Mr. President,

I should like to begin by expressing, on behalf of the Indonesian delegation, our congratulations to you upon your election as President of this historic UN Conference. Our felicitations also go to the other members of the Bureau. In addition, I wish to convey our sincere appreciation to Ambassador Carlos dos Santos of Mozambique for the commendable role he has played during the three Preparatory Committee sessions.

Let me also avail of this opportunity to commend the Secretary-General for focusing our attention and for playing a leading role in stimulating international awareness and action on an issue of concern and interest to all the Member States.

Before proceeding further, allow me to associate my delegation's position with the statement made by Ambassador Nguyen Thanh Chau of Viet Nam on behalf of ASEAN.

Mr. President,
This international Conference has been convened to urgently address and to focus our attention on the serious and persistent problems caused by the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects. The world market is now glutted with small arms that are easily available at very low prices and many of them could be obtained easily and illegally with relative ease. Further compounding the situation is that a sizable share of small arms deals are significantly increasing between private individuals, sub-national groups and non-state actors who also act as conduits for actual users. Illicit trade thrived in the 1990s for many of the same reasons that legitimate global trade has flourished as newly-opened borders and the expansion of free trade have eased the challenge of smuggling small arms. These were exacerbated by inadequate national laws and lax border controls to funnel weapons to conflict-ridden zones.

In consequence, the appalling toll in civilian casualties, the magnitude of human suffering, and the level of destruction brought about by the misuse of these weapons have shocked our sense of humanity. It is undeniable that small arms and light weapons have become the deadliest killers in the past decade. Such an unacceptable situation can no longer continue with impunity. Hence, the importance of international measures to eradicate the illicit trade in these arms have become self-evident.

In retrospect, the multi-faceted problems posed by the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons go beyond complex humanitarian situations. The proliferation of these weapons has also a detrimental impact on security. The illicit flow of these weapons has enabled armed separatist and insurgent groups to challenge the authority of the legitimate government and thereby disrupt law and order in the society. Porous borders have led to arms smuggling and challenged regional countries to intensify cooperation in combating these illegal activities. Furthermore, the easy access to small arms and light weapons has been closely linked to international terrorism and drug-trafficking and, as universally recognized, has become a destabilizing factor that prolongs conflicts, undermines peace agreements, complicates peace-building efforts and impedes socio-economic development.
Against this profoundly disturbing backdrop, and as the Millennium Declaration has urged Member States to take concerted action to end the illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons, our task would be to develop a coordinated approach to address the multiplicity of inter-related problems.

The increasingly global nature of small arms sales means that political and legal solutions need to be coordinated on a global level to be effective. A standardized international system for regulating exports and documenting where weapons ultimately end is urgently needed. It should also address the increasingly trans-national network of brokers, dealers, financiers, and transporters. Concurrently, close cooperation at the regional level is particularly important because small arms are often circulated by regional networks of illicit dealers and insurgents. This could include agreements for the strict enforcement of laws against illicit traffickings and joint operations against illicit weapons traffickers.

The holding of small arms at levels consistent with legitimate security interests and self defense, together with the strengthening of national controls related to manufacturers and dealers authorized by states and augmenting national legislation and controls over the possession, use and transfer of small arms, would make a significant contribution in stemming the illegal flow of arms. Thus, in dealing with the problem of small arms at the national, regional and global levels, an integrated approach has become a matter of urgency. They are mutually reinforcing and complementary processes and should be carried out in a non-discriminatory manner.

In this context, we welcome the draft Programme of Action and consider that it should serve as the basis of our negotiations, since it contains important elements needed to combat the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. It addresses, among others, the supply and demand sides of the problem as well as the dynamics of disarmament and those of conflict prevention, peacekeeping and peace-building.

In our view, the Programme of Action we are to adopt should be balanced, realistic and implementable. It should be imbued with a pervasive sense of pragmatism with the primary objective of ensuring that arms transfers would be authorized solely among states in order to prevent them from being acquired by illegal entities and
thereby endanger democratic processes and jeopardize state sovereignty and territorial integrity of Member States from possible external intervention.

We are further of the view that the implementation of the Programme of Action should take into account the existing capacities of states, which differ widely. This, in turn, necessitates appropriate measures of international cooperation, especially in extending technical and financial assistance in the field of capacity building to enable all countries, in particular the developing ones, to cant’ out their commitments consistently.

We also recognize the important role played by civil society in raising international awareness on the dangers associated with the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. We believe that civil society possesses the necessary expertise and, as such, could help the state in finding solution to difficult problems caused by the illicit trade in these weapons. In this regard, we wish to encourage an enhanced partnership between the two sides.

Finally; Mr. President, we believe that this Conference represents a critical starting point and provides an appropriate forum to work together in reaching a consensus on concrete measures to deal with the scourge of illegal small arms proliferation. It is not the end of our efforts but just the beginning. The challenges before us are enormous but my delegation believes that we can make concrete progress in achieving our objective.

Thank you, Mr. President.