STATEMENT
BY
MR GUGULETHU GINGQI
DEPUTY DIRECTOR: DISARMAMENT AND NON-PROLIFERATION IN THE DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND COOPERATION, SOUTH AFRICA

TO THE UNITED NATIONS DURING THE UNPOA PREPARATORY COMMITTEE MEETING

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Mr Chair,

Let me join others in congratulating you on your appointment as President of the PrePCom. Be assured of South Africa's support and cooperation.

My statement aligns itself with the statement delivered by Indonesia on behalf of NAM and Nigeria on behalf of the Africa Group.

I would like to highlight the following priorities of my delegation during the PrepCom:

Mr Chair,

1. South Africa welcomes the opportunity offered by the week-long Preparatory Committee (PrepCom) meeting to reaffirm its commitment to the full implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action on the illicit trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons (UNPoA) at national, regional and international level. It is our firm view that UNPoA implementation efforts should first and foremost be focused on the review of two critical components of the UNPoA, namely, the undertakings by Member States to implement UNPoA at national level and the important issue of international cooperation and assistance.

2. The PrepCom should build on the progress and gains made by the consensus outcomes of the BMS6, as well as the Second Meeting of the Group of Government Experts held in 2015 and 2016, respectively. The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was underscored by the BMS6 Outcome Document as a vital element in the implementation of the UNPoA. My delegation is open to discussing how the 2030 Agenda could be reflected in the outcome of the PrepCom.

Mr Chair,

3. The PrePcom is taking place against the backdrop of deep concerns about the devastating impact of small arms and light weapons on the Continent. The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons has seriously reduced the ability of many States in Africa to forged clear path to sustainable development, and has caused irreversible damage to many people in Africa especially women and children.

Mr Chair,

4. At national level, South Africa continues to include the UNPoA elements in national legislation and the results has already had a positive impact on the illicit trade and circulation of small arms and lights weapons. We welcome the efforts by the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Regional Protocol on the Control of Firearms, Ammunition and Other Related Materials, which reinforces our national implementation measures.

Mr Chair,

5. At regional level, we recall the bold leadership shown by the Heads of State of the African Union in adopting the Silencing the Guns by 2020 strategy in 2013, which is based on a longer-term Vision 2063. We urge the international community to lend its support towards the successful implementation of the strategy. There is still opportunity to be explored between the AU and UN in particular on how the implementation of the UNPoA could help advance the AU's strategy.

Mr Chair,

6. The implementation of the UNPoA cannot be effective without international cooperation and assistance. Such assistance and cooperation should in our view be an overarching theme underpinning all undertakings made by States when they adopted the UNPoA and should include a range of efforts including stockpile management, addressing illicit brokering and tracing of illicit
Small Arms and Light Weapons. We agree with the call that the international cooperation and assistance should not be conditional, but must be as a result of a bilateral agreement between the parties involved.

7. One of the challenges facing the majority of countries, especially on the implementation of UNPoA and ITI is lack of capacity. In that context, we believe that the PrepCom should insist that international cooperation and assistance efforts should be built on the foundation of capacity building because without such necessary skills transfer, the sustainability of the implementation efforts would be greatly compromised.

Mr Chair,

8. We wish to highlight that the "all aspects" part of the UNPoA is also critical if we are to make progress in the implementation of the programme. In our view the phrase implies that in addressing the prevention of the illicit trade, Member States should take into account issues such as the physical security, record-keeping, secure storage, legal and administrative structures and systems. These are the areas where South Africa is still not entirely convinced that enough has been done since 2001, and a more thorough and focused discussion during the PrepCom is needed on these issues before we move to "new issues".

9. On the issue of women, South Africa sees great value in the involvement of women in efforts aimed at combating and preventing the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. Such role should be integrated and implemented at respective national level.

Mr Chair,

10. In Conclusion, my delegation is ready to work with other Member States in an inclusive and transparent manner towards the successful outcome of the PrepCom.

I thank you.