STATEMENT DELIVERED
BY
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TO THE UNITED NATIONS

DURING THE REVIEW CONFERENCE OF THE UNPOA
HELD

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PLEASE CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY
Mr President, Ambassador Brunet,

Let me join others in congratulating you on your appointment as President of the Review Conference. 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.

Allow me to highlight the following priorities of my delegation during the Review Conference:

Mr President,

1. My delegation welcomes the timely convening of the 3rd Review Conference of the UNPoA to take stock of the progress made since 2012. It is important to take into account developments that have affected the prevention of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. My delegation would like 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.

2. It is our firm view that the implementation efforts of the UNPoA 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.

3. This Review Conference 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 landmark 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was highlighted by the 6th Biennial Meeting of States (BMS6) Outcome Document as a vital element in the implementation of the UNPoA. My delegation wishes to underline the importance of discussing the issue of the 2030 Agenda during the Review Conference and we remain open to discussing how the 2030 Agenda could be reflected in its Outcome Document.

Mr President,

4. The 2018 Review Conference of the UNPoA takes place amid deep concerns about the growing tensions and escalation big-power rivalries and potential impact on international peace and security. The increasing tendency of some countries to reduce the complex and inter-related problems of the world to narrow national interests continue to test the resolve of the multilateral approach. Furthermore, 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. This sorry state of affairs is further compounded by the ever-increasing military expenditures, which now amount to trillions of dollars. The continued and exorbitant investment towards acquiring military weapons should indeed be better spent towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development, which would benefit the developing countries.

Mr President,

5. 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 President,

6. 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.

Mr President,

7. 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.

8. One of the challenges facing the majority of countries, especially on the implementation of UNPoA and International Tracing Instrument (ITI) is lack of capacity. In that context, we believe that the Review Conference 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. It is with this in mind that we wish to express our support towards the initiative on establishment of a United Nations Fellowship Programme on Small Arms and Light Weapons submitted by the Non-Aligned Movement.

Mr President,

9. 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.

10. 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 the respective national levels.

11. Mr President before I conclude, my delegation fully supports the view that this 3rd Review Conference of the UNPoA should welcome the valuable contribution made by the First Committee resolution 71/48 entitled, "The Illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects" in keeping the implementation of the UNPoA in the forefront of the agenda of the First Committee. The resolution which is adopted without a vote is co-sponsored by Colombia, Japan and my own country, South Africa. South Africa will be coordinating this resolution during the 73rd
Session of the First Committee and we hope to count on the support of all Member States for the resolution.

Mr President,

12. This Review Conference coincides with the centenary of Nelson Mandela whose birthday we will be celebrating in exactly a month from today. Certainly, in the year that we are commemorating the centenary of Nelson Mandela, who dedicated part of his life to achieving a peaceful resolution on the Continent and whose values of peace, respect and forgiveness continue to inspire many across the world, the best tribute we can pay him and the millions who have died for world peace is to use this Review Conference to renew our commitment to the full and effective implementation of the UNPoA with the view to end the devastation caused by the illicit trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons.

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

I thank you.