Statement by

The Arab Republic of Egypt

on behalf of the African Group

at the Thematic Debate of the First Committee:

Conventional Weapons Cluster

New York,

18 October, 2017
Mr. Chairman,

1. It is my honour to speak on behalf of the African Group. The Group aligns itself with the Statement on this cluster by the Representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

2. The flow of illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons, (SALW) across national borders in the last decade have had grave security implications for the continent and has become a destabilizing force resulting in untold sufferings, armed rebellions and violent insurgencies. In this regard, the African Group remains deeply concerned over the illicit trade, transfer, manufacture, possession and circulation of these weapons, their excessive accumulation and uncontrolled spread in many regions of the world, particularly in Africa.

3. The Group recognizes that the UN Programme of Action (UNPoA) on Small Arms and Light Weapons is part of a number of key instruments in addressing the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and the Group remains committed to its balanced, effective and full implementation at the global, regional and sub-regional levels.

4. The Group welcomes the Sixth Biennial Meeting of States (BMS 6) on the implementation of the UN PoA on SALW in June last year, and looks forward to actively participate in the forthcoming Third Review Conference (RevCon3) in 2018. The Group urges all States to continue to fulfill their obligations regarding reporting, technological transfer, by ensuring the unhindered flow of international cooperation and assistance as mandated by the UN PoA on Small Arms and Light Weapons.
5. The group views the full implementation of the UN Program of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in all Its Aspects and the International Tracing Instrument (ITI), as vital elements in promoting long-term security and creating conditions for security and sustainable development in Africa. African States have indeed been guided by the efforts to address the menace of the illicit trade in SALWs on the continent, within the framework of the Program of Action.

**Mr. Chairman,**

6. The Group wishes to highlight the extensive work done towards addressing the subject of the illicit trade in SALWs since the Bamako Declaration (2000), the AU Constitutive Act, the Protocol on the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council of the AU (2002), the Solemn Declaration on a Common African Defence and Security Policy in Sirte (2004), the Nairobi Protocol, the SADC Protocol (2004), the ECOWAS Convention (2006), efforts in the framework of CENSAD and the Arab Maghreb Union, the African Union Agenda 2063, the Initiative of Silencing the Guns in Africa by Year 2020, and other relevant sub-regional initiatives aimed at addressing the issue in Africa.

7. Similarly, African Heads of State and Governments have, on numerous occasions, expressed concern over the impact of the illicit proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons in undermining peace and security and fueling conflicts in Africa.

8. Despite these efforts, the Group continues to stress that international assistance and cooperation, on a broader scale, remains an essential ingredient to the full implementation of the Programme of Action. In view of this, the African Group wishes to call on Member States of the UN that are from developed economies to render cooperation and more technical and financial assistance to developing countries in the realization of the overall objectives of the UN PoA and the ITI, with a view to eradicating,
the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. The Group believes such efforts will promote national and regional initiatives and assist efforts at the global level.

9. A veritable confidence-building measure is an actual reduction of military expenditures by major arms producing countries, in accordance with the principle of undiminished security at the lowest level of armaments. In this regard, we urge those countries to devote their resources to global economic and social development and, in particular, in the fight against poverty and disease.

Mr. Chairman

10. The African Group acknowledges the efforts by States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) since its entry into force, as well as the third Conference of States Parties held in Geneva, Switzerland in September 2017. The Group urges States Parties to the Treaty to implement the treaty in a balanced and objective manner, one which protects the interests of all States and not just the major international producing and exporting States. The full implementation of the treaty remains achievable with the cooperation of all. The Group acknowledges that unregulated conventional arms transfer to unauthorized recipients fuels the illicit trade and urges major arms suppliers to ratify the treaty and promote its implementation.

11. The Group reaffirms the sovereign right of States to acquire, manufacture, export, import and retain conventional arms, their parts and components for their self defence and security needs in accordance with the UN Charter. The full implementation of the treaty remains achievable with the cooperation of all. The Group acknowledges that unregulated conventional arms transfer to unauthorized recipients fuels the illicit trade and urges major arms suppliers to ratify the treaty and promote its implementation.
12. The Group continues to highlight efforts by the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa in the context of its contribution to disarmament issues and in providing requisite assistance to member States of the African Group in the implementation of disarmament, peace and security issues. The Group wishes to stress the need to further strengthen all UN Regional Centres to full discharge their mandates.

Mr. Chairman,

15. In conclusion, the African Group wishes to restate the critical importance of political will and transparency in addressing international disarmament and security issues. The Group believes that deliberations in the coming days should be guided by the need to advance the work of the First Committee and enhance the cause of peace.

I thank you