STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE AFRICAN GROUP

by

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AT THE

THE 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

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Mr. President,

Allow me at the outset to, on behalf of the African Group, congratulate you on your election as President of the 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. The Group wishes you well in your endeavors and assures you of its full cooperation at this Conference. Let me also seize this opportunity to congratulate members of the Bureau on their election. The Group supports and aligns itself with statement delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).

2. The Group remains deeply concerned over the illicit trade, transfer, and circulation of small arms and light weapons (SALW), and their excessive accumulation and uncontrolled spread in many regions of the world, especially in light of their wide range of humanitarian and socio-economic consequences, particularly on the continent of Africa. The Group, therefore, attaches great importance to the central role of the UN PoA and ITI as crucial multilateral instruments dedicated to fighting the illicit flow of SALW and tackling their multifaceted effects, which pose a threat to international peace and security.

3. In this context, the Group reiterates the total validity and relevance of the Programme of Action and emphasizes the importance of its full and effective implementation. We also stress that international assistance and cooperation is an essential aspect in its implementation. The African Group acknowledges the efforts undertaken by Member States and regional organizations to implement the PoA, and calls for the full implementation of the
International Tracing Instrument (ITI), to enable States identify and trace in a
timely and reliable manner, the illicit flow of small arms and light weapons.

4. Africa continues to be at the forefront of the regions that suffer the most
from the effects of illicit trade and transfer of small arms and light weapons,
mainly produced outside the continent, yet acquired and used by unauthorized
recipients and illegal armed groups within Africa. The African Group, thus,
considers this meeting as another opportunity for the International Community
to renew efforts to stem the tide of small arms and light weapons in conflict, to
create an enabling environment for peace, security and socio-economic
development. It is important to acknowledge that promoting a peaceful,
unfettered and inclusive participation of nations in global actions towards
addressing the flow of illicit arms, particularly in Africa, will facilitate the
achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the African
Union Agenda 2063.

Mr. President,

5. The Group stresses the need to establish and maintain controls over private
ownership of small arms, and expects the Conference to call on all States to ensure
that the supply of small arms and light weapons are limited only to Governments,
or to entities duly authorized by the Governments of recipient states, and to also
implement legal restrictions and prohibitions preventing the illicit trade in small
arms and light weapons. Universal adherence to this undertaking can greatly
contribute to the efforts aimed at eradicating the illicit trade and transfers of
small arms and light weapons. In this regard, the Group underscores the critical
importance of strengthening the commitments contained in the final document
regarding the prohibition of supply of SALWS without an official authorization.
from the government of the recipient State, and considers that the inclusion of such clear commitments represents a necessary condition for a successful outcome.

6. The Group also expects the Conference to call on all States to mobilize the necessary resources and expertise, as well as provide assistance to strengthen the full implementation of the UN PoA. To that end, the Group calls for strict adherence and respect by all States to the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and the principles listed in the 2001 UN-PoA.

7. The African Group takes into account the growing magnitude of illicit transfers of small arms and light weapons and the danger they continue to pose, and underscores that international cooperation and assistance, including through funding and capacity building, remains a key pillar to the full implementation of the Programme of Action. The Group wishes to commend the efforts and contributions of several partners and donors but emphasize that international assistance to support the implementation of the Programme of Action is still not commensurate with the needs of affected countries. The African Group underlines the need for further engagement in addressing the challenges faced by Africa with regards to the impact of the illicit flow of small arms and light weapons.

Mr. President,

8. The Group therefore urges the Conference to strive to ensure the adequacy, effectiveness and sustainability of such international assistance in a more institutionalized and efficient form, and calls for the provision of
concrete assistance, including technical and financial assistance to developing countries, upon request, in a more structured manner.

9. The Group also reiterates that such assistance should not be conditional on being part of, or detracting from, the recipient State's Official Development Assistance. To that end, the adequate provision of training, equipment, transfer of technology, strengthening of national capacity-building and the mobilization of financial resources are, in particular, an important segment of international assistance and cooperation.

10. In addition, the establishment of mechanisms to increase the effectiveness of international assistance and cooperation remains a critical aspect in the process of the implementation of the UN Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument. The Group also wishes to highlight the need for the UN to intensify the utilization of local expertise and resources available in developing countries in its activities to support the implementation of the PoA.

11. The Group is hopeful that this Conference will agree on a more robust and effective international mechanism for the delivery of financial and technical assistance and the establishment of capacity building programmes that are tailored to transfer the necessary technologies, equipment, and know-how to developing countries, upon their request, in the area of combating illicit flows of SALW and tracing their origins. The Group, thus, calls for enhanced cooperation and coordination with INTERPOL, WCO, and AFRIPOL towards that end.
12. In this regard, the Group wishes to reiterate its strong support for the NAM working paper on the establishment of a UN Fellowship Programme on Small Arms and Light Weapons for developing countries, to train relevant officials nominated by their respective governments in areas related to the implementation of the PoA. We call on the Conference to include this laudable initiative in the final outcome document of the Review Conference.

Mr. President,

13. The Group wishes to highlight the intensive efforts and successful programmes of the African Union and African sub-regional organisations to combat the illicit trade in SALW. Therefore, the Group calls for increased support of the UN and relevant international bodies to the several initiatives of the African Union, including Silencing the Guns by 2020.

14. The Group recognizes the need for cooperation and adaptation of the PoA to address the impact of new technologies, and to that end, wishes to highlight the need for a holistic assessment and adequate consultations on the possible implications of the application of certain advanced technologies in the area of marking and tracing SALW prior to proposing new measures within the context of the PoA and the ITI.

15. Finally, Mr. President, the Group wishes to underscore article 6(e) of the ITI, which clearly stipulates that weapons are illicit if they are transferred
without a license or authorization by a competent national authority and, to that end, reemphasize that States bear the primary responsibility for preventing, combating and eradicating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects and, accordingly, should intensify their efforts to identify the problems associated with such illicit trade and find ways of resolving them. The Group pledges its full support and commitment to the process and looks forward to constructive engagements with you and other member states in the course of this Meeting.

Thank you.