Statement by
Delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran
Thematic Discussion on “Conventional Weapons”
at the 69th Session of the First Committee
New York, 23 October 2014

In The Name of God, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful

Mr. Chairman,
My delegation would like to associate itself with the statement made by Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

We are gratified that the Fifth Biennial Meeting of States to consider the implementation of the Program of Action to prevent the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons concluded successfully with the adoption of its outcome document by consensus in last June. We appreciate the able leadership of Ambassador Zahir Tanin of Afghanistan in that meeting. We also would like to extend our thanks to the UNODA and the NGOs, which play a prominent role in the promotion of the objectives of these instruments.

Iran is at the forefront of the combat against terrorism, violent extremism and drug trafficking in the region. And therefore, we have been actively engaged in the combat against illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and continue our strong support for the full implementation of the United Nations Program of Action and the International Tracing Instrument. Both of these instruments, in our view, continue to provide the main international framework for cooperation and coordination in dealing with the challenge of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.
The excessive production of arms by major producers with the aim of export to other countries is a matter of serious concern. Without addressing this concern, the international efforts in preventing illicit trade in conventional arms continue to remain far from accomplishing the established expectations. Major arms producing countries need to take responsibility and make appropriate arrangements for the reduction of their arms production. Huge amount of produced weapons, would definitely find its way to markets, which are particularly located in the conflict stricken regions.

Irresponsible export of arms to the Middle East region represents a clear example in this regard. The flow of sophisticated weapons into the volatile region of the Middle East remains unabated. Its negative implications on the region’s security and stability are not hard to recognize given the recent developments. Unlimited amount of offensive weapons continue to be transferred to the Israeli regime. Such transfers fuel the war machine of the said regime to pursue its expansionist, aggressive and destabilizing policies in the region. Given the well-documented UN reports on various war crimes committed by the Israeli regime, such exports are in violations of principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter.

We are also concerned by the continuation of irresponsible arms exports to certain countries in our neighborhood in the Persian Gulf region. According to the authoritative information available in the public domain, two countries of the Persian Gulf region are among the five biggest arms importers in the world. We recognize the right of all States to acquire arms for their self-defence and security needs. But such a huge amount of arms imports are usually used for intervention in domestic affairs of other countries and crushing the democratic aspirations of other nations.

Mr. Chairman,

Iran actively participated in the UN Conferences on the Arms Trade Treaty with the expectation of negotiating and concluding an effective, robust, balanced and non-discriminatory treaty aimed at reducing human suffering resulting from the illicit trade in conventional arms. However, the end result of that process was a legally binding instrument full of legal flaws, loopholes and other deficiencies. It
was far from even our minimum expectations. In ATT, political and commercial interests of certain arms exporting countries have prevailed over the observance of the fundamentals of international law.

For instance, the ATT has failed to uphold the principle of the prohibition of the crime of aggression as the most fundamental principle of international law. It makes little sense that a legally binding instrument like Arms Trade Treaty has not prohibited arms transfer to countries that are engaged in committing acts of aggression, including foreign occupation. As a victim of the act of aggression in the recent history it is unacceptable to my country.

The international movement of conventional arms by, or on behalf of, a State Party for its use is exempted from the Treaty application. It also provides the ground for the exemption of transfer of arms between member States of military alliances and contains similar exemptions at the bilateral level. These are incompatible with object and purpose of the Treaty. Such arms transfers in some cases have been used to commit aggression and occupation causing human losses and destruction of the infrastructures of a number of countries including in the Middle East and the Persian Gulf.

While the rights of arms exporting States is well preserved in the ATT in the form of exemptions, exceptions and protections, the most basic and inherent rights of importing States is subject to the discretionary judgment and extremely subjective assessment of the exporting States. There is no real safeguard in the Treaty to secure the rights of importing countries and therefore, it is highly abusable and susceptible to politicization, manipulation and discrimination. ATT gives a blank check to arms exporting countries to apply any measure and standard in exporting arms, even if they are not compatible with the Treaty provisions and its overall object and purpose.

And finally, ATT does not prevent arms to fall into the hands of criminals, illegal armed groups, terrorists and extremist groups.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.