.

I thank you.