Chair,

Every day, armed violence kills more than 2000 people. The large majority are civilians. This is no less than a global crisis, affecting the lives and security of millions of people, and threatening international peace and security. It affects all societies and countries in the world.

The Norwegian Government is strongly committed to humanitarian disarmament. Our engagement in the fields of landmines, cluster munitions, small arms and other related areas is motivated from the unacceptable harm to civilians caused by the use of these weapons. We are very happy to work together with our partners on all these issues, and look forward to work together with states, the UN, the ICRC and civil society in the ongoing processes within the multilateral system.

In our view all relevant multilateral processes in these areas must have the actual situation and problem on the ground as a starting point in order to provide and develop adequate multilateral responses. We also support the involvement of civil society in processes, both as advocates and as actors with a great expertise on issues related to the actual effects of the use of weapons. It is our belief that the engagement of civil society will be crucial if we are to overcome the huge challenges we face in our efforts to achieve conventional arms control and disarmament.

Chair,

Norway recognises that we need to do more to address the root causes of armed violence. We will take an active role in including Armed Violence on the UN agenda in the upcoming review

(Check against delivery)
process of the Millennium Development Goals. Let me also reiterate Norway’s continued commitment and full support to the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development. This work serves as an important platform for further work on armed violence.

We need to see more proactive and concerted initiatives in the field of disarmament. It is our belief that the engagement of the UN system will be crucial if we are to overcome the huge challenges we face in our efforts to develop adequate multilateral responses to the challenges posed by armed conflict, explosive violence and the flow of small arms and light weapons.

Chair,

The interrelated issue of protection of civilians has been on the agenda of the Security Council since the late 1990’s. Through the work of states and the Secretary General a broader understanding of the issue seems to be emerging. We recognize the need to address protection in a comprehensive way that include peacekeeping, rule of law, security, development and also disarmament.

Chair,

Norway appreciates the lead taken by United Kingdom on an Arms Trade Treaty (ATT).

We regard an ATT important and think it is necessary to stay ambitious for the end result. We firmly believe that we must seek to ensure that an Arms Trade Treaty effectively contributes to improve the situation for individuals and societies affected by armed violence. In a majority of the instances the violence is caused by the use of small arms and light weapons, but also other conventional weapons and explosives are being used. This use of weapons violates human rights and hinders development.

We welcome a decision to start the negotiations next year. We welcome the positive and active participation of all states and their expressed commitment to ensure a strong Treaty. We have raised our concern that a consensus based process could lead to an ineffective ATT dismissing the global civil society campaign for such an instrument.

The devastating impact of armed violence affects many states and societies. However, it is an unequally shared burden. The countries suffering the most from armed violence are today paying the highest price, not only in terms of human suffering, but also in pure socioeconomic terms, through loss of human and other resources, increased health care costs, and lack of security to name a few. Providing the means and measures of an effective ATT is, therefore, a sound investment in humanitarian prosperity and development.

Chair,

The use of cluster munitions has been the cause of human suffering for more than 50 years. The Convention on Cluster Munitions is a categorical ban. It prohibits the use, production and transfer of cluster munitions. The Convention strengthens international humanitarian law, and provides a
framework for implementation. The Convention on Cluster Munitions not only addresses a humanitarian problem, but it has also great value in preventing a future humanitarian disaster that could easily reach the magnitude of the landmine problem.

We warmly welcome the offer from Laos PDR to host the first meeting of the States parties to the Convention in Vientiane next year. This will be a historic event and a milestone in the work of the Convention. We would also like to express our gratitude to all states that have undertaken various initiatives to drive the work forward for their leadership and partnership in the Oslo process, and to civil society, ICRC and the UN for its full support to the Convention.

We will continue work with other States parties for the full implementation and universalisation of the Convention, which should enter into force already next year. The Convention on Cluster Munitions is establishing itself as a new international norm. The experience with the Mine Ban Convention and other conventions is that a new legally binding instrument becomes an international norm which goes beyond the membership of the Convention.

Today 100 states have signed the new Convention and 23 countries have ratified it. We urge all states to accede to the Convention as soon as possible.

Another continued priority for Norway is the full implementation of the Mine Ban Convention. Norway will be President of the Second Review Conference of the Mine Ban Convention to take place in Colombia later this year. The Second Review Conference will be an important opportunity to focus on the humanitarian objectives of the Convention through compliance with its obligations and a focus on realities in the field, including victim assistance. We would like to urge all States Parties to the Convention to participate at the highest political level at the high level segment.

Chair,

Eight years ago the international community agreed on the UN Programme of Action on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons (PoA). It was regarded as a point of departure for developing new international instruments to better combat illegal trade in small arms. Norway has provided financial support for the implementation of the PoA.

We look forward to the biannual meeting of the Programme of Action in 2010. We warmly welcome the Chairmanship of Ambassador Pablo Macedo of Mexico and stand ready to support him in his preparatory work in the coming months. We are, however, concerned over the slow progress in further strengthening of the PoA since it was established. Multilateral efforts to fight the proliferation of small arms and light weapons clearly need to be reinvigorated. In doing so, we must recognise the important role of regional and sub-regional institutions, and not least the importance of national responsibility.

Thank you.