STATEMENT

BY

HONOURABLE MR. OUSMAN BADJIE
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE INTERIOR AND RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE GAMBIA

AT

THE FIRST BIENNIAL MEETING OF STATES TO CONSIDER THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME OF ACTION ON SMALL ARMS

8 JULY 2003
NEW YORK
Madam Chairperson,

At the outset, let me thank you and members of the Bureau on your election. My delegation would like to assure you of our full support and cooperation in discharging your duties. We wish you the very best of luck for the successful conclusion of this debate.

The fight to curb the proliferation of small arms is 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 enactment of the Anti-Terrorism Legislation in accordance with United Nations Resolution 1373 (2001);

4. The enactment of the Money Laundering Act and related offences;

5. The Signature and Ratification of the Convention on Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocols;

6. 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.

Madam Chairperson,

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

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.

This National Commission, under the project portfolio of the United Nations Programme of Coordination and Assistance for Security and Development (PCASED) has not only been

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established but 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 (Minister) 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 of $25,000 is being pursued from PCASED to implement various micro projects relating to national security sensitization, small arms collection, etc.

Madam Chairperson,

In conclusion, let me reiterate that The Gambia will 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 substantive action.

Finally, let me take the opportunity to inform you that a detailed report of our national implementation programme of action has been completed and will be submitted during the course of this meeting.

I thank you.

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