Statement by the Republic of Lithuania
at the UN General Assembly 1st Committee thematic discussion
on Other Weapons of Mass Destruction
27 October 2015, New York

Mr. Chairman, dear delegates,

Lithuania aligns itself with the statement by the European Union on behalf of the EU and its Member States.

Each year violence caused by small arms takes the lives of over half a million people, including nearly 60,000 women and girls. The illicit trafficking, destabilizing accumulation and misuse of small arms and their ammunition prolong conflicts, increase the risk of relapse, hamper humanitarian assistance, impede growth and development.

This year, following a comprehensive report by the Secretary General on small arms and light weapons, Lithuania initiated a process that led to the adoption of the UN Security Council resolution 2220 that established measures aimed at more concrete action by the Security Council to tackle the devastating effects of illicit arms trade.

Resolution 2220 has a strong focus on the human cost of small arms and underlines the need to protect the victims. It also speaks loud and clear on the essential role of women in tackling the small arms related problems.

It further aims at making UN’s numerous tools – peacekeeping operations, special political missions, country teams, and sanctions committees – to work closer together in fighting the illicit arms trafficking and misuse. The areas where UN’s contribution could be particularly useful include assisting weapons collection, enhancing stockpile management, collection and destruction of weapons, as well as the development of national export and import control systems.

The draft text contains significant new language recognizing the importance of preventing the illicit transfers and sales of weapons and ammunition to armed groups and criminal networks that target civilians and civilian objects and underlining that such transfers could exacerbate conflict or facilitate the commitment of serious violations of international humanitarian law and serious violations and abuses of human rights.

The text also contains extensive new provisions on supporting capacity building of and assistance to affected countries.

Finally, the resolution recognizes the important contribution that the Arms Trade Treaty can make to international peace, security and stability, in particular through increased transparency of arms transfers.

Let me use this opportunity to thank all 57 Member States who cosponsored the text and further recognised its importance in their national statements at this Committee.

Mutually reinforcing efforts to combat illicit trafficking in small arms were also underway in the framework of the UN Programme of Action. Lithuania welcomes the Second Open-ended Meeting of Governmental Experts that focused on recent developments in small arms and light weapons technology conducted under the skillful chairmanship of the Republic of Moldova.
Mr. Chairman,

Lithuania welcomes the First Conference of the States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty in Cancun, which made important progress in making the treaty fully operational. Yet a lot more remains to be done, as the Treaty’s full potential can only be reached if it is universally applied and robustly implemented.

In particular, Lithuania will continue to underline the need to make the national reports on arms transfers available to the public. In this regard we warmly welcome the launch of the ATT Monitor 2015 Report and remain convinced that it will develop into an important reference tool and will contribute to a more transparent arms trade.

Mr. Chairman,

In light of international community’s efforts to achieve a more responsible and transparent arms trade, we cannot disregard the persistent violations of international law in the east of Ukraine. The latest report by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights again notes that continuing presence of foreign fighters as well as the reported influx of heavy and sophisticated weaponry from the Russian Federation remain the major impediments to achieving a peaceful solution. We reiterate our call on the Russian Federation to stop the flows of weaponry and equipment into the sovereign territory of Ukraine, secure its borders and urgently end all support to the illegal armed groups.

Thank you.