STATEMENT BY

MR. NKOLOI NKOLOI
DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
OF THE REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA
TO THE UNITED NATIONS

DURING THE FIRST COMMITTEE
THEMATIC DEBATE ON
"CONVENTIONAL WEAPONS"

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Please check against delivery.
Mr. Chairman,

1. Let me begin by thanking you for giving me the floor to express my delegation's views on this important agenda item.

2. We align ourselves with statements delivered on behalf of the Non Aligned Movement and the African Group respectively.

3. We also take note of Secretary-General's reports on this important agenda item and remain seized with the observations and recommendations contained therein.

Mr. Chairman,

4. My delegation attaches great importance to issues of international peace and security. The international community is acutely aware of the devastating effects of some of the weapons that are in greater use today deemed "conventional".

5. My delegation wishes to underscore that development of robust international legal frameworks targeting weapons of mass destruction alone will never be sufficient in preventing human suffering, violent attacks and loss of innocent lives in many parts of the world.

6. We believe that the international community should do more to mitigate the destructive power of conventional weapons especially their disproportionate use against civilians, many of whom are women and children.

7. Progress that has been achieved in raising awareness about illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons could be replicated to raise the conscience of the international community about the indiscriminate effect of deployment of conventional weapons.

8. We therefore view the adoption of the Arms Trade Treaty in April this year as a step in the right direction. Upon entry into force, this Treaty will help control the diversion of weapons into the illicit market.

9. Reinforcement of regulations governing proliferation of weapons systems, including effective arms control should be ensured in order to cover all the blind spots.

10. Botswana, like all countries, is also experiencing problems of illicit proliferation of small arms, which is leading to an increase in criminal activities involving use of these types of weapons. This problem is exacerbated by porous borders particularly in our region.

11. As many of you may know, we are a landlocked country in the middle of Southern Africa and acting as a transit point for trans-regional crime. Unfortunately, most of our borders are not fenced. This has exacerbated the transfer and use of small weapons especially by organized syndicates who terrorize our citizens.
12. In an effort to address this phenomenon, we have entered into bilateral framework agreements through which we cooperate on issues of cross border crime, regional security and information sharing.

13. I am happy to note that these joint cooperation agreements between our law enforcement agencies have proved critical in promoting regional stability; providing security to our citizens.

14. We therefore wish to echo the sentiments already expressed about the need for effective national laws to combat organized crimes. We need to increase our vigilance, supported by strong legislation and policing of boundaries to prevent acquisition of sophisticated conventional weapons by criminal gangs and non-state actors.

15. Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects therefore remains critical.

16. My delegation is in support of the observations and conclusions of the Secretary General as contained in document A/68/171, that “given their synergic relationship, the Arms Trade Treaty is expected to lend strong impetus to the implementation of the Program of Action, the Firearms Protocol and International Tracing Instrument”.

17. Realization of the goals of the Programme of Action remains a challenge due to resource limitations of States. We deeply appreciate efforts by our cooperating partners to provide some of our States with technical assistance and capacity building and appeal to them to continue to provide such assistance in order to boost national implementation efforts.

18. Botswana stands ready to fully utilize any form of technical assistance and capacity building that could be offered to assist with the implementation of effective arms control especially in the computerization of the national arms records and registry.

Mr. Chairman,

19. Let me conclude by assuring you of Botswana’s continued cooperation as we continue to take stock of status of implementation of programmes, identifying new challenges and solutions to close the existing gaps in arms control.

I thank you Mr. Chairman.