Mister Chairman,

[IF ANY: France fully adheres to the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union. I would like to add some remarks in a national capacity.]

Chairman, fellow colleagues,

The regional dimension of the First Committee’s work is an issue of great importance to my delegation.

At regional level, ambitious best practices that may inspire our work in UN forums and disarmament conventions with universal scope may indeed take root among former adversaries that have to learn to get to know each other to build a neighborhood of peace.

The European Union is the best example of this as it has succeeded in drawing the lessons from a painful past, to build a lasting peace by inventing a new governance of divergences, namely “unity in diversity”. The EU enables its partners to benefit from this experience through its neighborhood policy and the cooperation it provides to third States. EU cooperation tools have a strong regional dimension, including in the field of disarmament. For example, France is actively participating in the EU assistance program to promote the entry into force, early universalization, and effective implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty. Within this framework, France has organized workshops, study visits and other related activities in Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ivory Coast, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra-Leone, Togo and Philippines.
Chairman, fellow colleagues,

Global, regional and sub-regional non-proliferation and disarmament initiatives can be mutually reinforcing when they are designed with a view to achieving complementarity. The mobilization of the international community against the threat of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons is a good example of this.

From a global perspective: the United Nations Program of Action on all aspects of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons provides a general framework against the trade of SALWs, and strongly encourages cooperation at all levels. France, chairing the 3rd PoA Review Conference in 2018, has demonstrated its full commitment in this direction.

From a regional perspective: cooperation is essential, given the largely cross border nature of SALW trafficking. France has also been very actively involved, with for example these actions in the Sahel-Saharan zone in the fight against the numerous cross-border traffic, and first and foremost that of weapons, ammunition and explosives.

The Serval operation in the Sahel-Saharan strip led to the seizure of 200 tons of weapons and ammunition in 2013 and 2014. Since then, the Barkhane operation, which contributes to the fight against illicit trafficking of SALW and breaking up weapon supply flows to terrorist groups, has continued to seize several tons of weapons and ammunition each year.

In the same time, France has also also actively involved in the ramp-up of the G5 Sahel force, encouraging States of the region (Chad, Niger, Burkina Faso, Mali, and Mauritania) to bolster their military presence in border areas by improving their coordination through a single chain of command.

These French initiatives at the regional level are far from being the only ones. France also participates in initiatives such as the revision of the European Union’s strategy to fight SALW trafficking, as well as the OSCE’s efforts to encourage good practices, assistance, and cooperation in this field.

And finally from a sub-regional perspective: France supports the Centre for Development of Post-Conflict Mine Action and Decontamination Actions in Ouidah, Benin, which has a regional remit and helps support our African partners in bolstering their capacity for evaluation, upgrading, and managing SALW and ammunition stockpiles.

Other example, in Europe, where France, with Germany, has launched a SALW coordination group in the western Balkans, with the aim of fostering the exchange of
information and synergies between bilateral and regional and international initiatives on SALW, with notably a permanent criminal intelligence unit, set up in Bosnia-Herzegovina, responsible for collating and analyzing information on SALW.

Chairman, fellow colleagues,

At the European level, France, like the other EU Member States, strongly supports the implementation of transparency and confidence-building measures adapted to the geostrategic situation in the region, and actively engages in dialogue aiming at reinforcing those, notably within the OSCE.

The Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe has enabled the destruction of a great deal of equipment: my country cannot reconcile itself to seeing it wither away and calls on parties to create the conditions to return to its full and comprehensive implementation. We would also like to express our concern as regards the disparities in implementing the Open Skies Treaty, and we call upon States Parties to look in good faith for solutions within the Consultative Commission for this instrument, a key pillar in the European security architecture. The Vienna Document, for its part, is as much a confidence-building as a transparency and risk-reduction instrument: my delegation wishes to continue bolstering and modernizing this text together with all countries concerned to adapt it to changing military doctrine and equipment.

Other instruments achieved consensus within the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, notably on the fight against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction or transversal threats, cyber-security, and the management of small arms and light weapons and ammunition stockpiles: they are studied closely by the OSCE's partners in Asia and the Mediterranean as best practices that can be adapted to their specific regional environment.