STATEMENT

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ON BEHALF OF

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TO THE UNITED NATIONS

AT THE

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

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NEW YORK
Madam President,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to congratulate you and the Bureau for your election to preside over this Review Conference and for your exemplary stewardship of the preparatory process of the Conference. Please be rest assured of my delegation’s support for a successful outcome to our deliberations.

Madam President,

If over the past decode our various efforts have won a battle against the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs), the war rages on unabated due to the sheer volume of weapons still in circulation world wide.

Scourges such as transnational organized crime, terrorism, human and narcotics trafficking, piracy, etc continue to make Small Arms and Light Weapons easily obtainable to non-state actors.

As recent events in the Middle East, North Africa, Sahel and other hot spots clearly indicate, there is a nexus between the proliferation of weapons and insecurity and social instability.

The Sahel region is experiencing increased violence, armed insurrections, coup d’etats, criminal activity and in some cases, a complete breakdown of the rule of law resulting in deepening social instability; even as many countries of the sub region are emerging from conflict situations.

Under these circumstances, the convening of this Review Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in all Its Aspects is opportune and timely. We must grab the opportunity of this auspicious conference to intensify our efforts to control further, access to these arms and weapons to those who are recklessly determined to destroy international peace and security.

Madam President,

The Gambia neither manufactures nor exports Small Arms and Light Weapons. However, we are not immune to their negative impacts. It is for this reason that
the government of The Gambia adheres resolutely to the ECOWAS Moratorium on the Import, Export and Manufacture of Small Arms and Light Weapons, including our commitment to the United Nations Programme of Action and other International Conventions and Instruments. We continue to heroically pursue implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action notwithstanding numerous daunting challenges.

Securing our porous national borders against the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons and other threats to our national security is a perennial problem, which has necessitated constant engagement in transboundary cooperation and collaboration between our security agencies and those of our neighbours.

Our law enforcement personnel, as well as judicial officers continue to enforce the provisions of the criminal code by prosecuting and dispensing severe punishment for the unlicensed possession of Small Arms and Light Weapons. In addition, national structures established to implement the United Nations Programme of Action, in collaboration with the Interagency National Security Council Task Force, Community Based Organizations and the media undertake public awareness and sensitization campaigns to conscientise the population on issues pertaining to the United Nations Programme of Action and other security matters.

Moreover, the Ministry of Defense reviews government stocks on a regular basis and a data base administered by the military showing the status of all available arms is used to track unmarked surplus stocks if any. Marking and tracing is done using the same database through interagency collaboration.

Madam President,

As I said earlier on, from the scenes unfolding on our television screens and social media on a daily basis, it would appear that the more efforts devoted at eradicating “these weapons of mass destruction” the more intractable and even refractory the task.

To this end, our review must identify the grey areas and loopholes in the United Nations Programme of Action with the view to come up with a fine tuned and pragmatic United Nations Programme of Action.
This conference must not aim at low-hanging fruits, as this would be counterproductive. Our individual and collective energies must be channeled into assessing how effective our efforts have been in thwarting violence through the use of illicit arms and weapons.

One wonders whether, implementation of would have been more effective as a legally United Nations Programme of Action binding treaty. Here, the relevant linkages between the United Nations Programme of Action and the Arms Trade Treaty must be forged.

In addition, political willingness and genuine commitment, coupled with robust follow up and monitoring mechanisms to produce good results is required of all stakeholders.

Madam President,

To win the war against the proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons, priority must be devoted to certain key issues.

1. My delegation shares the view that the International Community must be vigorous and rigorous in its efforts to tackle the root causes of the proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons.

2. No man is an island entire onto him/herself. In view therefore, international, regional, sub-regional, national collaboration and cooperation must remain at the centre of United Nations Programme of Action.

3. The availability of financial and technical assistance will be critical in enhancing the capacity of states sub-regional and regional organizations to control and by extension minimize or even eradicate armed violence. To this end, we must continue to make use of the expertise of the World Customs Organization and Interpol.

4. The recently agreed instrument to promote identification and tracing of Illicit Small Arms is also pertinent and would serve to enhance international cooperation. Likewise, the development of global controls on brokers and brokering and international arms transfers.
To conclude, let me paraphrase the United Nations Secretary-General's words on a related topic; let us make the Prevention, Combating and Eradication of the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects not just a priority, but a passion!

Thank you.