The Permanent Mission of the Republic of The Gambia extends compliments to the Department of Disarmament Affairs of the United Nations and with reference to the latter's note, has the honour to forward herewith the National Report of the Republic of The Gambia on the Implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade of Small Arms and Light Weapons in all its Aspects.

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of The Gambia seizes the opportunity to renew to the Department of Disarmament Affairs of the United Nations the assurances of its highest consideration.

New York, 9 July 2003

The Under Secretary General
for Disarmament Affairs
UN Headquarters
New York
REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME OF ACTION TO PREVENT COMBAT AND ERADICATE THE ILICIT TRADE IN SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS IN ALL ITS ASPECTS – THE REPUBLIC OF THE GAMBIA

A) INTRODUCTION

Small arms proliferation is principally seen as a Police/Crime issue, a conflict prevention/resolution issue or a relief/development problem. Each of these frame works suggests different remedial policies and different priorities. The fight to curb the proliferation of small arms is therefore very difficult and complex. Governments and NGOs have tried to tie together all the facets of the problem, but it is clear that there is no one solution. Thus the problem is ongoing and a web of initiatives and approaches are needed to reduce the illegal and over supply of these weapons.

The Gambia as a signatory to many international, Regional and Sub-regional protocols and conventions has made significant progress in the implementation of important treaties and protocols relating to international peace and security. Of notable examples in this area are the following:-

1. The signature and ratification of the Ottawa treaty on anti-personnel mines;

2. The Gambia’s adherence and agreement to be bound by Amended Protocol II on Prohibitions or Restriction on the use of mines, Booby-Traps and other devices;

3. The Signature and Ratification of the Anti-Terrorism Legislation in accordance with United Nations Resolution 1373.

4. The Signature and Ratification of The Money Laundering bill and related offences.
5. The adherence to The ECOWAS Moratorium on the Importation, Exportation and Manufacture of Small Arms and Light Weapons.

All the above is a clear indication of The Gambia's commitment to global peace and security and the attainment of sustainable economic growth and prosperity.

B) IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME OF ACTION TO PREVENT, COMBAT AND ERADICATE THE ILLICIT TRADE IN SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS IN ALL ITS ASPECTS

As a follow-up to the United Nations global Conference on Small Arms held in 2001, the following implementation measures have been adopted by The Gambia.

1) National Co-ordinating Body on the I illicit Trade in Small Arms

The Gambia has recently established a National Commission on the monitoring of the illicit trade in Small Arms in accordance with the ECOWAS Mechanism for conflict Prevention Management Resolution and Peacekeeping in the ECOWAS Sub-region;

This national commission, under the project portfolio of The United Nations Programme of Co-ordination and Assistance for Security and Development (PCASED) has not only been established but that its composition reflects the highest profile of stakeholders in the Country. It operates at the level of The National Security Council and its Chairman is the Secretary of State for The Interior;

The Gambia National Commission on the 3rd to 5th June 2003, successfully hosted the 3rd Networking Seminar for National Commissions on Small Arms from ECOWAS Member Countries, three months after the United Nations Security Council Special Session on the Scourge of Arms proliferations and trafficking in West Africa;
A grant support of $7,500 from PCASED has already been utilized for the purchase of computer equipment and related software for the Office of The National Commission. This equipment will be utilized by The Ministry of Defence as the Secretariat of The National Commission to establish an efficient database on illegal arms collection and destruction amongst other activities to be done by The National Commission.

Another grant support of $25,000 is being pursued from PCASED to implement micro projects already identified as follows:

**National Security Sensitization**

This activity has been ongoing for the past 5 (five) years under the co-ordination and guidance of The National Security Council. The National Security Sensitization targets the following stakeholders:-

- District and Municipal Mayors, Counselors, and Village Level Committees;
- Provincial Commissioners and District Chiefs
- Youth organizations and Women's groups
- Members of Parliament
- Non-Governmental Organizations etc.

All these relevant Stakeholders constitute National Security Sensitization Committees at divisional level.

**Functions of the Committees**

The main functions of the committees are as follows:

- To enhance the Culture of Peace by Sensitizing Local Communities on the dangers of allowing the Culture of Violence to permeate their societies. This is done in the form of establishing Community Radio Stations where the Local People are fully
informed of the following threats to Community Welfare and Security

- Armed Robbery
- Cattle Theft
- Drug Trafficking

The above-mentioned crimes involve the use of illicit firearms and other light weapons. These crimes have been on the increase in The Gambia and Youth Vigilante groups have been formed at district level under the ambit of The National Youth Action Movement. These groups work in close consultation with District Authorities and the Security Services to enhance Community Policing and the collection of illegal firearms in the hands of criminals. The following examples can be cited:

- On January 11, 2003 in the late night hours, robbers armed with an AK 47 rifle attacked shops along border villages. Fifty-one (51) empty cases of AK 47 rounds were found at the scene when a combine Security and youth groups visited the scene;

- On Sunday May 16th, 2003, four (4) armed robbers with one pistol and hunting guns were reported to have attacked a shop making away with $1000.00 worth of merchandise in a remote village in the upper River Division.

What the foregoing captures is not only the emerging trend of armed robbery but also the introduction of the use of small arms and light weapons in these criminal activities.

The disturbing aspect of the entire scenario is the use of small arms such as AK 47s, weapons that are meant to be strictly used by Government forces. In view of the above evident threat such arms pose, The Government of The Gambia deemed it necessary to enhance existing controls and to also establish new mechanisms to address the problem of small illicit arms circulation. Some of these are as follows:-
- Capacity building of the entire Security Service. This involves combined training of all security operatives on Community crime, arms control and detection techniques, etc. This training is currently being done at the Armed Forces training school under the direction of a Turkish Technical Assistance Team;

- Strengthening the Firearms Act to give more powers to the Inspector General of Police to enter and Search (by Force if need be) any place, ship or vehicle if suspected that firearms or ammunition are being kept, transported, landed or used unlawfully. He may demand the production of license or authority and can seize and destroy any firearms or ammunition believed to be unlawfully kept etc.

- The establishment of National Drug Control Council to Monitor the Circulation of drugs and to supervise their destruction. The linkage between drug trafficking and arms sale is evident;

- The decentralization of the dispensation of Justice to the Communities to enhance the speedy dispensation of Justice in cases of cattle theft. Cattle theft is on the increase and those involved often use illegal firearms to engage in this activity;

- Public awareness to enhance the culture of Peace through the National Security Sensitization earlier mentioned;

- Training Programme for the Military and other Security Organs on the Law of armed conflict and children in armed conflict in close consultation with the Christian Children Fund (CCF);

- Strict adherence to the ECOWAS moratorium on the importation, Exportation and Manufacture of Small Arms and Light Weapons.
CONCLUSION

The Gambia will certainly work in concert with the International Community to foster common dialogue and understanding in the area of Small Arms. Some achievements have been made by The Gambia in the implementation of The Programme of Action, although more achievements are yet to be made as well. Notwithstanding, it is also our strong view that the Small Arms threat cannot be effectively addressed without adequately dealing with the supply-side of the Small Arms equation. The rhetoric of concern must be followed by the substance of Practical action.

Department of State for Defence and Secretariat, National Commission on Small Arms,
Banjul,
The Gambia.

2nd July 2003