Mr Chairman,

Conventional arms issues remain as important as they ever were, perhaps even more so in the light of ongoing international events; and 2011 has seen us make more progress on the conventional arms agenda, not least on the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT).

Since 2006, when the UK and the other co-authors (Argentina, Australia, Costa Rica, Finland, Japan and Kenya) introduced the original resolution on ATT, significant progress has been made. This has not been achieved by accident. Over 150 states supported the move to negotiations in 2009, and it is this overwhelming support that has driven the process forward. And it is the constructive engagement of UN Member States, under the able Chairmanship of Ambassador Moritan, that has made that progress possible. It is here we would like to put on record our strong support to Ambassador Moritan and our firm wish that he be elected President Designate for the 2012 conference in the final PrepCom next year.

We have achieved much in the Preparatory Committee meetings of the last two years, and this work forms a solid base on which to begin formal negotiations in July. We support the Chair’s text as the basis for moving forward. Not only is it broad in scope, which we welcome, but the criteria, being an essential part of a future treaty, are pertinent and relevant for consideration that should be given when authorising an arms transfer.

There is only very limited time remaining before the crucial UN Negotiating Conference in July 2012, and it is essential we use that time effectively. But it is important that the international community continues to work together as we approach the Conference to ensure we have the best chance of success in July.

The problems that we sought to address through an ATT in 2006 remain the same in 2011. And if we fail to secure an effective Treaty in 2012 they will only become more acute; destroyed lives and livelihoods, displaced communities and hampered development.

The UK remains fully committed to securing a robust and effective, legally binding international Arms Trade Treaty to address those problems, and we urge all UN Member States to engage positively and constructively in the UN Conference next year. In this way we can address the problems of the unregulated trade in conventional arms by securing a Treaty that will help to save lives and respect human right, whilst at the same time supporting legitimate industry.

Mr Chairman,

The UK welcomes the approach of the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons (UNPoA) Review Conference in 2012 as a key milestone in measuring the impact that has been made on the illicit trade in Small Arms and Light
Weapons (SALW), and also the impact that the UNPoA has had on the humanitarian and socio-economic consequences of the illicit trade.

The UK has supported SALW related projects in 2011, both unilaterally and through the EU. But we should also see SALW control in the broader context of conflict prevention, armed violence reduction and development strategies and interventions, so a more integrated approach can be considered.

Mr Chairman,

The UK is a signatory to the Ottawa Convention and has long since stopped using, producing, stockpiling and transferring antipersonnel mines. We are also a major contributor to the clearance of anti-personnel mines and other explosive remnants of war in areas of the world where their legacy threatens the lives of civilians and holds back the socio-economic development of affected communities.

In support of Mine Action, the UK has allocated more than £30 million between 2010 and 2013, to clearance programmes across the globe. We have also allocated an additional £10 million over 5 years for mine action in Afghanistan. In Libya the UK is supporting clearance work and control of abandoned explosive ordnance as part of our wider humanitarian assistance efforts. This emergency clearance, destruction and control programme aims to reduce the risk from explosive remnants of war to local populations and humanitarian aid workers.

In addition, in January 2012 we will launch phase II of our Falkland Islands demining pilot project. Phase II will see land released in accordance with International Mine Action Standards, confirming the extent of some of the minefields near the capital Stanley, accurately defining their boundaries and fencing them on all sides. The project will also confirm that other land within a current suspect hazardous area is free from all mines and other Explosive Remnants of War and safely release it back to public use. Information gathered during the phase II pilot will inform future mine clearance and land release activity. Technical details will be shared with the mine action community.

Mr Chairman,

In the 12 months since the Convention on Cluster Munitions came into force we have seen remarkable progress. Already 111 States have joined the convention and 66 States have become State Parties. The Convention came into force in the UK on 1st November 2010, which made us the 32nd State Party to the Treaty.

We were proud to participate in the first meeting of States Parties in Vientiane in December 2010 and more recently at the 2nd meeting of states Parties in Beirut in September this year. It was very fitting that two of the countries’ most heavily affected by cluster munition contamination - the Lao PDR and the Republic of Lebanon – should preside over these meetings and drive forward the global ban on these weapons.

The UK remains strongly committed to the Convention. The UK has withdrawn all – more than 38 million cluster submunitions – from operational service and is systematically destroying them ahead of schedule. Under current plans it is our intention to have completed total destruction of our cluster munitions by the end of
2013. We have destroyed some 65% so far. We also continue to take all appropriate opportunities, be they bilateral or multilateral, to promote the universalisation of the Convention. Most recently this month, in partnership with the ICRC and the Cluster Munition Coalition, we hosted a workshop in London to promote the Convention among Commonwealth countries. We are committed to continue our work with States Parties and Civil Society to free the world from the blight of cluster munitions.

Mr Chairman,

The 4th CCW Review Conference in November this year provides an important opportunity to review the Convention’s existing Protocols and focus on promoting compliance and universalisation. We would also like to see a satisfactory outcome emerge from the negotiations over a Protocol VI on Cluster Munitions.

Mr Chairman,

Finally, the UK along with other ATT co-authors, will be submitting a draft decision L50 on the Arms Trade Treaty. This decision confirms the dates for the final PrepCom in February next year and extends the length of the PrepCom from 3-5 days to allow for more time to finalise both procedural and substantive issues. It is our hope that this decision will be adopted by consensus.

Thank you.