STATEMENT BY MARTIN NGUNDZE, FIRST SECRETARY AT THE PERMANENT MISSION OF SOUTH AFRICA TO THE UNITED NATIONS DURING THE THEMATIC DEBATE ON CONVENTIONAL WEAPONS, HELD ON MONDAY 29 OCTOBER 2018

Chairperson,

Since its inauguration in May 1994, the South African Government has committed itself to a policy of non-proliferation, disarmament and arms control which covers all weapons of mass destruction and extends to concerns relating to the proliferation of conventional weapons. A primary goal of South Africa’s policy is to reinforce and promote South Africa as a responsible producer, possessor and trader of defence related products and advanced technologies.

South Africa has therefore been a strong and consistent supporter of the Arms Trade Treaty and the strengthening of arms control systems. The illicit proliferation of arms, assisted by inadequate or weak control systems, destabilises communities, negatively impacts security and compromises development.

Chairperson,

Since the entry-into-force of the ATT, States Parties have worked hard to encourage universalisation of the treaty. In this regard, I would like to seize this moment to welcome States that have recently joined the ATT, especially Cameroon from our own region. South Africa believes that the full and effective implementation and universality of the treaty will contribute to promoting international peace and security by reducing human suffering caused by armed violence, most often affecting women and children. South Africa therefore calls on all States which have not yet signed and/or ratified, especially the major conventional arms producing and exporting countries, to do so in order to further promote the Treaty’s universalization.

South Africa joins other Member States in welcoming the outcome of the recently concluded 4th Conference of States Parties in Tokyo, particularly, the move from procedural issues to more substantive discussions. In our view the discussions on the Working Group on Effective Treaty Implementation, and the Working Group on Transparency and Reporting will add impetus to the realisation of the goals and the objective of the ATT.

Chairperson,

South Africa also welcomes the successful conclusion and the adoption of the outcome document of the United Nations Third Review Conference on the Programme of Action (PoA) to Prevent, Combat and
Eradicate the Illicit in Trade Small Arms and Light Weapons in all its Aspects that was concluded in June this year. Although consensus on the outcome documents could not be maintained, my country was nevertheless encouraged by the interest and dedication shown by Member States during the discussions to revive their commitments to the full implementation of the Programme of Action at the national, regional and international levels. This was a true manifestation of the global support towards ending conflicts in the world in general, and on the African continent in particular, which is a direct contribution towards the realisation of the African Union’s aspiration of silencing the guns by 2020.

Chairperson,

South Africa reaffirms its commitment to the Certain Conventional Weapons Convention (CCW) and the humanitarian principles enshrined in the Convention. We attach great importance to this framework Convention evidenced in our ratification of all the Protocols annexed to the Convention. South Africa also reaffirms its support for the work of the open-ended Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) to discuss emerging technologies in the area of lethal autonomous weapons systems (LAWS).

Chairperson,

Against the backdrop of the Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM), held in September 2017, concerns remain about the use of cluster munitions in some countries. South Africa therefore welcomes the increasing number of countries who are joining the Convention, in particular those countries from the African region, such as Benin and Namibia. The continuous addition of new Member States will assist the CCM to meet the shortfall of twenty six Member States to comply with the Dubrovnik Action Plan goal of signing 130 State Parties in 2020.

In closing, Chairperson,

This year South Africa has the honour, on behalf of Colombia and Japan, to again table the omnibus resolution on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects. As in the past, the resolution seeks to operationalise the UNPoA by essentially mapping out UNPoA implementation priorities for the next year or two. My delegation would like to express appreciation to all delegations for their assistance in the past and seeks further support for this resolution at this session.

I thank you, Chairperson.