Mr. Chairman,

The United States reiterates our support for the Chair in bringing about a successful outcome to the Sixth Biennial Meeting of States (BMS 6) for the UN Program of Action to Prevent, Combat, and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (PoA). All states must comprehensively implement the PoA and the complementary International Tracing Instrument (ITI), if the international community is to help reduce armed violence that is facilitated by illicit trafficking in small arms/light weapons (SA/LW). The United States remains steadfast in its commitment to implement the PoA and ITI and to assist others in doing so.

The United States views the draft outcome document of the Chair dated June 3, 2016, as a good basis for discussion. As we only have one week to discuss issues of great importance in the fight against the illicit SA/LW trade and to adopt an outcome document on the basis of consensus, the United States calls for delegations to focus discussion on implementing measures that are within the scope of the PoA and ITI.

The United States views physical security and stockpile management (PSSM) as a critical factor in addressing the illicit SA/LW trade, and supports commitments to strengthen PSSM in the draft outcome document. Illegal armed groups and criminal organizations increasingly turn to poorly secured state stockpiles as a source for weapons. In particular, there is much more that needs to be done when it comes to PSSM, particularly in post-conflict situations. Our efforts in this regard must also include ensuring that destruction or deactivation procedures for SA/LW render the weapons permanently inoperable.

In addition, the United States reiterates the importance of marking and tracing of weapons as indispensable to combating the illicit trade in SA/LW. To this end, the United States actively offers tracing assistance for firearms recovered in crime. The United States, through the Department of Justice, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco,
Firearms, and Explosives, currently has agreements with 44 nations to use the eTrace tool to assist investigations in fighting the illicit trafficking with SA/LW, and we welcome additional partners as well.

States could also consider how regional organizations and their members have cooperated to further PoA implementation, taking into account factors specific to their region. The United States has supported SA/LW capacity-building through a range of regional and sub-regional organizations, including the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, NATO, the Organization of American States, the UN Regional Center for Peace, the Caribbean Community, Disarmament, and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Nairobi-based Regional Center on Small Arms. Since 1993, the United States has provided over $1.6 billion in Conventional Weapons Destruction assistance, which in part addresses the proper disposal and management of SA/LW. Regional and sub-regional organizations have also played a significant role in implementing such assistance programs, as well as engaging Member States on the need for international cooperation to implement the PoA and related instruments.

On the topic of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the United States certainly welcomes adoption of Goal 16 and its targets, including 16.4, which includes a reference to illicit arms flows. However, we would note that discussions about SDG indicators, including indicator 16.4.2, are ongoing, and that Member States have only agreed to them as a starting point, subject to future technical refinement, per paragraph (d) of the UN Statistical Commission Decision 47/101. Therefore, we should not look to SDG target 16.4 as a baseline for PoA and ITI implementation. The commitments contained in the PoA and ITI, as well as national implementation reports, establish baselines and measure progress in implementing those two documents, not SDG target 16.4, which only aims in general terms for a reduction in illicit arms flows. Finally, the United States recalls paragraph 74(f) of the 2030 Agenda outcome document, which states that measures to evaluate achievement of the SDGs “will minimize the reporting burden on national administrations.” As such, we should avoid making new data collection commitments related to the SDGs in the BMS 6 outcome document. While the United States firmly believes that open and accessible data is central to our shared efforts to achieve the SDGs, as such data enables evidence-based decision-making, mutual accountability, and more effective policy and program implementation, we do not feel that the BMS 6 outcome document is the appropriate forum to discuss these issues. Rather, we would encourage the full support of ongoing efforts to develop the capacity of Member States to collect and report on data for the achievement of the SDGs such as the Global Partnership for
Sustainable Development Data and the “United Nations High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.” The United States has been and will remain a strong supporter of these and other relevant initiatives.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.