Mr Chairperson,

It is an honour for me to address this Committee on behalf of the Nordic countries: Denmark, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and my own country, Finland.

Mr Chairperson,

Advancing gender equality as a crosscutting theme throughout the entire spectrum of disarmament and arms control is a key priority for the Nordic countries. The advantages of full and equal participation of women in disarmament and arms control are abundantly clear. The arms control community in this room can do its part by advocating for improved gender balance throughout the various activities debated during the First Committee.

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the entry into force of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, which has established norms that are widely respected and adhered to, also by States which have not ratified the Convention. The Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention is perhaps the most successful multilateral disarmament treaty in recent times. Since it was adopted in Oslo in 1997, 164 states parties have joined, nearly 53 million stockpiled mines have been destroyed, and vast areas have been successfully cleared and released to local communities.

However, established international norms are under pressure and it is our responsibility to protect them. In recent years, we have witnessed new and widespread use of landmines of an improvised nature. Many of these are produced and used as tools of war and terror by non-state actors. The priorities of the Norwegian presidency this year are protection of affected communities and groups who are particularly vulnerable, including IDPs and refugees. There is a need to further gender mainstream all aspects of mine action and to push for increased progress in clearance so that more affected countries can declare themselves mine-free.

States parties, Observers and civil society will meet at the Fourth Review Conference in Oslo from 25 to 29 November. We request the support of all participants to secure a strong outcome in Oslo.
Mr Chairperson,

Poorly regulated small arms and their ammunition are key enablers of violent conflict. The Secretary-General’s Agenda for Disarmament, which the Nordic countries fully support, highlights the importance of a comprehensive approach to addressing arms and ammunition. We welcome the convening of a group of governmental experts in early 2020 on problems arising from the accumulation of conventional ammunition stockpiles in surplus.

The Nordic countries are longtime supporters of work in SALW control in several countries and regions. We also support a number of research institutes and civil society organizations and contribute to the UN Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation (UNSCAR). We are grateful that the SALIENT-fund will officially be launched [tomorrow/today] and we call on all countries in a position to do so, to support this valuable life-saving tool.

The Arms Trade Treaty remains a high priority for the Nordic countries. Already in its first five years, it has proven its value in promoting a more responsible and transparent legal trade, and in improving action to counter the illegal spread of arms and ammunition. The focus of the Fifth Conference of States Parties to the ATT on gender aspects, including gender-based violence, as well as the continued attention to risks of diversion, are welcome and valuable. The number of States Parties continues to grow: last year marked the milestone of 100 ratifications. Yet a number of the largest arms exporters and importers remain outside the Treaty. We will continue dialogue with them and other countries, and also continue our strong support for the practical implementation of the Treaty, including through the ATT Voluntary Trust Fund.

Mr Chairperson,

We remain strongly committed to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and its Protocols. The Group of Governmental Experts on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS) has been an extremely valuable venue for international work on this multifaceted and exceptionally complex arms control topic. Progress has indeed been made, including on the now 11 Guiding Principles. Strict adherence to International Law, and in particular International Humanitarian Law, is and must continue to be the cornerstone of all weapons use. High Contracting Parties should seize the opportunity to consider and clarify the normative and operational framework for LAWS. This should be done in the Geneva GGE, which we see as the appropriate forum for this topic.

The ATT, the CCW and other important multilateral conventions cannot function without adequate resources. We call on States Parties, which have not yet done so, to pay their assessed contributions and arrears in full and without delay.

The Convention on Cluster Munitions has succeeded in reducing human suffering caused by this weapon. We remain deeply concerned about the reported use of cluster munitions, which gravely affects civilian populations. The Nordic countries engage actively on a global level to alleviate the humanitarian consequences of cluster munitions.

Thank you, Mr Chairperson.

***