STATEMENT

BY

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FIRST COMMITTEE DEBATE ON CONVENTIONAL WEAPONS CLUSTER

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Statement by Nigeria
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Mr. Chairman,

People have continued to die needlessly all over the world from arms and ammunitions procured illicitly by certain elements in the society especially insurgents and violent extremists that pursue only missions of destruction for their countries. The inclusion of at least seven draft resolutions on this Cluster, is an indication of deep concern by Member States over the magnitude of the challenge we face regarding the scourge of the proliferation of illicitly acquired conventional weapons.

While acknowledging that the international community has shown remarkable commitment in addressing this common challenge since the adoption of the UN Programme of Action in 2001, the increasing spate of threats to national and international security from illicitly acquired conventional arms requires that we redouble our efforts to properly articulate the role of conventional weapons vis-a-vis the security of States, peoples and territories. We are all too well aware of the enormous human toll and economic costs inherent in the transfer of conventional weapons to unauthorized recipients. Evidence abound that violence perpetrated by use of arms in conflicts kill, on the average, almost 600,000 people annually. From Africa to the Middle East and elsewhere, the unprecedented carnage and bloodshed unleashed by terrorists and gangsters have left cities and communities destroyed or deserted, including loss of precious lives, property and livelihood.
In Nigeria, the costs of terror fuelled by illicit acquisition and circulation of conventional arms have been enormous as the terrorist group, Boko Haram, have killed over 13,000 people and destroyed whole communities in the affected areas. The unfortunate kidnap of hundreds of persons, including the Chibok school girls, was a dastardly act depicting the viciousness and inhumanity of Boko Haram. The Group has now expanded its terrorist operations to other neighbouring countries in the Lake Chad Basin area namely Cameroon, Chad and Niger Republic. In response to cross-border terrorism by Boko Haram, Member States of the Lake Chad Basin Commission - Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria including Benin Republic – have decided to establish a Multinational Joint Task Force, coordinate the Force and deploy contingents along their common borders.

Mr. Chairman,

Over the past decade, Nigeria has been consistent in calling for non-transfer of small arms and light weapons to non-state actors and unauthorized end-users to avoid conflict situations as the international community is witnessing today with Boko Haram and other similar violent groups currently operating elsewhere, unleashing mayhem and committing unconscionable atrocities against innocent people including women and children. It is for these reasons that Nigeria is gratified that the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) will effectively enter into force on 24th December this year. Nigeria signed and ratified the treaty more than a year ago on 12th August 2013, in the hope that its robust, effective and indiscriminate implementation would become an efficient tool in regulating global transfer of conventional weapons to keep terrorists, insurgents and violent extremists at bay. Our next challenge is to ensure its
universality. We must insist that arms producers and brokers whose weapons end up in illicit hands are held to account. Furthermore, it is important that we plug all possible loopholes against acts of conventional terror through the establishment of a legally-binding international instrument on illicit brokering in small arms and light weapons.

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation welcomes the meeting held in Mexico last month, where more than 70 States and 25 observers participated in the first informal consultations for the First Conference of State Parties to the ATT as we look forward to the second meeting to be held in Germany this month. As we explore further options to ensure a successful First Conference of State Parties, we remain hopeful for a future that will bring about decisions on the establishment of a Secretariat to host ATT and one that truly reflects the hopes and aspirations of all States Parties. We equally welcome the successful convening of the 5th Biennial Meeting of States on UNPoA on SALWs in 2014.

In conclusion, we believe that time has come for the world to rise in unison against terrorism and other violent acts by groups that have no regard for human lives and engage in indiscriminate killing of civilians. We must deny them access to weapons and stifle them of funds and sponsorship. Towards this end, there is the need for enhanced international cooperation and assistance.

I thank you.