Madame Chair,

My delegation wishes to congratulate you on your election as Chair of this PrepCom. Our congratulations also go to the members of the Bureau. Belgium very much appreciates the constructive and transparent way in which you have been leading this process so far. We would like to assure you of our fullest support.

Madame Chair,

Belgium fully aligns itself with the statement on the International Tracing Instrument presented earlier by the European Union. Allow me to add a few comments to this topic in my national capacity.

Last year Belgium submitted its first national report on the implementation of the ITI, including the designation of a national point of contact for the ITI. Currently, new initiatives are being developed with regard to the national coordination of the fight against the illicit arms trade, and this as a direct consequence of a tragic and deadly shooting incident involving an illicit assault rifle in December last year in the city of Liège. Belgium will report about these new developments later this year with a new national report on the implementation of the UN PoA.

Belgium would like to elaborate on two specific elements that we would like to see reflected in the Prepcom outcome document.

The **first element** is the **promotion of the sharing of tracing results, in an appropriate format, in order to prevent future diversion.**
Paragraph 11 of the second part of the UN PoA calls for states to “assess applications for export authorizations [...] taking into account in particular the risk of diversion of these weapons into the illegal trade”. To enable and facilitate the assessment of the risk of diversion to non-authorised end-users, export license authorities need access to the records of recipient countries and brokers in respecting end-user and re-export provisions. In short: in order to prevent diversion, transfer licensing authorities need access to diversion track records.

To be effective, this information exchange is necessary but not sufficient on a national level, and also needs to happen on a regional and international level. On the international level we believe that INTERPOL is well placed to consider and develop options in this direction, and we very much welcome the development of iArms in this regard. The publication on the internet of lists with convicted diverters is also very helpful in this regard and we thank countries that have already done so. Belgium believes this approach may also prove useful with respect to the operationalization and implementation of a possible future Arms Trade Treaty. Increased transparency on illegal diversion patterns can indeed lead to increased accountability on the demand- as well as on the supply side of the SALW-trade.

The second element that Belgium would like to see reflected in the Prepcom outcome document has to do with weapons tracing by Peace Support Operations.

Weapons tracing has an established role in criminal investigation where it is used to prove fire-arm related offence and to uncover the source of illicit supplies to criminals. By contrast weapons tracing in conflict and post-conflict situations remains largely a theoretical concept. This is inconsistent with the basic principles of the UN PoA, that states in paragraph 22, that particular emphasis should be placed “on the regions of the world where conflicts come to an end and where serious problems with the excessive and destabilizing accumulation of small arms and light weapons have to be dealt with urgently.”

Therefore Belgium fully supports the proposal to enable and mandate Peace Keeping and Peace Support operations to trace illicit and diverted SALW, where appropriate in close cooperation with UN panels of experts that control compliance with UN Arms embargoes. Belgium thanks the Small Arms Survey for their very useful issue brief on this subject. Belgium believes that this approach would address an unexplored but relevant dimension of the original objectives of the UN PoA, and make a meaningful contribution to the restriction of illicit arms flows to zones of armed conflict or instability.

Belgium is very interested in comments to these proposals, and will further elaborate them in dialogue with interested states and stakeholders in the run up to the Review Conference.

Thank you.