STATEMENT

BY

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AT THE
FIRST BIENNIAL MEETING OF STATES ON THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME OF
ACTION OF THE 2001 UNITED NATIONS
CONFERENCE ON THE ILLICIT TRADE IN SMALL
ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS IN ALL ITS
ASPECTS

New York, 7 July 2003
Madam Chairperson
Excellencies
Distinguished Delegates

May I first seize this opportunity to congratulate Her Excellency Madam Kuniko Inoguchi for being elected as the Chairperson of the First Biennial Meeting of States on the Implementation of the Programme of Action of the 2001 United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. My congratulations also go to the entire esteemed members of the Bureau. My delegation holds high regards for your abilities to navigate the Meeting through discussions on the burning issue of small arms and light weapons.

The United Nations Conference on Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects held in July 2001 is and will remain to be hailed as the milestone, for it was the first time the world "grabbed the bull by horns" together to tackle the scourge of the proliferation and illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, with specific tasks and resolutions taken.

While small arms and lights weapons remain a menace to the global community, we have hopes that the eradication of illegal use of these arms in a near future will be the thing of the past. Our hopes are embedded in the resolutions taken in this very august assembly two years ago, and more so that we are here again to review the implementation of the programme of action, specifically Resolution IV (b) calling for biennial meetings to consider the implementation of the Programme of Action.

The proliferation and illicit trade in small arms and light weapons continue to prove as a multi-faceted scourge negatively affecting all aspects of humanity and pose serious challenges to our governments and people in new daunting ways.

Development and progress for the betterment of the lots of our peoples, particularly in many of the developing countries is kept at bay by the use of these weapons.

Our success in addressing the issue of small arms and light weapons lies in a collective responsibility at global, regional, and national levels.

While Africa is not a primary source of manufacturing small arms and light weapons, our people are today victims in immeasurable ways. This heavy burden is further exacerbated by the costly demand of the war we are waging against poverty, under-development and the horrific HIV/Aids pandemic.

Madam Chairperson

Namibia has ratified the SADC Protocol on Control of Firearms, Ammunition and Related Materials and has been party to numerous build-up initiatives taken at international, continental, regional and local levels which culminated in the resolutions we are discussing today.
Following the United Nations Conference of 2001, the Namibian Government demonstrated her unwavering commitment in implementing the decisions taken. In doing so, the First National Conference on Small Arms and Light Weapons was convened in Windhoek, our capital city, during October 2002. It was attended by a broad spectrum of relevant stakeholders and knowledgeable international and regional bodies and personalities. This Conference aimed at:

- raising public awareness among civil society;
- raising the international profile of Namibia as a country implementing the United Nations Programme of Action, Bamako Declaration of 2000 and the SADC Protocol on the Control of Firearms, Ammunition and Other Related Materials;
- sharing informing about the nature of national, regional and international commitments to implement programmes on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

Madam Chairperson

Reviewing extensively the issue of proliferation of small arms in general, and the control of firearms and ammunition in particular, and the nature of the initiatives undertaken to prevent, combat and eradicate the problem globally, regionally and nationally, the conference adopted resolutions meant to eliminate the scourge of small arms and light weapons in Namibia.

It established a National Focal Point comprising of relevant Ministries to comprehensively address the problem of proliferation and illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in the Sub-region, and ensure adequate laws and regulations and administrative procedures for effective control over the possession and transfer of these arms at the national level. The National Focal Point is responsible for:

- co-ordinating implementation of the Programme of Action of the United Nations;
- co-ordinating implementation of the resolutions of the National Conference;
- co-ordinating and interacting with the civil society and with other National Focal Points;
- facilitating the exchange and disseminating of information;
- conducting and facilitating research;
- identifying and applying lessons learned and
- building capacity for a sustainable approach to the problem of Small Arms and Light Weapons.

Cross-national agency training involving relevant government departments such as customs, military, wild life and justice is underway to improve information exchange, and promote joint operations and resource utilization in the country.
In Namibia redundant and obsolete weapons are destroyed as part of the management for permanent removal of undesirable small arms and light weapons in society. Illegal possession of firearms is a punishable offence and once a suspect is finally prosecuted and sentenced, his/her firearm is confiscated by the state and eventually destroyed.

The Government of the Republic of Namibia also hosted the Sixth International Conference of Chief Inspectors of Explosives which reviewed and discussed a variety of topics including the management of war debris in Regions previously affected by conflicts.

It further discussed the link between terrorism and explosives, and all technical aspects related to manufacturing, handling, storing, transporting, and destroying explosives in their various forms.

This Conference developed broad sets of recommendations including one pertaining to the Universal Uniformity in Management of Explosive, and to those concerning the need for Uniformity in Management of War Debris in Southern Africa.

A Pan-African Chief Inspectors of Explosives has been tasked with the translation of measures controlling and eradicating undesirable use of explosive into reality.

Southern African Police Conference on a Regional Common Approach to the Management of Explosive and War Debris will be convened in preparation, as an agenda, for discussion at the Southern Africa Regional Police Chief Co-Operation Organization (SARPCCO) in September 2003.

The Government of the Republic of Namibia supports and will continue to support all efforts aimed at alleviating and eradicating the carnage of death and destruction of human lives caused by small arms and light weapons. The opportunity we have afforded ourselves here at this important meeting ought to be maximized in using our resolve to enhance our efforts to implement the Resolutions before us and make progress in solving the problem of proliferation and illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects.

I thank you.