Thank you Mr Chair,

This is a depressing topic we work on.

Sometimes it seems to me, to the members of our network, and (I imagine) to many of you that the problem of small arms proliferation and misuse is so huge, so overwhelming –

Can we really make any difference to the fact that 1000 people are being killed each day, and 3000 more are losing their limbs, their jobs and their autonomy because of the devastating injuries caused by bullet wounds?. The flood of guns is undermining development, human rights, children’s health and education – you know the story….

Well, last year at First Committee I brought you some great news from Brazil, where the new gun law had finally reversed the trend of rising gun violence. Every day in Brazil now, 22 people are alive who would have died without that new law.

Today I want to share with you some of the other good news that IANSA has witnessed over the past year, to remind us all that progress IS being made and that a safer world is possible.

Mr Chair, it is always dangerous to provide a list of examples, because some initiatives, some countries or regions will of course be left out. I hope that delegates will forgive me – there has been significant progress towards disarmament in many countries. But time does not permit me to mention them all

At the global level

- First, a big piece of good news – the conflict death toll is dropping. According to the Human Security report, the number of people killed in battle dropped 14% between 2003 and 2006.

- Still, the problem of armed violence remains acute. Most deaths occur in crime, rather than conflict, and the Geneva Declaration Report informs us that the global economy loses at least $95 billion each year in productivity lost due to armed violence.

- Another important fact we learned this year: 40% of the world’s military stockpiles of small arms are surplus to requirements, according to the Small Arms Survey. That means states can safely get rid of A LOT of weapons.

- The Biennial Meeting of States put the UN Small arms process back on track in July – Hurrah! Congratulations and thank you so much to Ambassador Cekuolis, and his bureau, and to you the member states, who in the true spirit of public service, looked for and found overwhelming agreement, despite the wide variety of views.

- More good news came from Vienna 2 weeks ago, when the Conference of Parties to the Transnational Crime Convention agreed to develop a review mechanism – for the Convention and also for the UN Firearms Protocol, our only legally binding global agreement on small arms.

- We’ve seen progress on ammunition and on brokering – please support the resolutions coming up on those topics! And on how to prevent diversion of arms being transported by air, with the Wassenaar Best Practices.
Progress towards ending impunity

Mr Chair, we have seen progress towards ending impunity for some suspected arms traffickers and their clients:

- **Viktor Bout**, the world’s most notorious arms dealer, was arrested in March, and is undergoing extradition proceedings to the US.
- **John Knight**, a British arms dealer was jailed for 4 years in November for illegally brokering machine guns from Iran to Kuwait. This example shows the value of strong brokering legislation.
- In June, Spain agreed to extradite **Monzer al-Kasser**, charged with trying to supply arms to Colombian rebels.
- The Congolese militia leader **Mathieu Ngudjolo Chui** was arrested in February and taken to the Hague, charged for crimes against humanity and war crimes.
- (And of course the trial is still under way of Charles Taylor of Liberia.)
- Also on impunity: the UN Security Council has at last recognised that rape and other forms of sexual violence can be classed as war crimes.

Regional progress

Mr Chairman, we know that progress at the regional level often moves faster than at the global level.

- This year **Sudan** became the 9th state to ratify the **Nairobi Protocol** on Small Arms. And all countries in Eastern Africa have pledged to mark **ALL** the small arms in government stockpiles over the next few months. This will help stop diversion of these weapons to conflict and crime.
- In West Africa, the **ECOWAS Convention** is expected to enter into force by the end of this year.
- Police in Southern African countries have a program to – at last – implement the **SADC Firearms Protocol**.
- In May this year, **Central African** ministers agreed to create a legally-binding sub-regional instrument. When that instrument is agreed, all of sub Saharan Africa will be covered by legally-binding agreements on small arms control.
- In **Central America**, SICA and UNDP launched the CASAC joint project on small arms control.
- And this month, the Ministers for **Public Security** from the OAS region met for the first time to discuss practical measures to increase public safety, including controlling weapons.
- In the past year the **European Firearms Directive was strengthened**, which means licensing and registration will be required for all newly purchased guns. IANSA is hoping the EU will follow, up by making its **Code of Conduct** on Arms Exports legally binding by the end of this year.

We have also seen regional progress in linking small arms with health and gender issues.

- In Mexico this year, 30 health ministers from the Americas signed a **Declaration on Violence and Injury Prevention**, recognising the availability of firearms as a fundamental cause and risk factor of violence.
- In **South-Eastern Europe**, SEESAC developed a project to address the link between gun possession and domestic violence.
- And of course, prospects for regional progress have been accelerated by the appointment of new directors at the UN regional disarmament centres in Nepal and Togo. IANSA looks forward to a productive relationship with these centres.
National success

- Hundreds of thousands of guns and millions of rounds of ammunition have been destroyed in countries including Argentina, Colombia, Peru, Guinea-Bissau and Uganda.
- It was interesting in Argentina, 50% of the people who physically brought weapons to the police for destruction were women, even though 95% of gun owners are men.
- The metal produced by the destruction of these weapons will be transformed into useful objects, or into sculptures for peace. Cambodia has inaugurated a 6-metre tall peace sculpture made out of guns that previously symbolised death and terror.
- Brazil has launched a 2nd gun buyback, and Papua New Guinea is about to start one too.
- In Yemen, the country with the world’s highest number of guns per capita, the a program is under way to close down hundreds of gun sellers and ban the carrying guns in urban areas.
- Also in the past year, Sri Lanka completed its first national computerised firearms registry.
- The Parliament in Spain enacted the country’s first law regulating arms exports – this came about as a result of intense campaigning by IANSA members.
- Post-conflict Angola held its first conference on disarmament and established its National Commission on small arms, which has a good representation of civil society groups. Angola is another country where women are at the forefront of the work to solve the weapons problem.
- In the Democratic Republic of Congo, which has seen so much suffering from armed violence, the year 2008 began with a peace agreement, including a strong DDR component. The news more recently has not been so good, but we are desperately hoping for peace in DRC.
- A very important step was taken by Uganda and Sudan this year – a joint strategy to prevent arms trafficking across their borders.

The message underlying all these initiatives is clear. Fewer weapons mean more security.

Civil society action

Mr Chair, most of these initiatives have involved close cooperation between governments and civil society. The nature of the small arms problem itself means it cannot be solved by governments alone. We have been pleases that states are increasingly joining with and supporting civil society in this work.

I’d like to finish by mentioning one of IANSA’s initiatives, the Global Week of Action Against Gun Violence. 2008 was the biggest Global Week of Action yet, with events in 81 countries to raise awareness of this global problem and the global efforts to solve it.

We were thrilled to have UNDP, UNICEF and UNODA as well as many governments join in the 2008 Week of Action, and we look forward to involving more of you in 2009. So please keep in touch with us to make sure you are informed of the dates.

Thank you for inviting us to share some good news, for a change.