**SECURITY COUNCIL**

**OPEN DEBATE**

**SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS**

**13 OF MAY 2015**

Madame President,

I would like to thank and congratulate the Lithuanian Presidency for organizing this debate on a issue of the utmost importance given its harmful consequences to the lives of millions of people.

We thank the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-Moon, for his detailed insightful report on this issue, which is a central concern of the international community. We also thank High Commissioner for Human Rights, Prince Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein, and Mr. Karamoko Diakite for sharing with the Council your direct experience on what it means to live with violence resulting from proliferation of light arms.

Madame President,

As the Secretary-General’s report underlines, in accordance with the UN Charter, States have the right to self-defense. However, in addition to supplying weapons to their armed and security forces, many countries allow private security companies, as well as citizens, to possess firearms for their use and legitimate defense.

Unfortunately, many of these weapons fall into wrong hands, resulting in severe damage of alarming proportions, deaths of innocent people, violations of human rights and huge destruction of property; in many cases, they target UN peacekeepers supporting peace processes in several Member States.

Additionally, weapons are supplied or sold to non-state actors to fuel conflicts against established authorities, destabilize entire regions and societies leading, in last resort, to the creation of terrorist groups and armed criminal networks.

Angola was for many years victim of such deeds: an Angolan non-state actor was for many years armed and funded to challenge state authority causing death and despair which was only possible to neutralize, thanks to the resilience of the Angolan people and its will to live in peace and freedom.

Given the experience, we have lived so recently to building a state founded on the rule of law and also the situation prevailing in a number of countries in Africa and other parts of the world with conflicts, we have the moral duty and political responsibility to openly oppose the supply of small arms and light weapons especially to non-state actors. These have been our weapons of mass destruction.

Madame President,

It is alarming that, as a direct result of more than 250 armed conflicts and acts of violence recorded in the last decade, throughout the world, nearly 55,000 people lost their lives each year, and thousands are displaced from their areas of origin.

Even more alarming is that in many of these armed conflicts, thousands of children were recruited, used sexually and forced to commit acts of violence. The extensive availability of small arms and light weapons and their ammunition are a key facilitator, to the destabilizing armed conflicts, as well as to organized transnational crime and terrorism.

The trade and illicit flows of these weapons, which too easily fall in the hands of criminals, terrorists, pirates and other armed groups, is the main cause of the devastating situations in Iraq, Syria, Libya, Yemen, Somalia, Mali, Central African Republic among other countries.

Corruption, theft, and the lack of appropriate mechanisms for the management and control of weapons stockpiles, particularly in the phase of disarmament, has worsened the proliferation of, and illicit trade in, small arms and light weapons and their ammunition.

Hence, we welcome the entry into force, in December 2014, of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), to which the Republic of Angola acceded in September 2013 as a global control system for the transfer of weapons, including small arms and light weapons. This Treaty also complements and consolidates other legal instruments, namely the United Nations Protocol against the Production and Illicit Trafficking in Firearms, their parts and components, as well as their ammunition.

In this context, we also welcome the role that the United Nations Program of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in all its aspects (UNPoA), and its International Tracking Instrument,

We would like to highlight the role played by Regional Centers for Peace and Disarmament and by the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (ODA), in the fight against the proliferation of illegal weapons, as well as by others actors who have directly or indirectly contributed to prevent weapons from falling in the hands of non-state actors, rebels, criminal organizations, pirates, terrorist groups and others.

Madame President,

As a country that went through and experienced a devastating civil strife, which lasted for 30 years, the Government of Angola unequivocally supports all the efforts of the United Nations and the international community with a view to preventing, combating and eradicating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

Following the Arms Trade Treaty in September 2013, continuing progress has been made, with respect to legislative and administrative procedures: - the passing of a new law on private security companies, which aims to restrict the use of weapons of war for private companies; the review of legislation on the use and possession of firearms, as well as hunting and recreational arms; the enactment of legislation on the registration and marking of weapons; the implementation of changes in the functional regulation of the Army and the National Police weapons depositories and stockpiles.

However, this success wouldn’t t have been possible without the cooperation of the civil society and non-governmental organizations, such as the Council of Christian Churches of Angola (CICA), which has been spreading the message on the advantages of disarmament and the adoption of a culture of non-violence; the *Halo Trust*, which is dedicated to the destruction of obsolete weapons and mine clearance; In addition to these activities, there has been an increasing involvement, especially of young people, in conferences, debates and other *fora*, with the objective to adopt and disseminate new national laws in conformity with the United Nations Program of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in all its aspects (UNPoA).

Madame President,

Relating to international cooperation, Angola is a member of two sub-regional organizations, namely the Economic Community of Central African States (CEAAC) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC), and both have programs to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects.

Angola will continue to vigorously implement the United Nations Programme of Action, the compulsory collection of weapons, awareness campaigns, as well as participation in international meetings related to the issue.

In conclusion, Madame President, let me reiterate the attachment of Angola to the international instruments on arms control, especially the Arms Trade Treaty. We stand ready to continue to work with you Madame President and with other members of our Council in order to reach consensus and a resolution which takes clarity into account the burning problem of proliferation of small arms non-state actors who have been at the center of so many conflicts in our world and which are on this Council’s agenda.

Thank you.