Statement by

The ECOWAS Commission

At the

THE THIRD REVIEW CONFERENCE ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS PROGRAMME OF ACTION TO PREVENT, COMBAT AND ERADICATE THE ILLICIT TRADE IN SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS IN ALL ITS ASPECTS

NEW YORK

18-29 June 2018
Ladies and Gentlemen, allow me first of all to add my voice to previous speakers in congratulating Ambassador Jean-Claude Brunet for his election as chairman and wish him success in his functions at this important meeting. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) associates itself with the statements made at the beginning of this meeting on behalf of the non-alignment movement and that of the African Group.

The Agenda of the meeting and the conclusions that have taken place so far are encouraging for those of us coming from regions where human security is threatened and development efforts are jeopardized by the proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

Mr. Chairman, in the framework of implementing the key provisions of the UN Programme of Action (UNPOA), ECOWAS Commission has recorded remarkable achievements, especially in the area of Arms Transfer Controls, Weapons Marking/Recordkeeping. Physical security and
stockpile management (PSSM) and Tracking of Illicit Arms in our region. During the last review conference, ECOWAS reported on the significant efforts made at the establishment of National Commissions (NATCOMS) on Small Arms that are now functional across the Member States in the region. These Commissions are now the focal agencies implementing primarily the key provisions of ECOWAS Convention on SALW, Their Ammunitions and Other Related Materials, but they equally serve as agencies implementing the UNPoA, ITI as well as other continental and global arms control initiatives.

Mr. Chairman, the ECOWAS Transfer Controls, otherwise known as the ECOWAS Exemption Procedure continue to be strengthened and its sanctity fully protected. It is to be reported that Member States in the ECOWAS region continue to comply with this commitment ensuring that no transfer of arms is made except for legitimate national security or if a state party is deploying for peace support.
operations. This is the novelty that ECOWAS Region is presenting to the world as a model that will allow us all to effectively regulate and to know the stocks that are available within the security forces. In the same vein, transparency is being promoted through this framework as all Member States receive information related to the requests for Exemptions for their comments or opinions thereby ensuring trust among them.

Mr. Chair, the ECOWAS Convention on SALW also obligates member states to take necessary measures to ensure effective management of stockpiles through standards and best practices. In this regard, Mr. Chairman, while our member States are continuing their National efforts at achieving this objectives, the ECOWAS Commission is continuing its support to them to have these standards based on PSSM Roadmap already elaborated and adopted in the region. In addition, I will like to report that due to the capacity deficit on the part of depot managers and in some instances poor storage facilities, the ECOWAS Commission in
collaboration with the Government of Germany has established a regional training center for PSSM. The Nigerian Government has availed ECOWAS Commission with its facility at the Martin Luther Agwai International Leadership and Peacekeeping Center in Jaji -Kaduna, North Central Nigeria. I therefore use this opportunity to thank the Government of Germany for its Technical and Financial Support for the training center and for the Nigerian Government for providing its facility.

Mr. Chair, as we all know, the fight against Illicit SALWs is transnational and requires collective effort that cuts across borders as rightly identified by previous speakers. The ECOWAS Region has large expanse of Land, maritime and air borders that are being abused by miscreants engaging in transnational crimes and trafficking of illicit contrabands. The vulnerability of some of our member states is created by lack of appropriate equipment, capacities and number of available
personnel as border security operatives that would adequately allow for effective policing.

In an effort at addressing the incessant cross border vulnerabilities, the ECOWA Commission in Collaboration with the European Union within the framework of the 10th EDF, has put in place the ECOWAS-EU Small Arms Project with the mandate as pilot Community Weapons Collection Project. The seven (7) beneficiary state are in the MRU and Sahel and have recorded modest achievements in mopping and establishing illicit trafficking routes in these areas. ECOWAS Commission wishes to thank the European Union for the solid partnership and the continues support in the overall consolidation of Peace Security and Stability Mandate of ECOWAS.

Mr. Chairman, since the last review conference, we have recorded significant level of peace consolidation in the Mano River Union countries and the attainment of peaceful change of leadership in Liberia and Sierra Leone thereby deepening our democratic practices in the
region. In a related development, the political impasse in The Gambia was managed through a mix of high level diplomacy as well as exercise of strong military might as demonstrated by the ECOWAS Standby Force. Recalling these successes are important as elections and post-elections violence are characteristic features in our region and ECOWAS Commission ensures observations of elections for peaceful transition to thrive. Any breakdown of law and order, the weapons of choice are always the SALW with grave consequences.

At the continental level, Chair, the ECOWAS Commission as a regional economic community (REC) supports the implementation of the African Union Master Roadmap for the strategy on silencing the Guns by 2020. Again, with the support of the Government of Germany, the ECOWAS Commission hosted its Member States in Dakar in May 2018 where key priorities were elaborated and adopted for the region as well as for each of the Member
States. While each MS will implement its priority based on their specificities, at the regional level, ECOWAS is promoting crosscutting priorities in the region that include effective border management, tracing and PSSM practices, among others.

At this juncture, permit me on behalf of ECOWAS to express my deep appreciation to our cherished partners who have supported the Commission and our Member States, technically and financially to have come this far in the fight against SALWs, which are too numerous to mention. ECOWAS Commission shall continue to count on your support, as we step into the next and more critical phases, in the implementation of our regional, continental as well as international SALW control instruments.

On international cooperation and assistance, we acknowledge the support and collaboration with UN agencies such as UNoDA, UNDP and UNIDIR, among others.
Mr. Chair, in perspective, it's the desire of the Member States of the ECOWAS Region to have as part of the outcome of this conference that ammunition control is included in the UNPoA. In the same vein, we are concerned more with the challenges presented by recent developments in SALW manufacturing than the opportunities as purported.

I wish to conclude by inviting participants at a Side Event to be organize by ECOWAS and its partners as displayed in the notices and online, please.

Mr. Chairman, distinguished delegates, I thank you all for your attention!!!