Declaration on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons

I have the honor to speak on behalf of Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Canada, Colombia, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech republic, Denmark, El Salvador, Estonia, Finland, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Gabon, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guinea, Haiti, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Mali, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Niger, Norway, Peru, Poland, Portugal, the Republic of Korea, the Republic of Moldava, Romania, San Marino, Senegal, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America, Uruguay and my own country France.

On the occasion of the 15th anniversary of the UN PoA, our countries wish to reiterate their grave concern regarding the illicit manufacture, transfer and circulation of small arms and light weapons (SALW) and their excessive accumulation and uncontrolled spread.

Small arms and light weapons have killed more people than any other weapon. They have been involved in more than 500 000 deaths per year and account for more than 90% of victims in armed conflicts.

As already recognized in 2001 in the UN PoA, the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons have a wide range of humanitarian and socioeconomic consequences and cause a serious threat to peace, reconciliation, safety, security, stability and sustainable development at the individual, local, national, regional and international levels. Target 16.4 of the Sustainable Development Goals explicitly mentions the objective of significantly reducing, by 2030, illicit financial and arms flows.

The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects continues to sustain conflicts and to exacerbate armed violence, to undermine respect for international humanitarian law and international human rights law, to fuel terrorism and organized crime.

The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons therefore constitutes a major security concern for our countries. We are firmly convinced of the need to continue to strengthen our collective action and coordination in this regard.

We reaffirm the inherent right to individual or collective self-defense in accordance with article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations and the right of each State to manufacture, transfer and retain small arms and light weapons for its legitimate self-defense and security needs, as well as for its capacity to participate in peacekeeping operations in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.

We welcome the various initiatives on small arms and light weapons taken by the international community over the last few years, including *inter alia*:
The adoption and implementation of the UN Program of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in SALW in All Its Aspects. We are committed to working constructively in the run up to the 3rd review conference in 2018.

The international instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons, which represents a practical tool. We will continue to engage on its implementation.

The adoption and entry into force of the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition, which supplements the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

The adoption and entry into force of the Arms Trade Treaty, whose scope includes small arms and light weapons. The ATT aims at promoting cooperation, transparency and responsible action in the international trade in conventional weapons tackling diversion of arms and building confidence among States. It contributes to reduce human suffering. It is a central instrument and it needs to be effectively implemented by States Parties. We will work together to promote its universalization.

While each of these international instruments has its own focus and membership, they complement each other.

Our countries are committed to working towards their universalization which, alongside with their full and effective implementation, is the best guarantee of a coherent and efficient international action.

The progress made by the international community in the past few years in preventing the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects contributed to lay the foundations for a solid framework, but more needs to be done. We believe it is now necessary to pursue further this engagement, in particular by reinforcing the efficiency, coordination, coherence and sustainability of actions carried out at the local, national, regional and international levels. We are committed to pursue our efforts in the following areas:

We recognize that the challenge posed by the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects is multifaceted and requires action on, inter alia, illicit transfers, destabilizing accumulation, physical security and management of stockpiles, illicit reactivation, marking and tracing, trade regulation and licensing, border control, as well as conflict prevention and resolution. Additionally, the promotion of a meaningful participation and representation of women in policy-making, planning and implementation processes shall be promoted. These different dimensions call for a global commitment to a comprehensive and sustainable approach.

We are mindful of the fact that governments bear the primary responsibility for preventing, combating, and eradicating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects. To this end, we underline the necessity to intensify efforts to define the origins of such illicit trade and find ways of addressing them. Other actions include putting in place, where they do not exist, adequate laws, effective national regulations and administrative procedures to
exercise effective control, including measures to establish as criminal offenses under domestic law the illegal manufacture, possession, stockpiling and trade of small arms and light weapons within their areas of jurisdiction. Existing international instruments offer an adequate framework to address these efforts, including through the exchange of experience and best practices.

- We also recognize the important contribution of civil society, including non-governmental organizations and industry, in *inter alia*, assisting Governments to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects.

- We reaffirm that international cooperation, as well as assistance, are instrumental to achieve a homogenous level of action in the fight against the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. Assistance in implementing standards and best practices needs to address *inter alia* the adaptation of normative frameworks, the establishment of national structures and procedures and the development of training. Assistance practices also need to be inclusive during the entire project cycle and sustainable beyond the period of donor support. We are determined to engage further in promoting a collaborative, focused and targeted work to identify relevant needs, including through mechanisms aiming at better coordinating efforts, improving consultations, exchanging information and fostering cooperation.

- Pursuing efforts to increase transparency in the framework of international, multilateral or regional or sub-regional instruments is an important element in the fight against the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. A number of States notify their transfers in the framework of international, multilateral or regional instruments. We are willing to pursue our efforts in this direction and encourage other States to do so. In this regard, we encourage States to report on their transfers of small arms and light weapons within the UN Register on Conventional Arms. Additionally, and in the lead up to the 3rd Review Conference of the UN PoA, we also call upon States to submit their voluntary national reports in a timely manner.

- We acknowledge the efforts already under way at the regional and sub regional levels, which have demonstrated their usefulness. We stand determined in our willingness to reinforce regional cooperation, including through mechanisms aiming at better coordinating efforts, improving consultations, exchanging information and fostering cooperation on law enforcement, border control and customs to counter the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

- We reaffirm the need to fight against the dissemination of small arms and light weapons to terrorist groups and we are committed to identify means to further intensify and accelerate international cooperation in this area.

As part of these actions, we will remain vigilant to build on the prevailing consensus on issues related to small arms and light weapons in order to improve together the international response to this challenge, including through the resolutions adopted at the 71st session of the United Nations General Assembly.