STATEMENT

BY

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68TH SESSION OF THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

FIRST COMMITTEE DEBATE CONVENTIONAL WEAPONS

NEW YORK, WEDNESDAY 30TH OCTOBER, 2013
Mr. Chairman,

Once again, my delegation restates its confidence in your experience and ability to steer this ship to a purposeful destination. Nigeria aligns itself with the Statements delivered by this delegation on behalf of the African Group and Mali on behalf of ECOWAS respectively.

Over the years, people have died needlessly from arms and ammunitions primarily produced for the defence and security of nation States. The inclusion of seven draft resolutions on this cluster, indeed demonstrates the magnitude of the challenges we face regarding the scourge of the proliferation of illicitly acquired conventional weapons.

It provides the basis and checklist on how we could redouble efforts to properly articulate the role of conventional weapons vis-a-vis, security needs of States, Peoples and territories. They further provide, in a deep and reflective way, the indicators to measure the enormous human toll and economic costs of the mismanagement inherent in the unauthorized transfer of conventional weapons.

Mr. Chairman,

Coming on the heels of the successful outcome of Second Review Conference on the implementation of the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons (UN PoA) last year, the overwhelming adoption of the resolution on the Arms Trade Treaty marked a watershed in our ability to address the menace of illicit trade in conventional weapons. It is structured to ensure that conventional arms and ammunitions are not deliberately, nor arbitrarily transferred
to unauthorized end-users and non-state actors bent on inflicting misery and pain on mankind, including the weak, aged, women and children.

Nigeria continues to act in compliance with UN Resolution 64/84 of 10 December 2009 on Assistance in mine action as an important component of the Ottawa Convention. The conduct of all mine action activities in Nigeria has been in accordance with International Mine Action Standard (IMAS) or IMAS-compliant as attested to by the Implementation Support Unit which visited Nigeria in March 2011. It is also in the plan of government of Nigeria to widen the 2009 Cartagena Action Plan as part of an elaborate national focus on the plight of the victims.

Struck by the reality of mindless mayhem and debilitating acts of armed violence, Member States forged an uncommon stance to provide leadership in addressing gaps seen in the transfer of all conventional weapons, not the least the problems of the illicit acquisition, transfer and use of small arms and light weapons. Need I underscore that small arms and light weapons are responsible for more than half a million deaths each year. Evidences abound that violence perpetrated by arms in conflicts kill, on the average, almost 600,000 people annually.

It was most gratifying that, with the adoption of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) on 2nd April, 2013, Member States would appear to have found the appropriate instrument to regulate, on the highest possible common international standards, global transfer of conventional weapons. Nigeria signed and ratified the ATT on 12 August, 2013 as a solemn promise to strengthen our conviction and commitment to a peaceful world, where growth and development remain
unfettered by illicit use of unregulated conventional weapons. We promise to work assiduously towards its entry into force.

Nevertheless, at this juncture, we should be seized with providing robust ideas and useful steps towards ensuring the success of its implementation. On this element, my delegation would like to share few points regarding the future of this noble treaty. Nigeria believes in and considers the ATT in the context of its key provisions on international assistance. As a developing economy, we believe in the need for the early setting up of an efficient system for building capacities where they are needed. A note of warning lies in the need to stress that the ATT could become an empty shell without the provision of this essential element.

For numerous developing economies in Africa, it is most significant that the future ATT Conferences be organised in a manner that allows them to focus on assistance needs, as a confidence-building measure. In our view, an excellent option would be to hold an inaugural conference immediately when the treaty enters into force, during which the rules of procedure and a reporting template would be agreed upon by States Parties.

This approach, if explored, might further ensure the immediate submission of national reports by Governments. In the second conference, a year after entry into force, can have meaningful discussions and decisions on assistance and cooperation, based on the needs assessments from national reports. We are convinced that the follow-up (second) conference can also set up the ATT trust fund following to assist States that may otherwise be in need of such support.
Furthermore, while not foreclosing other laudable approaches, we hope that decisions on the establishment of a Secretariat to host ATT should reflect the interests of Africa - in many respects, a continent most impacted by unregulated arms trade. Other areas of consideration include the following: (i) making use of existing infrastructure to minimize costs for meetings; (ii) decreasing the reporting burden, which implies the Secretariat will need to explore synergies between ATT, the Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons as well as the United Nations Register of Conventional Weapons.

Mr. Chairman, we must make full use of the normative authority and the convening power of the United Nations. We must also choose the location where our countries are best represented to engage in the meetings under the treaty's purview. While all of these have not been adequately covered in the treaty, we look forward to working with others to translate the Arms Trade Treaty into the success we all hope it will become.

I thank you.