Monsieur le Président, Excellences, Mesdames et Messieurs,

1. La présente communication du Centre Régional des Nations Unies pour la Paix et le Désarmement en Afrique (UNREC) que j’ai l’insigne honneur de diriger depuis Septembre 2017, fait le point de ses activités, défis et perspectives pendant la période comprise entre Janvier et Octobre 2018. Pendant la période considérée, le Centre a continué d’appuyer les États membres de la Région Afrique, à leur demande, et à travailler avec les institutions intergouvernementales, universitaires, de recherche et de la Société Civile sur les questions de sécurité, désarmement, contrôle des armes, non-prolifération et éducation à la paix.

Mister President, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

2. The report of the Secretary General on the United Nations Regional Center for Peace and Disarmament in Africa provides detailed information on UNREC activities during the reporting period. Therefore, my remarks will focus on highlighting some key aspects of the security context, the Center’s achievements and challenges, and the way forward.

3. The African continent has continued to face significant challenges to peace, security and stability posed by the proliferation of illicit small arms and light weapons, mainly in the hands of armed and terrorist groups in the Sahel-Sahara and Central Africa, and criminal groups in the remaining parts of Africa. The fact that the crises in Libya and Somalia remain to be sustainably addressed continues to fuel the many security hotspots across the Sahel as they remain major safe havens and sources of illegal SALW for terrorist fighters and transnational criminal groups. Of particular concern is the fact that attacks by terrorist fighters or armed groups tend to slowly expand further south, towards the Gulf of Guinea, both in Western and Central Africa on the one hand and towards the Mozambique Channel on the other hand.

4. As a result, the security of civilian populations and government institutions is at stake, thus resulting, among other consequences, in significant flows of refugees, IDPs and internal and external migrants, making them easy prey to human traffickers and recruiters for armed and terrorist groups. This calls for additional coordinated efforts by the international community to address the fundamental instabilities in Libya and Somalia, as well as for innovative peace and disarmament initiatives rooted in human security.

5. Against this background, UNREC is faced, quite logically, with a surge of requests for assistance from Member States in the Region; which lead the Center to expand its operations and double its staff within a year. During the reporting period, the center provided a multifaceted legal, capacity building and practical assistance to two-third of the African States, covering the whole spectrum of conventional arms, nuclear, chemical and bacteriological weapons and related.
6. Since the majority of weapons utilized by armed and terrorist fighters are diverted from government owned stocks (be it domestic or foreign), the Center placed particular emphasis on assistance to member states to improve the physical security and stockpile management of weapons and ammunition through the rehabilitation and construction of storage facilities compliant with international standard; and the capacity building of government officials, parliamentarians, civil servants, defense and security officers, UN Peace keeping personnel, civil society organizations and journalists on the subject-matter.

7. Much effort was invested in assisting member states in the implementation of the ATT, the UN PoA and related sub-regional instruments on SALW control such as the ECOWAS convention, the Kinshasa convention, the Nairobi Protocol and the SADC Protocol, in line with the ‘Silencing the guns’ initiative of the African Union. More emphasis was placed this year on peace education, targeting particularly the African youth, via awareness campaigns through friendly & pragmatic channels such as the social media and international broadcasting radio and tv stations covering Africa. One such campaign was carried out on the occasion of the International Peace Day, on 21 September 2018.

8. More than 900 beneficiaries from all regions of the African continent participated in person in the Center’s programs, while additional stakeholders from all African Member States benefitted indirectly. To support the Center’s expanding activities and personnel, new spacious and modern-style premises were graciously offered by the host country, the Togolese Republic, whose authorities, jointly with USG Nakamitsu, inaugurated the new building on 5 July. The center further strengthened partnership and synergy with other UN entities, including UNOWAS, UNOCA, UNDP, UNITAR and UNDESA to better deliver as one, in compliance with a key recommendation to enhancing cooperation among UN entities, as articulated in SG Guterres’ agenda on disarmament: ‘securing our common future’.

9. In delivering its mandate, UNREC serves 54 African States populated by 1.2 billion people, over 30 million square Km. Yet, limited financial resources remains the most significant challenge facing the Centre. That is why we encourage pledges, commitment and voluntary contributions from Member States. I would like to add my voice to those of the Secretary General and the High Representative to express gratitude for the political, in-kind and financial support provided to the Center by some Member States and regional organizations.

10. I would like to thank in particular the African Union and African sub-regional integration organizations, the European Union, the \textit{Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie}, the republics of Burkina Faso, Chad, DR Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, France, the Swiss Confederation, the State of Japan and the People’s Republic of China for their support during the reporting period. My sincere thanks go especially to the government of the Togolese Republic for providing modern and spacious premises to serve as a new headquarters for the Center and support its expanding activities and staff.

Mister President, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

11. Increasingly, Member States in our area of responsibility draw our attention on the necessity, while we provide them with assistance on arms control, to help them make the linkages with efforts to address the fundamental fragilities that render their local communities, especially women and the youth, vulnerable to violence by criminal, armed and terrorist groups. Addressing weak state presence, distrust among
security forces and local populations and limited access to quality education, job opportunities and basic public services is for them a prerequisite to achieve sustainable impact of arms control programs and build resilient societies. Therefore, UNREC is engaged in a paradigm shift to overcome traditional silos and strengthen partnerships with sister UN entities, the AU and African sub-regional organizations, drawing on each organization’s respective comparative advantage to rationalize resources and optimize impact. In so doing, UNREC focuses on the ‘Disarmament that save lives’ and ‘Strengthening partnerships for disarmament’ components of the SG’s disarmament agenda, in pursuit of SDG 4, 16 and 17 that promote quality education, peaceful and inclusive societies through enhanced partnerships.

12. As concluding remarks, I would like to stress again that the Regional Center needs Member States continued and increased political, financial and in-kind support to advance the UN agenda for a more peaceful, stable and secure African continent that contributes to global peace and security.

I thank you, Mister President.