The accumulation and misuse of conventional weapons are destabilising, and they threaten all societies and the very people we are responsible for protecting. From illicit small arms and ammunition that fuel conflicts between communities and across borders, to explosive remnants of war that maim and kill innocent civilians in many parts of the world, the uncontrolled trade and use of such weapons endanger security and undermine development.

Mr Chairman

Australia welcomes the near universal recognition of the need to better regulate the conventional arms trade. The General Assembly has made clear: the unregulated trade and diversion of arms to the illicit market contribute to armed conflict, the displacement of people, organised crime and terrorism, 'thereby undermining peace reconciliation, safety, security, stability and sustainable social and economic development'.

At the United Nations Conference for an Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) in July, States made significant progress towards agreeing on this essential treaty. At the conclusion of those negotiations, over 90 States from all regions joined together to express their clear intent to finish the job – to take a few more steps to make finalise the treaty and start saving lives. We thank Ambassador Moritan of Argentina for his skilled and fair guidance of our work and we hope that he can finish his work. With the President’s text of 26 July, we have a solid point from which to finish the job and make the treaty a reality at the Final Conference in March 2013.

Australia remains determined to achieve a strong, robust and effective ATT establishing the highest possible common international standards as soon as possible. The seven co-authors of the original 2006 General Assembly Resolution calling for an ATT have presented a simple resolution intended to maintain momentum and set out a legitimate process – one that is transparent and inclusive – to finalise a treaty quickly. An ATT that
is practical and effective would reduce armed violence and armed conflict fuelled by illicit arms. This would unreservedly be a good thing.

Mr Chairman

The ATT will be most effective if it has as broader adherence as possible, and it takes into account the views of all States, particularly those most affected by the illicit arms trafficking. This is the only way to ensure the result translates to results on the ground. Australia supported regional workshops in preparation for the negotiations in the Pacific, the Caribbean and Africa. We also supported over 40 government and civil society delegates to attend the negotiations in July and its preparatory meetings. And Australia is again committed to providing funding to support developing countries from Africa, Pacific and the Caribbean to be here to negotiate in March.

We urge other donors to look again at what they can contribute to the UNDP voluntary sponsorship fund to enable all countries to participate actively in Final conference in March.

International cooperation and assistance is essential to strengthen States’ capacities to regulate the cross-border movement of arms. Australia has also committed $1 million dollars to initiate a multilateral assistance facility to help developing countries with implementation of an ATT. We welcome Germany’s recent substantial contribution and we ask other donors to join us as we look ahead to ensuring the ATT is implemented and is effective through this fund.

Mr Chairman

The consensus outcome of the Second Review Conference of the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons (UNPoA) indicates international resolve to curb the illicit arms trade and provides us with practical steps to ensure our commitments give us results – fewer guns, better security, and lives that are saved and able to flourish because the conditions enable development. We congratulate Ambassador Ogwu of Nigeria on her leadership - the extensive preparations greatly contributed to the success of the Conference.

Australia welcomes the practical steps agreed to enhance implementation and to strengthen follow-up mechanisms. We are particularly pleased that the outcome identifies that armed violence must be tackled, and commits States to integrating the essential role of women into the solution.

Australia has increased its support for programs to help developing States most affected by this scourge achieve the objectives of the UNPoA. Our assistance to the Democratic Republic of Congo in strengthening stockpile management, Cote d’Ivoire in stockpile security, Central African Republic in disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration, the Republic of Congo in developing a comprehensive needs assessment, and Vanuatu in developing a nation-wide census are good examples of how donors can help affected countries improve security and the lives of their citizens under the UNPoA. We congratulate these governments for the results they have achieved.
Mr Chairman

Last month, many of us met for the Third Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions. We congratulate Norway its leadership of the Convention in the last year. We are pleased to report that Australia ratified the Convention this month and we very much look forward to joining as the 77th State Party when the Convention enters into force for us in April 2013.

Mr Chairman

After eleven years, the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention continues to go from strength to strength. Cambodia has played a crucial part in its leadership since the last Meeting of States Parties. The Mine Ban Convention has seen over 45 million stockpiled mines destroyed, large areas of affected land cleared and thousands of survivors provided with additional support and assistance.

As Chair of the Mine Action Support Group, which enhances the effectiveness of donor funding through improved coordination and partnerships, Australia will continue to focus mine action work on improving the quality of life for victims of landmines, cluster munitions and other explosive remnants of war. The MASG is also focusing on completion efforts to boost the resources and capacity of States within reach of completion, for example Mozambique, to declare their countries mine-free sooner than expected.

Our chairing of the MASG reflects Australia’s commitment to leading on mine action around the world. We have pledged to provide $100 million to mine action from 2010 to 2014. The good news is that we have committed more than $90 million so far in only three years. This, of course, reflects that amount of work required to rid the world of landmines and other explosive remnants of war. Our assistance has delivered improved quality of life for victims, reducing the number of deaths and injuries, and enhancing the capacity of countries to manage their mine action programmes, importantly, in line with the affected States' own priorities.

In the past year, under the Mine Ban Convention, Australia has assisted countries, including Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Uganda, Laos, Cambodia and the DRC as well as funding global programmes providing assistance in a broad range of countries such as the ICRC Special Fund for the Disabled. Working in partnership with affected countries, humanitarian organisations and local communities, we are removing the threat of old conflicts so new lives can be built. We are pleased to have been a part of the successful efforts by Guinea Bissau, Jordan and soon Uganda to become mine free.

At the Twelfthth Meeting of States Parties, to be held in Geneva in December, we look forward to collaboration with other States and civil society to promote the full realisation of the Convention's goals.

Mr Chairman

We urge all States, where they have not already done so, to join these important international instruments. Cluster munitions, landmines and other explosive remnants of
war are a tragic legacy of conflict. They continue to constrain development in several of the poorest countries and have devastating socio-economic consequences, but membership and implementation of these instruments makes a tangible impact in turning around these consequences.

Australia is committed to working with others to address the challenges posed by the destabilising accumulation, misuse and unacceptable harm of conventional weapons. This is a top priority for us given the difference we can make to everyday lives. We are encouraged by the momentum over this past year to address these threats, but we as States have a responsibility to convert this effort into real outcomes that will enable people to survive, provide for their families and contribute to safer communities. We must recommit ourselves to this common goal, follow through and do what we say.