"I wish to begin by expressing my delegation’s heartfelt appreciation to you, Mr. President, for the initiative you have taken to organize this very important debate on small arms. This underscores the importance your country attaches to small arms and light weapons as instruments that whet the appetites of belligerents to continue to seek solutions to political and economic problems by military means.

Namibia, like many other countries emerging from war, was awash with large numbers of small arms. Those numbers have now been reduced significantly, but given Namibia’s geographical location, illicit trafficking continues to this day.

Namibia holds the view that the uncontrolled availability of small arms and light weapons encourages the outbreak or continuation of hostilities which have the capacity to ruin treasuries, destroy life and property and cause panic.

Weapons force people to live in an atmosphere of increasing insecurity where differences become more polarized and where peace is at best fragile and at worst illusory. This distressing state of affairs is attributable largely to the impunity with which weapons manufacturers and arms exporters transfer small arms and light weapons to corrupt, unscrupulous and undemocratic regimes with track records of human rights violations and to rebel groups and anti-national elements which
use these weapons to subject populations to brutal savagery for their own selfish ends.

The merchants of war, on the other hand, motivated by the fortunes they make from arms sales, feel no urgency to curb arms transfers nor are they concerned with the devastating consequences those arms have on developing countries, especially in sub-Saharan Africa. Arms transfers and trafficking, and the resulting armed conflicts which they feed, are having a devastating impact on social, political and economic life for Africa south of the Sahara, a region endowed with natural resources but which still has pockets in which live the poorest people in the world today.

It is therefore imperative that the international community should seek to address effectively the culture of impunity related to arms trafficking. Many tend to believe that it is the duty of African leaders alone to constrain the availability and flow of arms in and into the region. Against this backdrop, we believe that the effort to rid Africa of its superfluous small arms is a shared responsibility for the region's leaders and for the international community as a whole.

Uncontrolled transfers of small arms, especially to irregular forces, for cash, diamonds or other commodities weaken or facilitate the collapse of States and result in anarchy. Naturally, non-State parties to the conflicts have a capacity for unusual cruelty and serious violations of international humanitarian and human rights law. Such violations are always the order of the day in areas where the illicit supply of small arms and light weapons flourishes.

Acquisition of weapons is always accompanied by the diversion of scarce resources away from social services. It discourages foreign investment and tourism. It contributes to unemployment and its attendant problems of organized crime, poverty, ignorance and lawlessness.
We would not be true to our consciences if we confined ourselves to tackling the illicit traffic in small arms: we need to include also arms transferred licitly to irresponsible regimes by those who know full well that they will be distributed among ethnic groups that are bent on committing inhuman activities such as ethnic cleansing. My delegation encourages the Governments of arms exporting countries as well as those of receiving countries to exercise a substantial degree of responsibility in such transactions."