3RD UN 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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African Union statement
Delivered by
Ms. Einas Mohammed - Acting Head of the Defence and Security Division
Mr. President,

On behalf of the African Union, I add my voice to the delegations that preceded me in congratulating you on your designation as President of the Review Conference. I wish to assure you our full support towards a successful outcome of this process.

Mr. President,

Since the adoption of the PoA, and guided by its principles and standards, African Union Member States have concluded legally binding instruments to address illicit SALW trade in a manner that responds to the local realities. Additionally, several regional police cooperation organizations and intelligence sharing platforms have been established to strengthen inter-state response to the range of transnational security threats, including illicit SALW trade. These include the recently established AU Mechanism for Police Cooperation – AFRIPOL. Moreover, with the adoption of the AU Master Roadmap for Silencing the Guns in Africa, controlling the illicit flows of SALW remains at the heart of the AU’s Peace and Security agenda.

Mr President,

Significant progress has been recorded at the national level. This progress has been highlighted in the statement delivered on behalf of the African Group, as well as other national statements made since the beginning of the conference. This reflects the strong and continued commitment of African Union Member States to this critical instrument.
As we celebrate progress, we also remain acutely aware of the gaps and challenges undercutting the full and effective implementation of the PoA – both regionally and globally. Therefore, we call upon this review conference to consider measures to address the persisting challenges in the spirit of multilateralism and consensus that underpin the PoA, and guided by a strong sense of shared responsibility.

With your permission – Mr President – the delegation of the African Union Commission wishes reemphasize four points as a contribution to the deliberations of the Conference.

First, illicit arms flows should not be viewed in isolation of the broader security context in which they take place. The 6th Biennial meeting of States rightly acknowledged the importance of addressing the root causes of armed conflict and crime in combating illicit arms trade.

Therefore, the African Union encourages the streamlining of illicit arms control measures in efforts to prevent and manage conflicts, and counter terrorism and crime. This requires robust transfer and border control measures to prevent the inflow of arms, particularly into conflict and fragile zones, as well as strengthening of the criminal justice response to illicit trade. Such efforts should be coupled with measures to deny non-state actors the financial resources through which they acquire illicit arms. Action on this front require stronger cooperation within and across continents, particularly in light of the intricate and global trafficking networks, and the growing alliances between terrorist groups.
Furthermore, there is a need for greater investment to complete and effective disarmament, demobilization and reintegration interventions in order to sustainably prevent remobilization.

Second, the urgent need to address the wide availability and high demand for arms among civilians cannot be understated. The African Union strongly encourages integrated violence reduction programs that address the social, economic, political and environmental factors that fuel inter-communal and criminal violence. In this respect, I wish to note that the July 2017 AU Summit has declared the month of September as *Africa Amnesty Month* for the surrender of illicit arms. In implementing the amnesty, African States will build on the successful experiences recorded on the continent, including arms-for-development programs.

Third, it must be emphasized that international cooperation and assistance remain a critical component of the PoA, and has without a doubt contributed the significant progress achieved to date. Nonetheless, and as reiterated by AU Member States, assistance remains short term, incommensurate with the needs and insufficiently coordinated. This often results in unsustainable interventions and suboptimal resource allocation.

The African Union calls upon this conference to review current assistance practices and modalities with a view of aligning and scaling them up to the needs identified by the recipient States, and in a manner that contributes to institutional capacity building, sustainability, and reinforcing national ownership.

Finally, progress towards the full and effective implementation of the PoA cannot be objectively assessed without monitoring and evaluation frameworks. As such, there
is a need for greater investment in building institutional capacities, particularly at the national level, for the continuous and comprehensive gathering and analysis of information, and in a manner that informs evidence-based programming and efficient allocation of resources.

In concluding, Mr President, I wish to assure you that the Commission of the African Union, working closely with the sub-regional African organizations, will continue to provide a regional platform to foster cooperation and assistance among states and international partners, and facilitate the sharing of experiences and best practices.

Thank you, Mr. President.