Thank you Mr. Chairman,

Mr. Chairman, the proliferation and misuse of conventional weapons exact a terrible human toll each year. Lives are lost, communities are traumatized and societies live in fear. Economic development is stifled, stabilization and peacebuilding efforts are hampered, and human security, in all of its aspects, is compromised.

Canada remains fully committed to collaborative international action to address the negative effects of conventional weapons on the lives and livelihoods of people throughout the world. There have been significant developments on several conventional arms issues during the past year, and 2006 will present opportunities to build upon our collective achievements to date.

Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW)

Mr. Chairman, in 2001 UN member states gathered, “To develop and strengthen international efforts to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects”. This resulted in a strong UN Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons which has provided guidance and impetus for action by the international community for the past few years.

Within the framework of the Programme of Action, consensus was achieved in June 2005 on an instrument to mark and trace small arms and light weapons. Although Canada and many others would have preferred a legally binding instrument, this agreement will improve the tracing of small arms and light weapons throughout the world and reduce the incidence of illicit use. Canada congratulates Switzerland for its deft chairmanship of the Open Ended Working Group on Marking and Tracing, and fully supports the chair’s recommendation that the applicability of provisions of this instrument to United Nations peacekeeping operations be considered further within the framework of the United Nations.

The forthcoming Review Conference in July 2006 will be a seminal opportunity to review our work since 2001, to further elaborate the UN Programme of Action, and to develop communications and resource mobilization strategies to generate the political will and resources needed to fulfill our objectives in the years ahead. Among the specific areas that Canada would like to see discussed and addressed more comprehensively are: (i) transfer controls (including export criteria) and illicit brokering (ii) national regulation (iii) appropriate use of small arms and light weapons by state security officials and agents (iv) measures to reduce demand for such weapons, and (v)
ensuring that this issue is fully integrated into the national and sectoral development plans of affected developing countries.
Landmines

Mr. Chairman, turning to the world of mine action, progress has been remarkable. In just over five years, 147 nations have ratified or acceded to the Ottawa Convention that bans the production, stockpiling, use and transfer of anti-personnel mines and makes provision for rehabilitation and reintegration of survivors into their communities. More than 37 million stockpiled mines have been destroyed, vast tracts of land have been cleared and the global trade in such mines has virtually ended. Most important, the number of direct casualties has been cut from approximately 25,000 per year to between 15,000 and 20,000 victims per year.

The First Review Conference of the Ottawa Convention, The Nairobi Summit on a Mine Free World in November 2004, charted a clear course for the future in a visionary High Level Declaration and an ambitious 70 point Action Plan that will govern the work of states parties for the next five year period. Canada urges the 50 states not yet party to ratify or accede to the Ottawa Convention as soon as possible and to become part of the global effort to rid the world of the scourge of anti-personnel landmines for all time.

Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW)

Mr. Chairman, Canada is also pleased to be party to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and its protocols which address: Non-detectable Fragments, Mines, Booby Traps and Other Devices, Incendiary Weapons, and Blinding Laser Weapons. We have ratified Protocols I through IV and are currently preparing our instrument of ratification of Protocol V which seeks to ameliorate the humanitarian and development impact of Explosive Remnants of War.

Canada, like many others, is deeply concerned about all weapons that, by design or by the manner in which they are used, are prone to indiscriminate effect. We strongly encourage member states of the CCW to continue work aimed at improving the reliability of specific munitions, including sub-munitions, and to ensure that they are used only in a manner that complies fully with international humanitarian law.

Canada also supports prohibition of the use of undetectable Anti-vehicle Mines and will continue to promote the development of a legally binding instrument governing Mines Other than Anti-personnel Mines, at the next CCW Annual Meeting in November.

Mr. Chairman,

We know all too well that the cumulative effect from the illicit use of conventional weapons has been nothing less than horrific. I close by reiterating Canada’s commitment to working cooperatively with other UN member states to check their deadly legacy, and in so doing, to contribute to the creation of a more secure world for all.

Thank you.