Thank you Chairperson,

In August 1994, the South African Government made a commitment to a policy of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control as an identified priority of South Africa's foreign policy. In the field of conventional disarmament, we continue to champion the need for equal attention to be given to the control of the proliferation of conventional weapons as is given to the disarmament debate on weapon of mass destruction (WMD). More than WMD, these weapons impact negatively on African States.

South Africa therefore actively participated in the recent meeting of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty. We believe that this landmark Convention sets an important norm in the field of conventional arms control. The illicit proliferation of arms, assisted by inadequate or weak control systems, destabilises communities, negatively impacts security and compromises development. We welcome the ratification or accession to this Treaty by three additional African countries during this year, namely Botswana, Mozambique and Guinea Bissau.

South Africa again calls on all States which have not yet become a State Party to the Treaty, especially the major conventional arms producing and exporting countries, to do so in order to further promote the Treaty's universalization.

Chairperson,

We also recall with appreciation the successful Third Review Conference on the implementation of the UN Programme Action (UNPoA) and the International Tracing Instrument (ITI) on small arms and light weapons that was held in June 2018. The UNPoA represents the single internationally recognised standard in addressing the illicit trade in these weapons. Importantly, as stated in its outcome document, it encourages the development and implementation of national action plans or other national policies in support of the implementation of the UNPoA to improve the measurement of progress and to coordinate the development and implementation
of such plans or policies, with those relevant to target 16.4 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

As far as the issue of ammunition is concerned, South Africa has long held the view that the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons should not be viewed in isolation. In this regard, we joined the consensus with the adoption of the ITI in 2005, that the issue of ammunition should be addressed separately. Accordingly, we regard further work on this important issue, which is to resume in 2020, as an integral part of eradicating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

Key to this is addressing stockpile management issues in a comprehensive manner and developing or improving, as necessary, legislative and regulatory frameworks that govern the safe and secure storage of stockpiles of conventional small arms and light weapons, including ammunition.

Chairperson,

South Africa reaffirms its commitment to the Certain Conventional Weapons Convention (CCW) and the humanitarian principles enshrined in it. We attach great importance to this framework Convention, as evidenced in our ratification of all the Protocols annexed to the Convention. We also reaffirm our 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).

South Africa also actively participated in the recent Ninth Meeting of States Parties (9MSP) to the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) and reiterates its resolve to ensure the conclusion of its stockpile destruction process under Article 3, within the specified eight year time frame. The Convention continues to define the international norm on these weapons, which bans those cluster munitions that have indiscriminate area effects and pose a grave humanitarian threat to civilian populations. Since our last First Committee session, we welcome the latest ratification by an African country, The Gambia, as a State Party to the CCM.

In closing, Chairperson,

This year we will support Colombia, together with the other lead sponsor, Japan, in tabling 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 wishes to express its appreciation to all delegations for their assistance in the past and seeks their support in ensuring that this resolution will be adopted by consensus during this session.

I thank you, Chairperson.