Mr. Chairman,

Thank you for the opportunity to present our views in this thematic session.

Reducing the humanitarian consequences of the uncontrolled spread of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) will come not only from measures to control the supply of weapons. It will also come from limiting the risks to which potential victims are exposed and changing the behaviour of arms carriers. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) encourages States to tackle the problem of SALW in a holistic manner.
By adopting the Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons, States have put in place a comprehensive road map for addressing the illicit trade of these arms. The need now is for States to deliver results on the ground.

The ICRC has found that, while innovative and interesting projects do exist to reduce the availability and effects of small arms and light weapons already in circulation, they are too few.

States' work in implementing the Programme of Action should include putting in place violence prevention strategies that address all key actors that can play a role in reducing armed violence. Context-specific and comprehensive approaches are indispensable for successfully reducing the threat that SALW pose to safety, security and humanitarian operations.
The ICRC also believes that improved respect for norms of international humanitarian law (IHL) is an essential component of efforts to protect persons from the misuse of arms. Enhanced respect for IHL can increase people's safety and security and contribute to reducing the demand for weapons in response to insecurity. In light of this, the ICRC emphasizes the need for capacity-building efforts to ensure that military, police, security forces and other arms bearers use weapons in accordance with IHL and applicable human rights law. The ICRC provides practical support to States for the training of armed, security and police forces, and promotes respect for IHL by non-State armed groups.

We believe such "capacity-building" and "demand"-oriented efforts need to be seen as an integral part of implementation of the Programme of Action.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.