Mr. Chairman,

The proliferation of conventional weapons is a cause of concern for Turkey as well. The excessive accumulation and uncontrolled spread of small arms and light weapons pose a significant threat to peace and security. It also affects the social and economic development of many countries. Furthermore, there is also a very close and disturbing relationship between the illicit trade in arms and terrorism.

As a country fighting terrorism, Turkey will continue to actively contribute to all efforts within the UN and other fora to foster international cooperation in the fight against terrorism, including through the establishment of effective norms and rules aimed at eradicating illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects.

Turkey has taken its own share from the negative effects of illicit trafficking, proliferation and unauthorized use of small arms and light weapons (SALWs). Therefore, in the context of fight against terrorism, Turkey attaches great importance to the prevention and eradication of illicit trade of SALWs and elimination of their negative security and safety implications.

While developing necessary tools and implementing certain practices to prevent and eradicate illicit trade in SALW, our approach should be comprehensive. That is, the measures should include the whole series of steps, from the manufacturing of SALW to their seizure and destruction. Transparency and information sharing would certainly help promote consistency in the implementation of agreed multilateral standards for these arms and weapons.

In spite of the existence of many international instruments that address transfer controls, large numbers of weapons are still being transferred illicitly, pointing to the need to focus on effective implementation of such instruments. This leads us to the conclusion that preventing the illicit trade in all its aspects necessarily involves the implementation of effective regulations over the legal transfers of arms, weapons and ammunition. A well-functioning transfer control system should be based in law and supported by comprehensive enforcement mechanisms.

Turkey remains committed to the effective implementation and further strengthening of the UN Programme of Action (POA) to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in SALWs in all its Aspects.

We would like to join previous speakers in expressing our satisfaction with the adoption of a substantive report at the 3rd Biennial Meeting of the States Parties to review the POA that took place in New York last July. Turkey attaches particular importance to the implementation of the recommendations and the establishment of a follow-up mechanism to the POA. We believe that international cooperation and assistance are fundamental to the successful implementation of the POA and other relevant documents and measures.

Turkey will continue to contribute to the efforts within the UN and other fora to foster international and regional cooperation and, when necessary, the adoption and implementation of additional norms and rules. Turkey will therefore continue to support the conclusion of an Arms Trade Treaty, which should halt unregulated and uncontrolled trade of conventional arms worldwide and establish common standards for their global trade. We also support the complementary efforts of certain regional organizations and initiatives in this field.

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Mr. Chairman,

Another worrying issue in the field of conventional weapons is the scourge of indiscriminate and inhumane weapons called anti-personnel mines. As a State Party to the Mine Ban Convention since 2004, Turkey fully supports the efforts for the universalization and effective implementation of the Convention and the vision of a world free from anti-personnel mines.

As a testimony of our sincere and transparent approach, I would like to give you a short update regarding the process of destruction of our stockpiled anti-personnel mines.

Following the circulation of a Note Verbale dated 28 February 2008 by the Turkish Permanent Mission in Geneva, colleagues from ICRC, ICBL and ISU were in Turkey last May. They visited the Turkish Munitions Disposal Facility which was inaugurated in November 2007 and were briefed on the progress of work. They also visited the Rehabilitation and Health Care Center for mine victims.

Furthermore, the President of the 8th Meeting of States Parties (MSP), His Royal Highness Prince Mired, accompanied by the Director of the ISU Mr. Briickert, paid a working visit to Ankara a fortnight ago, on 6-8 October 2008. During their visit, they were briefed by representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as well as military and other related authorities regarding Turkey’s ongoing efforts to fulfill her obligations arising from the Mine Ban Convention.

They also had the opportunity to visit the Turkish Munitions Disposal Facility. This facility currently operates with possible maximum capacity in order to destruct the remaining parts of the Turkish stockpiled anti-personnel mines. Turkey’s determination and dedication to comply with the requirements of the Convention was once again displayed during this visit.

As of 30 September 2008, a total of 1,980,109 remaining parts of anti-personnel mines need to be destroyed. We will continue to inform the State Parties regularly on the progress achieved. In this framework, an update will be given during the forthcoming MSP which will be held next month in Geneva. However, I should like to underline that Turkey has already destructed the fuses of all the stockpiled anti-personnel mines, which are not usable anymore.

Let me take this opportunity to appeal to the States which have not yet done so to accede to the Mine Ban Convention. In this connection, we would also like to emphasize that, since the rights and obligations enshrined in the Mine Ban Convention apply only to the State Parties, the consent of the relevant State Parties is necessary if and when engagement by NGOs with armed non-State actors is contemplated within the context of the Convention. Such activities should in no way serve the purposes of terrorist organizations.

Mr. Chairman,

We would also like to comment on the draft Convention on Cluster Munitions that will be open for signature in Oslo in December 2008. Turkey has been involved in the Oslo process, and is also an active participant of the ongoing work in the Governmental Group of Experts (GGE) on Cluster Munitions. We are encouraged by the GGE discussions held in Geneva within the context of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. We share the humanitarian concerns behind the international efforts to limit the use of cluster munitions. Turkey expects the GGE to intensify its efforts to conclude a document which should take into account the concerns of all. In our opinion, parallel processes do not need to overlap each other entirely.

I thank you.