

ADOPTED VERSION

STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE AFRICAN GROUP

BY

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AFRICAN GROUP FIRST COMMITTEE EXPERTS ON DISARMAMENT
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THEMATIC DEBATE OF THE FIRST COMMITTEE:
CONVENTIONAL WEAPONS CLUSTER

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Mr. Chairman,

The African Group aligns itself with the Statement delivered by the Representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

2. The Group remains deeply concerned over the illicit trade, transfer, manufacture, possession and circulation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs), their excessive accumulation and uncontrolled spread in many regions of the world, particularly on the continent of Africa especially in light of their wide range of humanitarian and socio-economic consequences, particularly on the continent of Africa.

3. In this regard, the African Group attaches great importance to the central role of the United Nations Programme of Work (UN PoA) to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and International Tracing Instrument (ITI) as crucial multilateral instruments dedicated to fighting the illicit flow of SALWs and tackling their multifaceted effects, which pose a threat to international peace and security.

4. The Group remains committed to the implementation of UN PoA and welcome the successful convening and adoption of the consensual outcome document of the Eighth Biennial Meeting of States (BMS8), held from 27 June to 1 July 2022 in New York.

Mr. Chairman,

5. The Group recognizes the extensive work done towards addressing illicit trade in SALWs including the Bamako Declaration (2000), the AU Constitutive Act, the Protocol on the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council of the AU (2002), the Solemn Declaration on a Common African Defence and Security Policy in Sirte (2004), the Nairobi Protocol, the SADC Protocol (2004), the ECOWAS Convention (2006), efforts in the framework of CENSAD and the Arab Maghreb Union, the African Union Agenda 2063, the Initiative of Silencing the Guns in Africa, and other sub-regional initiatives.

6. The African Group acknowledges the efforts by States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) since its entry into force, as well as the Eighth Conference of the States Parties (CSP8) to the Treaty held from 22 to 26 August 2022 in Geneva. The Group urges States Parties to the Treaty to implement it in a balanced and objective manner that protects the interests of all States and not just the major international arms producing and exporting States. The Group reaffirms the sovereign right of States to acquire, manufacture, export, import and retains conventional arms, their parts and components for their security needs in accordance with the UN Charter. The full implementation of the Treaty remains achievable with the cooperation of all.

Mr. Chairman,

7. 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. Chairman,

8. The African Group stresses the need to establish and maintain controls over private ownership of small arms, and calls on all States to ensure that the supply of SALWs 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 SALWs. 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.

9. 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.

10. In this context, the African Group wishes to call on all States to fulfill their obligations regarding reporting, technological transfer, and ensuring the unhindered flow of international cooperation and assistance as mandated by the UN. The Group also, urges Member States of the UN from developed economies to render more technical and financial assistance to developing countries in the realization of the overall objectives of the UN PoA and the ITI, with a view to eradicating the illicit trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons. The Group believes such efforts will promote national and regional initiatives and assist efforts at the global level.

Mr. Chairman,

11. 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.

12. 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 PoA and the ITI.

13. 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.

14. In this regard, the Group wishes to reiterate its strong support for 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 Member States to expedite the implementation of the UN Fellowship Programme after considering the different proposals submitted by the Secretariat in this regard.

15. I thank you for your attention.

