STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATE FROM THE REPUBLIC OF CUBA, MRS. MARIETA GARCIA JORDÁN, IN THE THEMATIC DISCUSSION ON CONVENTIONAL WEAPONS. First Committee 63rd UNGA, 21st October 2008.

Mr. Chairman,

Increasingly sophisticated and deadly conventional weapons are developed and used in the world. Their growing killing power brings them closer to weapons of mass destruction. The military actions occurred in the last years, prove these weapons cause ever more "collateral damages", which provoke death and harm to thousands of innocent people.

As expressed by the Non-Aligned Movement, there is a significant imbalance between industrialized countries and developing countries concerning the production, possession and trade of conventional weapons. Industrialized countries must significantly reduce the production and trade of such weapons with the objective to promote international and regional peace and security.

We are concerned about the obvious imbalance in the priority given to determined categories of conventional weapons to the detriment of others, as sophisticated conventional weapons, the effects of which are significantly devastating.

Mr. Chairman,

Illicit arms trade has severe social, humanitarian and economic consequences in several countries, which see their right to life, peace and a sustainable development seriously compromised. To achieve the eradication of illicit trade in small arms and light weapons on medium and short terms, we must face the root causes.

Cuba has supported and will continue to support the United Nations Program of Action to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects. Our country also has fully implemented the commitments it entered into and cooperated with the practical initiatives and measures contained in the same.

Cuba defends the legitimate right of the States to manufacture, import and possess small arms and light weapons for their security requirements and legitimate defense, in accordance with Article 51 of the UN Charter.
Cuba supports the implementation of an effective follow-up mechanism ensuring the full implementation of the Program of Action. There has been some progress seven years after the Program was adopted. However, there is still much to do to achieve its full implementation.

International assistance and cooperation are of vital importance for all countries to move towards the full implementation of the Program of Action.

Mr. Chairman,

The Group of Governmental Experts, created under resolution 61/89, held its working sessions this year, in which a Cuban expert participated. This Group could not get to an agreement on whether a legally binding instrument, establishing common international standards for the export, import and transfer of conventional weapons is feasible or not.

It is important to highlight that the Group of Experts, in its final report, emphasized that this complex topic requires a balanced, open, transparent and “step by step” consideration, within the UN framework and or the basis of consensus. That is why, Cuba reiterates its willingness to continue considering this topic and appeals for the absolute rigor in this process. The complex question of conventional weapons transfers cannot be faced through easy solutions, nor admits preconceived or simplistic recipes.

Mr. Chairman,

Cuba, State party to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, fully shares the legitimate humanitarian concerns associated with the indiscriminate and irresponsible use of anti-personnel landmines.

Likewise, it is well known that our country has been subjugated for almost five decades to a policy of continuous hostility and aggression from a military superpower. As a consequence, it is impossible for Cuba to relinquish to the use of this kind of weapons to preserve its territorial sovereignty and integrity, under the right to self-defense recognized in the UN Charter. That is why Cuba is not State party to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction.

We will continue supporting fully all the efforts that, maintaining the necessary balance between the humanitarian and national security questions, are aimed at eliminating the terrible effects causing in the civilian population and the economy of many countries the indiscriminate and irresponsible use of anti-personnel landmines.

Cuba urges all the States in the condition to do so, to provide the financial, technical and humanitarian assistance needed for the mine removal operations and the social and economic rehabilitation of the victims.

Thank you.