Mr Chairman

The daily reality for many people in many countries is the fear, suffering, death, destruction and economic chaos wrought by illegally traded, poorly managed and misused conventional arms and ammunition. Preventing instability, and promoting security and economic development, especially in our Asia-Pacific region, are high priorities for Australia.

Mr Chairman,

We encourage states to redouble their efforts towards universalisation and implementation of international instruments in the field of conventional weapons.
Australia remains strongly committed to advancing the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). We encourage states that have not done so already to ratify or accede to the Treaty. Over the next year as one of the ATT’s Vice-Presidents, we will be focusing on universalisation and implementation in the Asia-Pacific region. Since the First Conference of States Parties, Australia has supported ATT workshops in Fiji, Solomon Islands, Cambodia, Thailand, and most recently, in Samoa, last month.

Australia is also active in promoting other efforts to combat the illicit trade in and mismanagement of small arms and light weapons. We worked hard to contribute to a solid consensus outcome at this year’s BMS6, and are committed to strengthening the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons at its Third Review Conference in 2018.

The complementarity between the Arms Trade Treaty and the Programme of Action needs to be further considered at this conference.

We were also pleased to be support France’s initiative to adopt a Declaration at this General Assembly on small arms and light weapons.

Australia is a leading donor to the UN Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation (UNSCAR) which, this week, is considering nearly 60 applications from organisations seeking funding to support conventional arms regulation initiatives around the globe.
Mr Chairman

This year marks the 20th anniversary of Australia's comprehensive gun law reform—called the National Firearms Agreement—prompted by a mass shooting in Tasmania's Port Arthur in 1996.

This Agreement along with strong border controls has contributed to Australia's lower rates of gun violence when compared with many other parts of the world.

Australia has firm evidence that having fewer guns in circulation reduces the occurrence of gun-related death and injury, and increases safety and security.

Mr Chairman

The Australian Government remains committed to mine action, and to supporting the implementation of the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM), the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and Protocol V of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW). We are providing significant funding for UNMAS activities in Iraq and other regions. Australia has also committed another $9 million over five years to our long-term mine action programme in Cambodia. We have consistently supported the Mine Ban Convention and Cluster Munition Convention ISUs as well as key international de-mining efforts.

There is much to be done to achieve the goals of completing clearance and stockpile destruction efforts by
2025 and 2030 under the Mine Ban Convention and Cluster Munitions Conventions respectively.

Moreover, the needs of the victims of these munitions will remain long afterwards. Both affected States and donor States must therefore put in place measures to ensure the sustainability of victim assistance. Australia is pleased to be developing Guidance for States on addressing this challenge, including through our as Coordinator on Cooperation and Assistance, for the Cluster Munitions Convention.

The annual meetings and review conferences of the Mine Ban Convention, Cluster Munitions Convention and Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons provide vital opportunities for ensuring the momentum of these conventions is sustained. These conventions do not cost huge sums to run. We thus urge all States Parties in arrears to clear their debts. As Sponsorship Coordinator for the Mine Ban Convention, we also encourage States Parties in a position to do so to contribute to sponsorship programmes, to enable all States Parties to attend relevant conferences.

Finally, we encourage Member States to co-sponsor the Preventing and Combating Illicit Brokering Activities Resolution put forward by Australia and the Republic of Korea and the Improvised Explosive Devices Resolution put forward by Afghanistan, France and Australia.