STATEMENT

BY

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AT

THE

GENERAL DEBATE

OF THE

FIRST COMMITTEE

OF THE

59TH SESSION OF THE
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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Mr. Chairman,

I wish to warmly congratulate you on your appointment as Chair of the First Committee for the 59th Session of the United Nations General Assembly. I am confident that under your able guidance, this Committee will be able to make tangible and substantive progress in addressing the issues before us. I wish to assure you and the Bureau, of my delegation's full support and cooperation.

Mr. Chairman,

The current world situation remains fluid and volatile. The threat of terrorism remains a real and present danger. Recent revelations of widespread, underground, possibly terrorist-linked arms operations, behoves us to take determined action to address this menace. The ever-present danger of the possibility of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs) falling into non-state or even unscrupulous state hands adds urgency to the international community's efforts to strengthen multilateral legally binding agreements, with the necessary verification provisions.

Mr. Chairman,

The Great Lakes and Horn of Africa Region is especially vulnerable to the threat posed by the easy availability of Small Arms and Light Weapons which have escalated the conflicts in the region. Ongoing inter and intra state conflicts have resulted in massive numbers of refugees and internally displaced persons. These in turn, have placed an unprecedented strain on the resources of the region, and indeed led to reversals in economic development.

It is against this background that Kenya welcomed the establishment of the Open-Ended Working Group to negotiate an international instrument on marking and tracing of these weapons. Kenya supports regional efforts to implement the Plan of Action adopted by the 2001 International Conference on Illicit Arms Trade and notes the critical role of international assistance for the implementation of the Programme.
Kenya is a key player in sub-regional efforts to combat trafficking in Small Arms and Light Weapons. In May 2000, Kenya hosted the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa Conference that culminated in the signing of the Nairobi Declaration on the Problem of Proliferation of Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons. Consequently, the Nairobi Protocol for the Prevention, Control, and Reduction of Small Arms and Light Weapons was signed on April 21, 2004. The Nairobi Protocol remains the only binding instrument on Small Arms in the region. States Parties signatories to the Nairobi Protocol are expected to ratify the Protocol not later than December 31, 2004. Kenya wishes to urge the international community to support the Nairobi Secretariat in the implementation of the Nairobi Protocol. The Conference adopted a Plan of Action and established the Nairobi Secretariat on Small Arms and Light Weapons to follow-up on the agreed Plan of Action. The Nairobi Secretariat is actively involved in spearheading the Anti-Personnel Arms and Light Weapons offensive as well as in preparations for the 2006 United Nations Review Conference.

Mr. Chairman,

Anti-Personnel landmines are amongst the most inhumane of all weapons devised by man. They not only maim and kill innocent civilians, but they also directly contribute to the perpetuation of poverty and under-development in the affected regions. It was therefore, with a sigh of relief that the States Parties negotiated the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction (Ottawa Convention), and ensured its entry into force on March 1, 1999. The Convention is the most successful Global Disarmament and Humanitarian Treaty and has been ratified by over 140 States.

The consequent successful conclusion of the Fifth Meeting of the States Parties to the Ottawa Convention in Bangkok from September 15-19, 2003, was testament to the importance attached by the world community to the issue of Anti-Personnel Mines.

As with other disarmament efforts, the fight against the scourge of landmines has been most successfully fought under regional and international umbrellas. Kenya therefore, welcomes the adoption of
the Common African Position on Anti-Personnel Landmines adopted last month in New York during the African Union Ministerial Meeting. The Common African Position identified priority action areas on which Africa should focus:- mobilization of resources to clear mined areas, and assistance to mine victims, amongst others.

The Common African Position emphasized the degree to which the Anti-Personnel Treaty has been uni-vers-alized in Africa and has become the benchmark for assessing success in the eradication of these atrocious mines. It places on African States, the obligation to meet stockpile destruction and mine clearance deadlines, to ensure assistance to mine victims and encourage their social-economic reintegration as well as the promotion of Inter-African Co-operation and the mobilization of the international community’s support.

The Ottawa Convention is approaching a watershed in its implementation. Kenya will be hosting the First Review Conference of States Parties to the Ottawa Convention, also known as the Nairobi Summit on a Mine-Free World, from November 29 to December 3, 2004. Kenya attaches great significance to this important gathering which will take stock of progress made since the entry into force of the Convention in 1999, and set the agenda for action over the next five years to ensure that the humanitarian objectives of the Convention are met. The Conference will thus be a crucial milestone in the operationalization of the Convention.

We wish to thank all those who have contributed to the hosting of the Nairobi Summit-2004 and invite all States and interested Organizations to participate at the highest level.

Mr. Chairman,

Nuclear weapons remain a global challenge. In this regard, Kenya believes that the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is the cornerstone on which nuclear disarmament should be founded. Kenya urges for the universal application of the IAEA’s strengthened safeguards system, i.e., the Additional Protocol.

The 2005 Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference should be an
occasion to re-assess the implementation of the NPT taking into consideration the security benefits that would accrue to all Member States upon its successful implementation.

Kenya remains concerned that the Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty is yet to be negotiated and that the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty has not yet come into force. Kenya also attaches great importance to the successful implementation of both the Chemical Weapons and the Biological and Toxic Weapons Conventions.

Mr. Chairman,

In a fluid and volatile world, the United Nations' role is coming under even closer scrutiny as are the roles of its Committees. Scrutiny of the United Nations and of the First Committee, will of necessity, take into consideration the extent to which the Committee is able to meet the aspirations of its Members towards the achievement of collective security. We look forward to working constructively with all delegations on practical ways to achieve our common goal.

I thank you.