



STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE AFRICAN GROUP

BY

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AMBASSADOR AND PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
OF THE REPUBLIC OF GUINEA BISSAU, AND CHAIR OF THE AFRICAN
GROUP FOR THE MONTH OF OCTOBER 2025

AT

THEMATIC DEBATE OF THE FIRST COMMITTEE:
CONVENTIONAL WEAPONS CLUSTER

DURING THE 80TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL
ASSEMBLY

NEW YORK, TUESDAY, 23 OCTOBER 2024

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Mr. Chairman

The African Group aligns itself with the Statement delivered by the Representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

2. The Group remains deeply concerned over the illicit trade, transfer, manufacture, possession and circulation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs), their excessive accumulation and uncontrolled spread in many regions of the world, particularly on the continent of Africa, and emphasizes great concern regarding the humanitarian and socio-economic consequences of such an issue, and its overall detrimental impact on peace and security of the continent.

3. In this regard, the African Group attaches great importance to the central role of the United Nations Programme of Action (UN PoA) to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs) in All Its Aspects and the International Tracing Instrument (ITI). They are crucial multilateral instruments dedicated to fighting the illicit flow of SALWs and tackling their multifaceted effects, which pose threats to international peace and security.

4. The Group welcomes the adoption of the final outcome document of the 4th Review Conference by consensus in the implementation of the PoA, held in New York from 17 to 28 June 2024, and wishes to highlight the need to implement its

recommendations particularly; as pertains to strengthening the scope of international cooperation, technical and financial assistance, and capacity building, including inter-alia the establishment of a standing dedicated fellowship training programme on SALWs for developing countries. The Group also welcomes the successful outcome of the Tenth Conference of States Parties (CSP10) to the Arms Trade Treaty, which took place from 19-23 August 2024 in Geneva, Switzerland. The Group encourages States Parties to implement it in a balanced and objective manner, given its protection of the interests of all States and not just the major international arms producing and exporting States.

Chair,

5. The African Group acknowledges the efforts by States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) since its entry into force and urges States Parties to the Treaty to implement it in a balanced and objective manner that protects the interests of all States. The Group reaffirms the sovereign right of States to acquire, manufacture, export, import and retains conventional arms, their parts and components for their security needs in accordance with the UN Charter. The full implementation of the Treaty remains achievable with the cooperation of all stakeholders.

6. The Group recognizes the extensive work done towards addressing illicit trade in SALWs, including the Bamako Declaration (2000), the AU Constitutive Act, the Protocol on the Establishment of

the Peace and Security Council of the AU (2002), the Solemn Declaration on a Common African Defence and Security Policy in Sirte (2004), the Nairobi Protocol, the SADC Protocol (2004). Others are the ECOWAS Convention (2006), efforts in the framework of CENSAD and the Arab Maghreb Union, the African Union Agenda 2063, the Initiative of Silencing the Guns in Africa, and other sub-regional initiatives.

Chair,

7. Africa continues to be at the forefront of the regions that suffer the most from the effects of illicit trade and the transfer of small arms and light weapons, mainly produced outside the continent, yet acquired and used by unauthorized recipients and illegal armed groups within Africa. The African Group, thus, considers this meeting as another opportunity for the International Community to renew efforts to stem the tide of small arms and light weapons in conflict, to create an enabling environment for peace, security, and socio-economic development. It is important to state that promoting a peaceful, unfettered and inclusive participation of nations in global actions towards addressing the flow of illicit arms, particularly in Africa, will facilitate the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the African Union Agenda 2063.

8. The African Group as well stresses the obligation of States primarily responsible for laying the explosive remnants of the second world war, particularly in the form of landmines outside their

territories, to cooperate with the affected countries, through information exchange, technical assistance for mine clearance, defrayal of the costs of clearance and compensation for any losses caused by mines laid.

Chair,

9. The African Group highlights the need to establish and maintain controls over private ownership of small arms and calls on all States to ensure that the supply of Small Arms and Lights Weapons (SALWs) are limited only to Governments, or to entities duly authorized by the Governments of recipient states, and to also implement legal restrictions and prohibitions preventing the illicit trade. It is important to state that universal adherence to this undertaking can greatly contribute to the efforts aimed at eradicating the illicit trade and transfers of small arms and light weapons.

10. While the Group commends the efforts and contributions of several partners and donors, it is observed that international assistance to support the implementation of the Programme of Action is still not commensurate with the needs of affected countries. The African Group, therefore, emphasizes the need for further engagement in addressing the challenges faced by Africa with regards to the impact of the illicit flow of small arms and light weapons.

11. In this context, the Group wishes to call on all States to fulfill their obligations regarding reporting, technological transfer, and ensuring

the unhindered flow of international cooperation and assistance as mandated by the UN. The Group also urges Member States, especially developed States, to render more technical and financial assistance to developing countries in the realization of the overall objectives of the UN PoA and the ITI, with a view to eradicating the illicit trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons. The Group holds that such efforts would promote national and regional initiatives and assist efforts at the global level.

Chair,

12. The Group reiterates that such assistance should not be conditional in being part of, or detracting, from the recipient State's Official Development Assistance. To that end, adequate provision of training, equipment, transfer of technology, strengthening of national capacity-building and the mobilization of financial resources are, in particular, an important segment of international assistance and cooperation.

13. In addition, the establishment of mechanisms to increase the effectiveness of international assistance and cooperation remains a critical aspect in the process of the implementation of the UN PoA and the ITI.

14. The Group also wishes to highlight the need for the UN to intensify the utilization of local expertise and resources available in developing countries in its activities to support the implementation of the PoA.

15. In light of this, the Group wishes to reiterate its strong support for the establishment of a UN Fellowship Programme on Small Arms and Light Weapons for developing countries, to train relevant officials nominated by their respective governments in areas related to the implementation of the PoA. We call on Member States to expedite action in the implementation of the UN Fellowship Programme after considering the different proposals submitted by the Secretariat in this regard.

16. The Group also stresses the need to address the legal, humanitarian, moral, and technical aspects of the use of Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS), as well as the risks associated with their use on international peace and security. We equally stress the centrality of human responsibility, in conformity to international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law, and recall in this regard the call of the UN Secretary General for a legal binding instrument to prohibit lethal autonomous weapons systems that function without human control or oversight by 2026.

17. I thank you for your attention.