Mr. President,
Mr. Secretary-General,
Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of my Government, of my delegation and on my own behalf, I would like to congratulate you on your election to chair this historic and important Conference on the Prevention, Combat and Eradication of the Illicit Trade of Small Arms and Light Weapons. We are confident that under your wise leadership and proven diplomatic skills, our debates will be crowned with success.

Our sincere appreciation and recognition goes to H. E. Mr. Kofi Annan for the able manner in which he has been leading the United Nations. Allow me to congratulate him for his unanimous re-election to continue providing his leadership and wisdom to this universal organization.
We also commend Ambassador Carlos dos Santos for the good work done in the preparatory process of the conference, clearly reflected in the draft programme of action before us, considered by all as a comprehensive document that addresses the major concerns of member states in a balanced manner. We hope that from the ground work done so far, we will be able to adopt a realistic, implementable and effective programme of action, comprising a set of concrete and tangible actions for preventing, combating and eradicating the illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

Mr. President,

The proliferation, excessive and destabilizing accumulation, and illicit use of small arms and light weapons poses a serious global threat to humanity. Initially perceived as affecting developing countries particularly the African ones, their negative impact is increasingly felt worldwide threatening individual and collective security of States, fuelling conflicts and violence, undermining democratic institutions and good governance, destabilizing democratically elected governments and perpetuating poverty and underdevelopment.

Illicit trade of small arms and light weapons is also associated with other evils such as violent crime, terrorism, illicit drug trafficking and money laundering, resulting in societies where fear and violence become social values. The global magnitude of the illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons culminated with a debate and subsequent adoption by the General Assembly, of resolution 54/54V that called for this conference to agree on a concerted international action for the prevention, combat and eradication of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. In the Millennium Declaration, the world leaders reiterated this call by committing themselves to spare no efforts to put an end to the illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons. In this regard, delegates should seize the opportunity offered by the conference to operationalize the prevailing political momentum, by adopting a forward-looking programme of action, effective in reducing the suffering endured by humanity, caused by these deadly weapons.

Mr. President,
In Mozambique the proliferation and illicit use of firearms is directly linked to the country's history characterised by long years of armed conflicts that resulted in the severe destruction of economic and social fabric, where the possession of firearms is no longer exclusively for the Armed Forces and Law and Order Institutions, ultimately becoming a means of survival for many citizens.

As a result of the General Peace Agreement and the establishment of the United Nations Peacekeeping Mission in Mozambique, UNOMOZ, a process of collection and destruction of firearms, used during the armed conflict has been initiated. This operation was particularly relevant by showing that a peace process should include a strong disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of ex-combatants component.

As the Peacekeeping Mission was phased out in my country, we soon realized that there was an increasing circulation, hidden arms caches and availability of firearms in the hands of unauthorized citizens, posing a threat to security, peace and social stability.

In this connection and in order to reduce the potential of violence, the government of Mozambique has defined as a priority the identification, disposal of arms caches and ultimate destruction of the weapons. Since 1995 to date we conducted 7 "Rachel" Operations, in which 533 arms caches were identified, leading to the destruction of 654,929 kilograms of armament, including 17,941 firearms, 574,036 ammunitions, and 18,259 types of ordnance.

Conducting these operations requires substantial financial resources and equipment that are beyond the Government's capacity. Such is the case for aircrafts, satellites, specialised equipment to detonate war devices and training of the staff that can ably carry out these activities. In this regard, the cooperation and close collaboration with the Republic of South Africa is of paramount importance not only for making them successful but also by providing a clear example of regional cooperation and partnership that is flourishing in Southern Africa.

The Government of Mozambique has encouraged initiatives from the Civil Society towards promoting and consolidating the culture of peace and nonviolence. One of the most remarkable initiatives is that of the Christian Council of Mozambique
through their Project of Transforming Arms into Hoes, known as TAE (Transformation of Arms into Hoes). Since the beginning of this programme in 1995, a total of 200,000 firearms of different calibres were collected and disposed of.

Another equally important civil society initiative is the transformation of seized or collected weapons into art instruments, some of which will be exhibited within the UN building during the conference.

As far as we are concerned these initiatives are a bridge between disarmament and socio-economic development, as the incentives provided in exchange for firearms, namely tractors, ploughs, bicycles, sewing machines, construction materials, school materials and others are relevant instruments for sustainable development, for those who benefit from it, while also helping to change the mindset that one can make a living without using a firearm.

Mr. President,

The regional dimension of the illicit trade and use of small arms and light weapons led to the adoption of a Declaration on Firearms, Ammunitions and Other Related Materials by the Summit of the Heads of States and Governments of the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), through which SADC leaders expressed their political will and determination of SADC to tackle this problem, by enhancing restrictive measures to curtail access and use of firearms by civilians and improving records, marking and control of firearms. It also seeks to improve the operational capacity of institutions responsible for Law Enforcement as well as to promote firearms awareness for the public. This will be followed by the entry into force in August 2001, of a corresponding Regional Protocol establishing guidelines for cooperation in this regard, as well as the foundations for the implementation of a plan of action.

Regarding the African continent where unfortunately peace is not yet a reality for some countries, we note that the growing concern over the proliferation and illicit use of small arms and light weapons has enabled us to come to this Conference with a common position enshrined in the Bamako Declaration, that enjoys the full support of the Government of Mozambique. This Declaration presents the African vision on how
to eradicate the illicit proliferation and trafficking of small arms and light weapons in the continent, including a set of recommendations for its implementation at national, regional and continental levels.

Mr. President,

We welcome the holding of this conference and commend the excellent work being done by delegates in the negotiations of the draft programme of action. The complex nature of the illicit proliferation, circulation and trafficking of small arms and light weapons and the multiplicity of interests and different situations prevailing in countries and continents demand a great deal of flexibility and diplomatic skills, qualities demonstrated by our negotiators and clearly reflected in the draft programme of action

We encourage the member states to further the steady political will and flexibility demonstrated so far, towards producing a doable, realistic and pragmatic programme of action. My Government believes that the draft contained in document L.4 Rev. 1 is a balanced proposal and we look forward to its adoption with minor amendments to strengthen its effectiveness and operationality.

The adoption of the Draft Programme of Action will contribute to the beginning of a new era in the combat of the devastating effects of the illicit use of firearms. The result we seek to achieve will be more significant if we are able to direct our national, regional and global efforts towards the dissemination of the outcomes of this Conference.

In order to ensure the successful implementation of programme of action, we should also focus on national and regional initiatives as they have a major impact on the affected communities. In this regard, my country is planning to convene national workshops in order not only to disseminate the results of the Conference but also to engage all segments of the society in a deep reflection on the phenomenon of violence and illicit use of firearms.

However, for national and regional initiatives to be effective, international assistance, and cooperation is fundamental to allow all countries to comprehensively implement
the recommendations of the programme of action. On the other hand, we believe that
the establishment of an effective implementation mechanism and follow-up within the
UN system is equally important, to ensure regular monitoring to record the success
as well as tackling the failures.

Finally, I would like to conclude my remarks by referring to the fact that under the
international movement of the destruction day, Mozambique has destructed the
symbolic figure of 1,511 arms of different types, to show the unequivocal
determination of my country to build a society free of illegal arms and violence, where
the culture of peace, dialogue and tolerance prevail.

Thank you very much.