Thank you Mr Chairman,

France aligns itself with the statement of the European Union. I would like to make the following additional remarks.

Conventional weapons continue to represent a major security challenge for all regions of the world, regardless of whether they are affected by conflicts. International measures on conventional weapons are part of an overall disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control approach. As is the case for many other issues, there is no single response, but a series of specific, targetted and coherent measures whose main goal must be to strengthen international security by taking into account everyone’s security concerns to the benefit of all.

This past year has proven that international action in the area of conventional weapons must now increasingly take into consideration the risk of terrorist groups’ acquiring and using them. France, like other countries, has unfortunately tragically experienced this. The efforts of the international community should not abate: on the contrary, this issue concerns all of us.
Mr Chairman,

The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons (SALW) continues to feed conflict, exacerbate armed violence and fuel terrorism and organized crime. It constitutes a grave threat to international peace and security. Small arms and light weapons are today those that kill the most people worldwide.

A certain number of actions have already been conducted, but we need to pursue our collective engagement. The United Nations Programme of Action (PoA) on small arms and light weapons remains an essential instrument: it continues to be the cornerstone of our efforts. But we can do better. The PoA Review Conference, to be held in 2018, will provide an opportunity to take stock of actions that have been conducted to date, but also to look towards the future, and work on strengthening the effectiveness and coherence of our actions.

[I should like to take this opportunity to point out that France is a candidate to chair the 3rd PoA Review Conference and would be honoured to work with all of the delegations on this essential instrument].

We can only overcome this challenge if we work together. That is why France has taken the initiative to propose, at the time of the POA’s 15th anniversary, a political declaration on the illicit trade in SALW. This declaration, on which all regions concur, aims to increase the visibility of this issue, but also – and above all – identify common areas of effort. Some of these areas go beyond the PoA, but they must also complement it, for our action to be more coherent. France will of course support the resolutions put forward by South Africa, Colombia and Japan on the one hand and Mali on the other.

Mr Chairman,

The Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) Review Conference will be held in November. This Convention is unique in the multilateral landscape because it brings together complementary expertise whether it be political, legal, military or diplomatic. This specificity of the CCW is a guarantee of the Convention’s ability to address current and future challenges.

The fact that CCW State Parties are dealing with the issue of lethal autonomous weapons systems, as proposed by France in 2013, is a significant development with regard to the Convention. France supports the continuation of dialogue on the issues relating to these future systems, and would like to see agreement at the Review Conference to establish a group of governmental experts with a discussion mandate.
Mr Chairman,

The threat of improvised explosive devices is a general concern that affects all regions. The international community’s mobilisation on this issue is essential. This mobilisation was revitalized by the adoption by consensus last year of the first ever resolution devoted to improvised explosive devices in the First Committee, as proposed by Afghanistan and sponsored by France and Australia. This resolution must be a guideline for the international community’s action. It is important that work undertaken on improvised explosive devices – both on a practical and political level – contribute to an overall coherence of the international community’s efforts, in keeping with this resolution.

France is fully committed as a State Party to the CCW to working on this issue as coordinator of the Group of Experts on Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs). A political declaration instigated by France was adopted by the States Parties to the amended Protocol II, and we hope to see it endorsed by the Review Conference that will take place in December. France is ready to contribute to CCW work on IEDs in the next review cycle.

Mr Chairman,

In 2016, we continued to consolidate the fundations of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). By creating a partnership of responsibility between exporters, importers and transit countries in every region of the world, this Treaty should make it possible to regulate legal trade more effectively and prevent illicit flows.

At the 2nd Conference of States Parties to the ATT, a solid framework allowing for for substantive discussions was established, particularly on the implementation of the ATT. France will of course contribute. In these discussions, we must not lose sight of our objective of making the ATT a truly universal standard. We must also not lose sight of the different circumstances prevailing in each State Party and the need to work on a convergence of national practices to fulfil the joint objective set by the ATT.

Mr Chairman,

I should like to take this opportunity to point out that in 2016 France completed the destruction of its cluster munitions stockpiles, two years ahead of the deadline set out in the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

It remains fully committed as a State Party to the Oslo Convention prohibiting cluster munitions and as a State Party to the Ottawa Convention prohibiting anti-personal mines.
Mr Chairman,

France has been actively involved on all of these issues and will remain committed in the future.

Thank you.