Mr. President,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me begin by extending sincere congratulations to you, Mr. President, on your election to chair this historic Conference. This reflects the confidence the world has in you to successfully guide this Conference and ensure a fruitful outcome. Botswana fully aligns itself with the statement made by Namibia on behalf of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Member States.

Mr. President,

It is estimated that about one thousand three hundred people (1,300) worldwide are killed daily with illicit military weapons. The most prolific killers have relied not on complex high-tech weapons systems but on cheap, readily available and easy to handle small arms. Low-tech weapons like assault rifles, machine guns, pistols and hand grenades, have been responsible for the misery, suffering and, most
importantly, an appalling toll to the peoples of the world. Deaths caused by these weapons are the second greatest after the HIV/AIDS scourge. This is a global problem that needs a global solution.

Mr. President,

I am grateful that we gather here today to embark on efforts to curb illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. The source of illicit weapons is the licitly traded weapons. Millions of originally legal traded small arms and light weapons end up illegally in the hands of individuals and small groups in conflict ridden parts of the world. In this regard, there is need to address the issue of illiciticity of these weapons at its origins. A great deal of our efforts should be targeted at strengthening our national machineries to effectively curtail the large numbers of small arms and light weapons in circulation today. The ever increasing production and transfer of these weapons between and among different stakeholders add to the dimension of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

The Draft Programme of Action clearly outlines measures that States could undertake at the national level to address the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. These measures enjoy our support. As explicitly captured in the Draft Programme of Action and in line with the SADC Heads of State and Government Declaration on Firearms, Ammunition and Other Related Materials, adopted at Windhoek on 9th March, 2001, there is need to put in place adequate laws, regulations and administrative procedures to exercise effective control over the legal manufacture, stockpiling, transfer and possession of small arms and light weapons within States’ areas of jurisdiction. States should prevent the manufacture, stockpiling, transfer and possession of any unmarked or inadequately marked small arms and light weapons. My delegation would like to see prohibition in the unrestricted civilian possession of military small arms and furthermore, the total prohibition of the possession and use of light weapons by civilians. It is important that State’s undertakings should contribute towards the advancement of the cause of the global world.
Let me at this juncture, pay tribute to Ambassador Carlos dos Santos of Mozambique, who through his diplomatic skills diligently chaired the Preparatory Committee Sessions that culminated in the production of a remarkable and balanced Draft Programme of Action that has accommodated diverse views of delegations.

Mr. President,

Botswana continues to be committed to address the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons at the national level through the 'Arms and Ammunition Act' which is administered by the Commissioner of Police. The Act regulates manufacture, importation and exportation, sale and transfer, and records, storage and safe custody of arms and ammunition. Furthermore, the Act provides for the establishment of an Arms and Ammunition Quota Board. In addition, there is a Central Arms Registry where all information relating to arms and ammunition is recorded.

Under the laws of Botswana, no person is allowed to own, purchase, acquire or possess any arms or ammunition except under and in accordance with an arms license issued by the Commissioner of Police. Furthermore, no person is allowed by way of trade or business, purchase, sell or transfer, or accept or expose for sale or transfer or possess for sale or transfer, any arms or ammunition unless he/she is a registered arms dealer. The buyer should also be the holder of an arms acquisition permit authorizing him/her to purchase, acquire or possess the arms or ammunition in question.

No person is allowed to import any arms or ammunition except under and in accordance with an import permit issued by the Commissioner of Police. Arms or ammunition for the purpose of sale are imported only under the authority of an arms dealer's import permit. No person is allowed to export any arms or ammunition except under and in accordance with an export permit issued by the Commissioner of Police.

All arms and ammunition imported into Botswana, either for the purpose of sale or for the personal use of the importer, are registered and consequently issued a registration certificate. Every registered arms dealer keeps a register of transactions relating to his/her business as a dealer, including the sale, transfer, repair, test or
proof of arms and the sale or transfer of arms and ammunition. Every registered arms dealer makes suitable provision at premises of business for the storage and safe custody of all arms and ammunition in his/her possession to the satisfaction of the Board.

Mr. President,

Our blanket application of laws to military and civilian firearms has greatly contributed to the reduced circulation of arms and ammunition in all its aspects in the country and hence, significantly curb illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. However, being a country fortunate to enjoy many years of high economic growth and furthermore, located in a sub-region which for many years has been the scene of protracted wars of liberation and consequent proliferation of small arms including light weapons, Botswana has not been saved from the ever-increasing armed crime. Illegal weapons have contributed to the high incidence of crime such as armed robbery, car hijacking and murder. It is common knowledge that a country might have a rigorous legal code to control firearms but enforcement is always a challenge.

Mr. President,

Namibia on behalf of SADC Member States, has explicitly outlined the role that our sub-region continues to play to stop illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, and I will not repeat those. I, however, wish to highlight certain regional and global aspects that are important to my delegation in as far as the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons is concerned.
It is only fitting that voices of those that are most affected by the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons must be listened to most. To this end, the Bamako Declaration, which in this case is a united voice of Africa, a region highly traumatised by the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, should be suitably accommodated. In this regard, my delegation strongly supports the Bamako Declaration and is grateful that it contributed towards the shaping of the Draft Programme of Action. There is need for the world to actively engage, support and fund the efforts of O.A.U. Member States in addressing the problem of the illicit proliferation, circulation and trafficking of small arms and light weapons in the African
continent. The international community should seriously consider ways to discourage and eliminate the practice of dumping excess weapons in African countries and in violation of U.N. Security Council arms embargoes. Trade in small arms should be limited to governments and authorized registered licensed traders only.

Mr. President,

In conclusion, we wish to highlight that tracing of illicit small arms and light weapons will require more cooperation between States than before. There would be need to provide financial and technical assistance to developing countries. It is our ardent hope that the national, sub-regional, regional and global mechanisms would form partnership to advance the cause of the global world. The role of the civil society in all these efforts cannot be over-emphasized. We have an obligation to make this a safer world.

I thank you.