Statement by H.E. Ambassador Ham Sang Wook
Deputy Permanent Representative of the Republic of Korea to the United Nations

at the Preparatory Committee for the Third United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects – Part I (UN PoA)
at the UN Headquarters, New York
March 19, 2018

Mr. President,

At the outset, I would like to join the previous speakers in congratulating you on your assumption of the chairmanship of the Third UN Programme of Action (PoA) Review Conference and this Preparatory Committee. I am confident that this week’s thematic debate will lead to a fruitful and practical result in the upcoming Review Conference under your able leadership, and I assure you of my delegation’s full support for the success of the meeting.

Mr. President,

Small arms and light weapons continue to be the weapons of choice in a vast majority of armed conflicts around the world. The destabilizing inflow of such weapons fuel and prolong violence and armed conflict. This exacerbates other illicit activities and spurs the emergence of violent groups, hindering the rehabilitation and the long term development of affected communities and economies. With over 1,300 people being killed every day by illegal firearms,
the humanitarian cost itself already deserves the joint effort of the United Nations to fight against the scourge caused by the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

Such illegal weapons and ammunitions originate from varied sources. This includes from illicit and irresponsible trade across porous borders or in grey or black markets, diversion from poorly managed stockpiles, and smuggling, theft, or trafficking by terrorist groups or transnational organized crime syndicates.

With a view towards tackling the specific phase of trade where illegality arises to a consignment of small arms, the 2001 UN PoA pointed out three crucial aspects: marking, record-keeping and tracing. These three aspects are closely interrelated as tracing relies on the markings placed on a weapon, and, in cases where tracing involves multiple transfers of such arms, markings are only useful if proper records are kept. By emphasizing these points, the UN PoA and its 2005 International Tracing Instrument (ITI) have played a vital role in equipping the international community with various national and multi-national tracing systems and promoting the importance of stockpile management efforts.

Mr. President,

Since the last PoA Review Conference in 2012, the Republic of Korea (ROK) has once again beefed up its efforts to better implement the UN PoA and the ITI. In addition to the rigorous export marking regulations under the Act of Defense Acquisition and the Act on the Control of Firearms, Swords, Explosives, etc., in 2015, we also introduced a stipulation allowing only properly marked small weapons, at the time of import, into Korea. Since 2016, the ROK has required import/export licenses to include information on all third countries via which transfers are made. All of these efforts are specified in our 2018 national implementation report of the UN PoA and the ITI, made public through the UN Office of Disarmament Affairs website.

As a High Contracting Party to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) and its Amended Protocol II, the ROK has been participating in a range of discussions and activities to ensure only limited and responsible use. We also joined Protocol V on Explosive Remnants of War (ERW) and are implementing all relevant obligations.

The ROK government ratified the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) in November 2016.
As one of the treaty’s original signatory states, we believe that this year’s UN PoA PrepCom and RevCon should explore possible synergies between the ATT and the UN PoA, including the sophistication of implementation and technical assistance mechanisms at various levels.

The ROK government has also contributed more than 10 million US dollars since 1993 for de-mining and victim assistance efforts through relevant UN programmes, including the UN Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Action (UNVTF) and the International Trust Fund for De-mining and Mine Victims Assistance (ITF). Our most recent allocation was made to a project reducing the impact of explosive remnants of war in the Gaza Strip, protecting civilians from explosive hazards in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and an Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) Threat Mitigation project in various impacted countries, including Afghanistan.

To conclude, Mr. President, my delegation would like to briefly mention illicit brokering activities. To raise awareness on the threat to international peace and security posed by illicit brokering activities of conventional arms and materials circumventing relevant international instruments, Australia and the ROK have been tabling a biennial resolution at the First Committee and UN General Assembly. My delegation would like to request the continued support of all Member States on this resolution at the 73th General Assembly.

Thank you, Mr. President. /End/