CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

STATEMENT BY

MR. JUSTIN N. SERUHERE, CHARGE D'AFFAIRES A.I.,
OF THE PERMANENT MISSION OF THE UNITED REPUBLIC
OF TANZANIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS DURING THE FIRST
COMMITTEE DEBATE

ON

CONVENTIONAL WEAPONS

20 OCTOBER 2009
Mr. Chairman,

My delegation has the pleasure to share its perspective on this important topic of conventional weapons. Let me seize this opportunity to congratulate you and the entire bureau for the outstanding service rendered to the First Committee, thus far. My delegation also wishes to align itself with the statements delivered by the distinguished delegates of Nigeria on behalf of the African Group and Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Mr. Chairman,

Conventional weapons, whether legitimately acquired or otherwise are today responsible for instability in most countries, world over and especially in Africa; they are contributory factors in illegitimate and unconstitutional change of governments, a source of untold pain and suffering to innocent civilians and a major threat to national, regional and international stability and sustainable development. These weapons, coupled with their unregulated circulation and their irresponsible deployment are responsible for the most heinous crimes against humanity and war crimes. As Kofi Annan, the former UN Secretary General once described a category of these weapons, namely the Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW), “in terms of the carnage they cause, these (weapons) could well be described as weapons of mass destruction”. And indeed these are weapons of mass atrocities, particularly in our region, of the Great Lakes of Africa.

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation welcomes and support disarmament and non-proliferation efforts of conventional weapons at regional and international level, under the multilateral framework of the United Nations. While affirming States' inherent right to self-defence and maintenance of territorial sovereignty, as prescribed in international law, we denounce in the strongest way possible, the illicit trade in and proliferation of SALW. We support and commit to implement the United Nations Programme of Action to
Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in SALW in all its Aspects. We welcome the outcome of the Third Biennial Meeting States held in 2008 and look forward to the upcoming meeting to be held here in New York, in June next year. We call on the delegates to draw lessons from the previous meetings with a view of ensuring a fruitful and meaningful outcome.

Similarly Mr. Chairman, we welcome the ongoing negotiations for a global binding instrument to regulate the import, export and transfer of conventional arms, including SALW. It is the sincere hope of my delegation that, the time between now and the diplomatic conference to adopt this treaty, planned for 2012, will be used to ensure that it adequately addresses the diverse concerns of future States Parties, with regard to the production, supply, transfer, acquisition and storage by the end users. It is imperative that the treaty be inspired by the international human rights and humanitarian law. It is also important that it takes into account local and regional dimensions, particularly security dimensions which are necessary for its eventual acceptability and legitimacy. My delegation pledges to participate effectively in the remaining negotiations and calls on other delegations to do the same.

Mr. Chairman,

It is disheartening to note that military expenditures are on the rise. My delegation wonders if this is as a result of regional and global insecurity or simply a vicious spiral of an arms race. Be that as it may, we do not believe this is a rational way forward. It certainly does not make sense to continue on such a course when millions of people are trapped in poverty; when millions of children are dying of hunger and curable diseases; and when commitments made to assist those in the bottom billion from their plight are not met. We strongly call for a review of these priorities.

Mr. Chairman,

Tanzania welcomes the adoption of the Convention on Cluster Munitions in Dublin in May 2008. We have signed and are in the process of ratifying the Convention. We believe that the early entry into force of this historic Convention, which among other things addresses humanitarian consequences of cluster bombs, will contribute to global peace and security, while also ensuring that the wounds of victims are taken care of. We commend the Government of the Lao People’s Democratic Republic for committing to
host the first Meeting of States Parties to the Convention, later next year. My delegation looks forward to attending that meeting, as a fully fledged State Party.

In the same vein, Mr. Chairman, we affirm our support to the Ottawa Convention on the ban of anti-personnel land mines. Tanzania is party to this Convention and continues to discharge her obligations tenaciously. We commend the Government of Colombia for accepting to host the Second Review Conference in Cartagena, Colombia later next month. We assure them of our continued support in the process leading to the Conference and of our eventual participation.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, we wish to restate our strongly held view that multilateralism as well as international cooperation and assistance are pivotal in the disarmament process. We therefore call for continued cooperation and assistance to regional and sub-regional endeavours, especially in our region of the Great Lakes of Africa and the Horn of Africa in addressing the consequences of illicit trade in and circulation of SALW, including but not limited to internal conflicts and armed violence, transnational organised crimes, pillaging of natural resources, terrorism and piracy.

I thank you.