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REMARKS BY

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AT THE

UN CONFERENCE TO REVIEW PROGRESS MADE IN 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

United Nations Headquarters, New York
27th August to 7th September, 2012
Madam President,

The Ghana delegation joins other speakers in congratulating you on your election as President of this Review Conference and look forward to working with you and other officers of the Bureau to achieve the objectives of this Conference.

Ghana wishes to associate itself with statement made by Indonesia, on behalf of the Non Aligned Movement, and Nigeria, on behalf of African Group.

Madam President,

Indeed, I believe you would agree that small arms and light weapons are weapons of choice in most internal conflicts, especially in Africa, for a number of reasons: they are widely available, relatively cheap, portable, lethal, long-lasting, simple to use and easy to transport. Given the scale of harm and instability that Small Arms and Light Weapons has caused in Africa, we have no reason not to side with the voices that have described small arms as the true weapons of ‘mass destruction’ particularly in Africa.

Despite these setbacks, we believe and acknowledge that the developments in the last ten years, with regards to the objectives set forth in the UN Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (UNPoA) and the International Tracing Instrument (ITI), have provided a useful framework for small arms control in Ghana.

Firstly, for the effective implementation of the UNPoA, Ghana has developed a strategic national plan of action on the proliferation of small arms based on the provisions and objectives of the UNPoA.

The National Action Plan for Arms Control and Management, as we call it, provides the framework for a comprehensive set of activities to ensure the effective and efficient control and management of arms in the country. Specifically, it is the core document that guides the Ghana’s efforts to arrest the proliferation and the misuse of
small arms, and eradicate the threats posed by small arms and light weapons to human security.

Secondly, the Ghana National Commission on Small Arms, of which I am the Executive Secretary, was established in the spirit of the provisions of the PoA and as part of the implementation of the specific ECOWAS Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, their Ammunition and Other Related Material which entered into force in September 2009. In that regard, Ghana is part of one of four clusters formed by ECOWAS to enhance inter-national exchange of views and technical cooperation.

Our National Action Plan consists of five strategic action areas, which include:
1. Small arms control through policy and legislative reforms, infrastructure development and capacity enhancement;
2. Alternative livelihood programmes for local blacksmiths who form the nucleus of indigenous small arms manufacturers in Ghana and also for communities with high incidence of proliferation;
3. Border control and cross-border crime initiatives; arms and ammunition stockpile inventory taking aimed at maintaining accurate statistical information on quantities and quality of stocks of weapons and ammunition in Ghana; and
4. Raising public awareness to the dangers to peace and security posed by small arms, as well as development of strategies needed to reduce their proliferation.

Madam President,

Ghana continues to work closely with the sub-regional organization, the Economic Community of West Africa States [ECOWAS], in the area of small arms and light weapons control and is determined to comply with arrangements and agreements reached at the level of ECOWAS, the Africa Union and the United Nations.

At this stage, permit me to reiterate that our collaboration with civil society has been fruitful.

However, our major challenge relates to the conceptual placement of the whole idea of integrated small arms control into a sector that has been the traditional preserve of
the mainstream security agencies. Thus, national small arms commissions in Ghana and in West Africa as a whole require substantial resource support, including training, to deliver on their national level mandates.

In addition, the extent of local manufacture of craft weapons that are able to utilize orthodox cartridges provide a source of cheap but effective weapons and ammunition to criminals with its attendant effect on community level safety and low intensity conflicts in Ghana.

These are two major areas that Ghana would like to highlight as part of the deliberations of this conference.

Madam President,

It our fervent hope that based on experiences, best practices and lessons shared over the next two weeks we shall leave this conference with clear commitments and strategies to enhance our efforts in dealing with the illicit trade and manufacture of small arms and light weapons.

I would like to conclude by indicating that my delegation welcomes the call on States to recognize the need to strengthen casualty recording and ensure the rights of victims of armed violence and, therefore, supports the amendment of the draft declaration to reflect this issue.

I thank you.