

Permanent Observer Mission of the
AFRICAN UNION to the
United Nations

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STATEMENT

BY

**H. E. MR. TETE ANTONIO
AMBASSADOR, PERMANENT OBSERVER OF THE AFRICAN UNION
TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

**UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL THEMATIC DEBATE
"SMALL ARMS: THE HUMAN COST OF THE ILLICIT TRANSFER,
DESTABILIZING ACCUMULATION AND MISUSE
OF SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS"**

NEW YORK 13 MAY 2015

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Madame President,

Allow me first of all to thank you for organizing this open debate as well as for giving us the opportunity to present the African Union's perspectives on the very important question concerning the proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

I also wish to thank the Secretary General and the High Commissioner for Human Rights for their comprehensive briefings.

Madame President,

One of the major threats to peace and security in Africa, is the presence and continued proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW).

According to the statistic 2004 out of the approximate 500 million illicit small arms and light weapons in circulation worldwide, more than 100 million were in Africa. This number is growing in light of arms flows within and from outside the Continent, irresponsible trade and diversion, and taking advantage of the porous borders between countries as well as the absence of effective measures to control the illicit proliferation.

Although they do not in themselves cause conflicts and criminal or terrorist activities in which they are used, the wide availability, accumulation and illicit flows of such weapons

contribute to the escalation of conflicts; serious human rights violations, undermine peace agreements; put peace-keepers and humanitarian workers at risk and impede economic development, social stability, democracy and good governance in post-conflict settings.

Furthermore, the destructive continued existence of many Non-state actors, including insurgents, armed gang members, pirates and terrorists, has been consolidated by the easy availability of these weapons.

We therefore support the position expressed by the Permanent Representatives of the 3 African non permanent members of the Security Council, A3, namely Angola, Chad and Nigeria in this respect and regret that the resolution adopted today did not address the important issue of non-State actors, especially that consistent UN Reports corroborated this fact including in the context of the so called "Arab Spring".

It is indeed well known that countless arms have flowed from Libya into other North and West African countries as well as the middle east, fueling conflicts, terrorism and crime and causing further instability..

It should also be noted that at the heart of the Arms Trade Treaty, adopted after years of negotiations and hard work by all Member States, lies a true desire by all states to prevent irresponsible trade in arms and their diversion into the illicit

sphere. The Common African Position on an ATT adopted by the Assembly of the African Union prior to the March 2013 UN Conference called for a treaty that explicitly prohibits the transfer of conventional weapons to non-state actors. The principled position of the African Union on this matter is therefore undisputable and unwavering.

Madame President,

In the face of these challenges, the African Union continues its efforts aiming to address the scourge of illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) on the continent.

In addition to its longstanding support of the different instruments adopted within the UN framework, the AU has made significant progress over the recent years in terms of establishing the necessary mechanisms to control the circulation, transfer and use of small arms and light weapons in Africa.

In this regard, the “African Common Position on the Illicit Proliferation, Circulation and Trafficking of SALW”, also known as the Bamako Declaration, which was adopted by the Council of Ministers of the OAU in December 2000, remains the main policy Document. In this Declaration, Member States undertook to identify, seize and destroy illicit weapons.

In so doing, the African Union succeeded in bringing the different regions together to build synergies and collaborate in

addressing this issue through the establishment, since 2008, of the “AU-Regions Steering Committee on Small Arms and Lights Weapons”.

Charged with the task to coordinate the implementation of continental agreements related to SALW, promote exchange of experiences as well as research and data collection, the Steering Committee has developed the “African Union Strategy on the Control of Illicit Proliferation, Circulation and Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons”, which was adopted by Member States Experts in September 2011.

Furthermore, with the support of the European Union, the AU embarked in 2010 on a 3-year project on the “Fight against Illicit Firearms in Africa”, managed by the Regional Centre on Small Arms (RECSA). This project has been renewed for a further three years since July 2013 thanks to the substantial support of the EU.

Currently, the African Union is working with the Government of the Federal Republic Germany, within the framework of its G7 Presidency, on developing and launching a project focusing on enhancing Physical Security and Stockpile Management (PSSM) in the Sahel region. PSSM is an area where substantial work needs to be done and in which immediate gains can be made to prevent the diversion of arms procured for legitimate security needs into the illicit market.

Madame President,

Before concluding, allow me to stress that for the African Union, the problem of illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons requires the commitment of all states to resolve it holistically and in an integrated manner, through improving cooperation and coordination as well as reinforcing the capacities to regulate compliance with all aspects as provided for in the existing international and regional instruments.

Thank you.

2015

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Council thematic debat "Small arms:
the human cost of the illicit transfer,
destabilizing accumulation and Misuse
of small arms and light weapons"