STATEMENT BY

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DURING THE
FIRST COMMITTEE's
THEMATIC DISCUSSION ON
"CONVENTIONAL WEAPONS"

ON THE OCCASION OF THE
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UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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Please check against delivery.
Mr. Chairman,

1. Thank you for giving me this opportunity to participate in this important debate on conventional weapons. My delegation aligns itself with statements delivered by Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and Morocco on behalf of the African Group.

2. Permit me to now make a few remarks in my national capacity.

Mr. Chairman,

3. Botswana remains deeply concerned about the illicit trade, transfer, and circulation of small arms and light weapons around the world, which often worsen conflict with adverse humanitarian and socio-economic consequences.

4. In this regard, my delegation fully supports the UN Program of Action to Combat the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in all Its Aspects (PoA) and the International Tracing Instrument that address the problem of SALW.

5. Botswana further welcomes the outcomes of Third United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, held in New York in June this year. This Conference made critical decisions on a wide range of issues, including the positive role of women and youth in conflict prevention and resolution.

6. We therefore, appeal for international cooperation and technological exchange in order to implement the PoA.

Mr. Chairman,

7. Botswana reaffirms its support for the work of the 5th Review Conference to the "Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons" (CCW). In this connection, we welcome the appointment of a Group of Governmental Expert who will amongst others examine challenges related to emerging technologies in the area of Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS).

8. While some nations may promote and even see value in the use of such weapons, we are convinced that such critical decisions involving use of weapons of war and taking of human lives should not be abdicated to machines which ordinarily do not have any regard to international humanitarian law or human rights law.

9. We also welcome the adoption of the Declaration on Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), which will raise public awareness about the dangers posed by these weapons. The use of IEDs particularly in densely populated areas is deplorable for it normally results in high civilian casualties.
10. With regard to the elimination of anti-personnel mines, Botswana reaffirms its commitment to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines (Ottawa Convention). While some remarkable progress has been attained towards the total elimination of anti-personnel mines, these weapons continue to claim many casualties, again a considerable number being civilian. It is our fervent hope that we tirelessly strive towards the 2025 objective set by States Parties wherein clearance of mines, their destruction and assistance to victims will be realized globally.

Mr. Chairman,

11. Modern warfare is urbanized and largely fought around populated areas where various weapons and delivery systems are often employed. The rampant use of explosives in populated areas, particularly those with wide area effect result in great indiscriminate harm to civilians and damage to critical infrastructure such as hospitals, schools, water sources to mention just a few. These effects last past conflict and often require great financial and socio-economic sacrifices. Such adverse humanitarian and socio-economic consequences are indeed highly regrettable.

12. In this regard, Botswana welcomes the communiqué from the Maputo Regional Meeting on Protecting Civilians from the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas that was held from 27th - 28th November 2017 in Mozambique. It is our expectation that the recommendations adopted at that forum will go a long way in contributing to disarmament efforts/education, observance and respect for internationally established norms governing the conduct of warfare.

Finally, Mr. Chairman,

13. Botswana reiterates her support for the sovereign right of States to acquire, manufacture, export, import and retain conventional arms, for their self-defence and other security needs. We recognise the legal trade in conventional arms and also stress the importance to observe the associated responsibilities thereof.

14. It is incumbent upon producers, suppliers and all other legitimate stakeholder to ensure that conventional arms do not enjoy uncontrolled distribution since such illicit transfers only serves to fuel conflicts and other transnational security challenges. We take note of existing Treaties such as the Arms Trade Treaty that is fashioned to essentially regulate and ensure that the illicit transfer and accumulation of conventional arms is curbed and hence urge for its balanced implementation.

I thank you for your attention.