STATEMENT BY THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE GREAT LAKES REGION (ICGLR) TO THE OPEN ENDED MEETING OF GOVERNMENTAL EXPERTS ON THE UNITED NATIONS PROGRAMME OF ACTION (UNPoA) ON SALW, NEW YORK, 11 MAY 2011.

(BY SINGO MWACHOFI, PROGRAMME OFFICER, PEACE AND SECURITY)

Mr Chairman, I wish to join other delegates in congratulating you for being elected Chair of this meeting and for the excellent manner in which you have conducted the business of the meeting so far.

Secondly, on behalf of the International Conference on the Great Lakes region, I wish to appreciate the efforts of the United Nations in fighting the illegal proliferation of SALW. I also wish to express our appreciation for the recognition and involvement of experts from member states of the ICGLR in this important meeting.

I wish to recall that the ICGLR is a regional initiative of 11 member states of the great Lakes region namely Angola, Burundi, Central African Republic, Republic of Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia. The underlying objective of the ICGLR is to promote member state cooperation on tackling Peace and Security challenges within the Great Lakes region, among them the challenge of proliferation of illegal Small Arms and Light Weapons.

Member states have showed unwavering commitment to implementing illegal SALW control programmes through a holistic regional approach. Within the context of the implementation of the UNPoA, progress has been made, notably: the ratification of regional instruments on SALW in particular the Nairobi protocol which covers all but only two members of the ICGLR. The Republic of Congo joined the RECSA protocol in 2009, while Central African Republic has applied to join RECSA. Ten of the eleven members of ICGLR have ratified the ICGLR Pact on Peace, Security and Development and are actively implementing its provisions; Cooperation with Regional Economic Communities (RECS) in particular the EAC, IGAD, and COMESA all of which are implementing Peace and Security programmes that have strong SALW projects; Close working relationship with African Union, as a member of the African Union Regions’ Steering Committee on Small Arms and Light Weapons and the African Union Border Programme; partnerships with Civil Society organizations, most notably the Institute for Security Studies (ISS), ACCORD and national CSOs working on small arms issues in the region.
The Regional Centre on Small Arms (RECSA) is one of our most important partners. RECSA was mandated by the member states to foresee implementation of the ICGLR SALW programme and has steadfastly supported our member states since RECSA’s establishment in 2005. RECSA has helped our member states with electronic arms marking machines and training, data bases, disarmament including the development of Best Practice Guidelines on Practical Disarmament among others.

Mr. Chairman, some of the specific initiatives the ICGLR has undertaken in the context of the implementation of the UNPoA are disarmament, Transborder cooperation initiatives, the Fight against Illegal exploitation of natural resources, and the promotion of social and economic development as a measure to fight SALW demand.

On disarmament, ICGLR member states are involved in measures to promote regional cooperation in disarmament of armed negative forces, and also the disarmament of illegally armed communities. I recall the meeting of ICGLR Regional Interministerial Committee Meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs held on 5-6 May in Brazzaville, the Republic of Congo during which the ministers decided to hold a meeting of Defence and Security Ministers from the region to deliberate on measures to deal with illegal armed groups in particular the Lord’s Resistance Army, the FDLR and the ADF. The Governments of Uganda and the Central African Republic made presentations on the growing negative impact of the LRA and called for the support of the region and the region international community to tackle the problem. The Ministers supported ongoing efforts against the LRA spearheaded by the African Union, and other international actors and called for harmonized interventions. The ICGLR remains engaged with other actors in finding lasting solutions to peace in the Eastern Parts of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

On the disarmament of communities, the ICGLR is facilitating regional cooperation initiatives involving the member states of Kenya, Uganda, Sudan and Ethiopia on the disarmament of illegally armed nomadic pastoralists in the Karamoja cluster. The establishment of a regional disarmament committee, simultaneous disarmament and development activities, social and economic development activities to address demand factors of SALW are some of the activities already undertaken.

On transborder cooperation initiatives, under the ICGLR transborder cooperation framework, Rwanda, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo (the ICGLR has 12 designated border zones) through a series of national and regional consultations held in 2009-2010, identified joint transborder projects to be implement jointly with a view to tackling common challenges experienced by the member states across the
common border, including strengthening border posts to curb trafficking of SALW. Unfortunately, there is a great risk that these projects will remain unimplemented because of lack of resources to implement them.

With regard to cutting the link between illegal exploitation of natural resources and conflict in the region, the ICGLR has prioritized the fight against illegal exploitation of natural resources as one of the key measures to stabilize the region. In December 2010, ICGLR Heads of States endorsed six tools developed to curb illegal exploitation of natural resources. These tools are now being implemented with the support of partners in particular the Government of Germany, through the GIZ, Canada, and the Netherlands. It is expected that funding from illegal sale of natural resources will no longer be available to purchase illegal SALW once this initiative is fully implemented.

**Partnerships**

The ICGLR is cooperating with key partners on the fight against the proliferation of illegal SALW namely: the Regional Centre on Small Arms (RECSA); the African Union; Regional economic Communities (EAC, COMESA, IGAD and CEPGL) in disarmament and other peace building initiatives; Bilateral donors (Germany, Canada, Netherlands support RINR, and capacity building); The UN (cooperation with MONUSCO on peace efforts in Eastern DRC), UNHCR on IDPS, UN Women support to the ICGLR gender Unit; Civil Society organizations (Institute for Security Studies, ISS) on Disarmament in Karamoja, ACCORD on peacebuilding training, to name a few.

**Challenges**

Notable challenges experienced include insufficient resources to address demand factors for SALW, disarmament issues and border control initiatives; coordination challenges, limited awareness and negative perception of SALW; lack of appropriate legal provisions to guide marking; some countries have received marking machines and training but are yet to start marking; RECSA doesn’t have all financial resources to push the process forward and should therefore be assisted.

**What we require from the International Community**

Financial, material and technical assistance to implement SALW control programmes; political and diplomatic support to peacebuilding initiatives in the region, including dealing with illegal armed groups such as LRA and FDLR; increased international assistance to implement all aspects of the UNPoA; support to member states in the region who are already implementing marking, record keeping and tracing.