STATEMENT BY THE EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY AT THE 3RD REVIEW CONFERENCE ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UN PROGRAME OF ACTION ON SALW AND ITS TRACING INSTRUMENT

Mr Chairperson

Accept Chair Felicitations of the East African Community comprising the Republics of Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania at being elected to Chair the 3rd Review Conference. Going by the leadership you have demonstrated in consensually producing a draft outcome document, we have faith and confidence in your leadership towards a REVCON that will achieve the intended objectives.

Chairperson

The EAC aligns itself with the statement made by Nigeria on behalf of the Africa Group and EAC Partner States.

The EAC Region has made substantial and remarkable progress in ensuring the implementation of the UNPoA and the tracing instrument. The sustainability of these gains must therefore be domiciled in the AU agenda 2063 and the UN SDG 2030 for verifiable impact and contribution to the overall goal of human security. To this extent the EAC launched a 5th Development Strategy in February 2018 with specific targets on SALW control contributory to the AU silencing the Guns initiative 2020. Additionally, the EAC views the implementation of the Joint United Nations-African Union Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security signed on 19th April 2017 as providing an enabling vehicle for SALW control initiatives with an eye on addressing both the demand and supply driving factors.
Chairperson,

The foreseen gains of regional integration efforts are predicated on a stable, secure and predictable security environment. The Eastern Africa Region where the EAC is domiciled can be said to be one of the most fragile regions in the world from a security perspectives. For the region illicit SALW is an existential threat. The region has witnessed some of the worst atrocities and human rights abuses in the world hence unwavering commitment to the implementation of the UNPoA. Sustainability of our integration of gains are thus inextricably linked to SALW control.

The acts of terror that the region has been exposed to, ethnic conflicts, maritime insecurity are all linked to easy availability and circulation of SALW. The Nairobi Declaration and later Protocol, one of the earliest initiatives on SALAW control, was a deliberate response to these challenges. SALW are harmless in the absence of ammunitions as arms alone do not kill or maim. Ammunitions do. As a region we are keen on seeing the issue of ammunitions regulation in the final outcome document of this conference.

The impact of SALW on women and children need not be overemphasized but must be viewed as one that must be restated and re-emphasized. The UNSCR 1325 provides a firm basis for participation of women in related decisions within a human rights perspective.

Chairperson,

The last few years, has seen a lull in enthusiasm by states to support SALW initiatives, specifically after the signing of the ATT. This may roll back on UNPoA gains made which remains crucial to its full implementation. The ATT while complementary is not an antidote to the SALW problem and hence I would wish to emphasize the revitalization of the linking of the needs to resources program that had hitherto played a crucial role in facilitating support to the nations in need by willing nations.

At regional level, the EAC has established a Regional Ballistics Referral facility in Kampala through EU Support to procurement and commissioning of a state of the art Integrated Ballistics Identification System, intended to address the dual challenges of enhancing investigative capacity in arms related offences but also ease in tracing supportive to the tracing instrument. This is one of the flagship interventions under the East and Southern Africa Maritime Security Project intended to among others interdict sea bound illicit trafficking of SALW. The EAC remains immensely appreciative to the EU for this support in this regard.

On border control, the EAC has had her policies trained at enhancing border controls within an easing of business and people to people interaction through operationalization
of a single customs territory anchored on one stop internal border posts that have incrementally been established. Additionally the EAC is in the process to operationalizing a Community Border Security Policy which will provide a formal place to trans boundary community on border security as a panacea to the challenges posed by long and porous borders. These two initiatives are intended to be responsive to SDG 16 and to place SALW proliferation and misuse within a development and human security context.

Chairperson.

While the UNPoA supported by related regional and sub-regional instruments have registered substantial achievements over the last 15 years, we must not rest on our laurels. EAC wishes to emphasize the need for continued and sustained technical and financial support at both regional and national level, the leveraging of these efforts on the initiatives of international specialized organizations like INTERPOL, UNODC and WCO all of which have provided substantial value addition to the process.

In conclusion, Chairperson the EAC wishes to underscore the critical role of the civil society in the effective implementation of the two instruments. SALW is a development concern that requires multi-dimensional approach anchored on effective broad based participation by all societal segments. Due attention to the integration of the provisions of UNSCR 1325 in this regard is central to effective implementation.

I thank you.