Statement
by
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The Chairman of the Rwanda National Focal Point on Small Arms and Light Weapons

at the First Biennial Meeting of States to consider the implementation of the Programme of Action to prevent combat and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects

New York, July 8, 2003
(Check against delivery)
Madam Chairperson,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Permit me on behalf of my country and my delegation to congratulate you on your election as the Chairperson of this conference. It is an election well deserved as manifested by the conduct of the conference so far.

Madam Chairperson,

We would like to associate ourselves with the statement made by the Nigerian Representative on behalf of African States. It reflects our common position.

The UN conference on small arms and light weapons in all its aspects of July 9-20, 2001 was the first of its kind. This conference of 7-11 July, 2003 was agreed upon by the representatives of the members states at the July 2001 conference to take place every two years.

I am delighted to note that the holding of this conference is in itself a general implementation of the Programme of Action to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects.

Madam Chairperson,

The Pretoria Conference of 18th-21 March 2002 on Needs and Partnerships was another mechanism of implementation organized by Safer Africa and Safer World to coordinate African countries towards the implementation of the UN Programme of Action, July 2001.

Madame Chairperson,

Over a period of two years, since the July 2001 Conference we have had successive Sub-regional meetings under the Framework of the Nairobi Declaration of the 15th March 2000 on small arms and light weapons. The objective of these conferences have been to review national progress on the implementation of the Nairobi Declaration which in effect amplifies the intentions of the UN Programme of Action of July 2001 in the Sub-region.
Nationally, Rwanda continues to strengthen the capacity of the National Focal Point as a means of enhancing implementation because it is the main mechanism of implementation of the programmes on small arms and light weapons in the country.

In this context, the National Focal Point was formally launched as a means of campaign awareness of the problem to the population and many, more members have been included from the Civil Society and concerned Government, Ministries and Departments in the process of developing a National Programme of Action to deal with the prevention, eradicating, combat of the Illicit Trade and Proliferation of small arms and light weapons in all its aspects.

Rwanda is undergoing democratic reforms and a new constitution was promulgated last June 2003. The existing legislation will also change under the ongoing law reform to conform to the modern legislative demands of firearms and light weapons. The importation and ownership will be strictly controlled.

In this regard, the National legislation will be harmonized with the UN Programme of action to combat the illicit trade and proliferation of small arms and light weapons. The cross-border proliferation of small arms and light weapons through non-state actors and other illegal means are the main problem in the Sub-region. The solution therefore lies in the working together of the countries of the Sub-region by harmonizing National Legislation and other concerted effort.

No single State can Boast of eradicating this scourge single handedly. The International Community should play a major role particularly in assisting National Institutions to build competent capacities to deal with the problem.

Madam Chairperson,

In spite of all the efforts of the Government of Rwanda and the initiatives taken by the countries of our sub-region, the Ex-FAR and Interahamwe militia that are responsible for the 1994 Genocide in our country still roam the country side of DRC with large amounts of small arms and light weapons and with the aim of coming back to complete their unfinished business.
These Forces and Other Non-State Actors in the Sub-region are the main cause of insecurity and proliferation of Small arms and Light weapons. Urgent attention is required by the International Community.

That’s why the problem of the illicit trade and proliferation of small arms must be reviewed not only in the Great Lakes but globally and must be defined and seen not downstream but upstream. We cannot simply wish away the problem. Practical and decisive steps should be taken by the International Community to help National States.

The existing State regulations and controls in some States are evidently inadequate to prevent illicit arms trafficking or excessive and destabilizing accumulations and flows of small arms and light weapons in many countries and regions. Weaknesses in some national laws, regulations, licensing procedures and enforcement mechanisms are exacerbated by insufficient political will, inconsistent approaches and inadequate coordination and cooperation at the national, bilateral, regional and global levels.

There is wide variation in national systems for regulating the manufacture of small arms and light weapons, their parts and components, ammunition and explosives, and associated technologies and services, and in most countries such activities are well regulated. However, in some States, there are problems of insufficient State control, licensing or authorization of the manufacture of such goods, and of the stockpiles of arms kept by manufacturers and dealers. There are gaps in some States’ laws. Legal definitions vary, as do systems for regulation and oversight and minimum standards relating to record-keeping and conditions of manufacture. Similarly, since prescribed standards and techniques for marking weapons during the process of manufacture also vary substantially, in some cases marking and record-keeping systems are inadequate to enable weapons tracing.

When they exist, regional effort, by their very nature, do not address the global nature of the sources of small arms and light weapons and the increasingly transnational networks of brokers, dealers, financiers and transporters.
There is acute shortage of Resources to deal with the problem. The International Community should address the issue of Resources urgently. The manufacture of small arms and light weapons should be called upon by the International Community to account for their actions and or face sanctions from their lack of Accountability. It should be strictly forbidden to sell any type of weapons to the Non-State Actors and Nations that provide assistance to these groups should be penalized.

One major ray of hope is the National political will to deal with the problem both at the National and Regional levels.

I thank you Madam Chairperson