Statement

By

The Representative of the Federal Democratic Republic Of Ethiopia

At

The First Committee of the 69th Session
Of The United Nations General Assembly

On

Thematic Debate: Conventional Weapons

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New York
Mr. Chairman,

My delegation wishes to extend its gratitude to the Secretary-General for his reports on this important subject and welcomes the increased focus accorded to the need to strengthen the implementation of the Programme of Action of the Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons.

Ethiopia fully aligns itself with the statements made by Nigeria and Indonesia on behalf of the African Group and the Non-Aligned Movement respectively.

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation believes that conventional weapons continue to claim tragic loss of innocent civilian lives, particularly the vulnerable ones, such as women and children, and also continued to represent major regional and global peace and security challenges in many parts of the world. There is no doubt that the negative impacts of these weapons are immense, not only in claiming increasing human lives indiscriminately but also in causing untold sufferings on peoples in different ways. They are responsible for long-term negative effects on hard-won peace and security gains, especially in post conflict situations, and also in hampering many countries’ socio-economic development efforts.

The irresponsible proliferation and illicit transfer of these Weapons is indeed a grave and pressing concern for regional states and international community. Because they are increasingly becoming significant contributing factor to armed conflicts and serious violations of international law, including international human rights instruments and humanitarian laws. Indeed, we have been witnessing over the years that many violent conflicts are being fueled across the African continent using these weapons, and in addition, that they are aggravating armed and
gender-based violence, organized crimes, gross human rights violations which, in turn, led to increased numbers of refugees and internally displaced persons. Globally, the challenges they posed not only necessitated adoption of international conventions such as SLAW, but also required international cooperation and coordination through regional and international organizations to address them in a meaningful manner.

To address these challenges and their adverse consequences, Ethiopia has been working closely with partners in our sub-region and with international community to enhance collective efforts in combating illicit brokering and trafficking of small arms and light weapons. We believe that it is crucial for all states to join universal efforts to implement the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons at national, regional as well as international levels as the problem of small arms light weapons is often transcend beyond national frontiers. In this regard, it is worth mentioning that the East and Central African region, through its Regional Centre on Small Arms, has continued to coordinate and assist member states to effectively control arms transfers within and outside the region.

**Mr. Chairman,**

Ethiopia suffers from landmines contamination left over from the conflicts dating back to the five year foreign occupation of the mid-1930s and other wars afterwards. For many years, they have negatively affected peoples’ lives, denying safe movement of people, and seriously hampering food security efforts and livelihood recovery in those areas affected by landmines.

My country is one of the first countries that joined the Anti-personnel Mine Ban Convention by signing it in 1997. We have become a state party in June 2005, following the ratification of the Treaty on 17 December 2004. And as state party
to the Convention, Ethiopia fully supports the international mine action efforts to clear mines from affected areas and ensure their destruction with the view to completely halting them from inflicting harms on innocent civilians and from impeding development endeavors.

The Convention on Anti-personnel is one of the most universally accepted and widely implemented disarmament treaties. In this regard, the recently held conference on this subject in Maputo will further help the implementation of the Convention as political will of the international community is clearly reflected in its outcome document.

**Mr. Chairman,**

Comprehensive measures and a strong commitment to effectively implement the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons are urgently required. Among the wide-ranging measures undertaken in this regard by the government of Ethiopia, includes the provision of gender and culture sensitive mine risk education in locations around the mine affected areas and de-mining project sites. Accordingly, since 2002, mine risk education has been given to close half a million people. As a result, most of those people who received the education have exhibited behavioral changes through different responses, including reporting a number of explosives and remnants of war from different locations as well as assisting the on-going clearance and survey activities. I am pleased to note here that Ethiopia, in compliance with article 7 of the Ottawa Treaty, has been reporting on the activities it has carried out every year since 2008.

Ethiopia has also fulfilled its international obligations under article 4 of the Treaty by completely destroying its stockpiles before the deadline. In addition, Ethiopia continues to exert its efforts to clear 58.4 sq kms antipersonnel mines and
explosive remnants of war from the country and is committed to promoting regional and international stability and disarmament.

Mr. Chairman,

In closing, Mr. Chairman, my delegation would like to seize this opportunity to reiterate, once again, that Ethiopia remains committed to continue to address the increased danger of proliferation of conventional arms, particularly small arms and light weapons, and calls upon all stakeholders to work together in the spirit of cooperation and demonstrate the required level of political commitment to curb the devastating impacts of these weapons have on the lives of millions of people the world over.

I thank you