Mr. Chairman,
Please accept my congratulations in connection with your election to the post of chairman. I am convinced that with you in the chair we shall bring about a successful conclusion of this Conference.

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Delegates,
Illicit trade in small arms and light weapons has become one of the greatest challenges to the security of mankind in the twenty-first century. Poland is deeply convinced that the effects of uncontrolled spread of small arms and light weapons, particularly the extreme suffering of defenseless and innocent civilian population - the elderly, women and children - require urgent adoption of international agreements, incorporating suitable preventive measures.

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Delegates,
There is a clear link between the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons - and such nonmilitary threats as terrorism, trafficking in drugs and people, and organized crime. Bearing that in mind, Poland has actively participated in the work on the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. The Polish draft of the Convention was adopted by the United Nations as the point of departure for its work. We believe that the Program of Action, to be adopted by the Conference, and the Protocol against Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, their Parts and Components and Ammunition, supplementing the Convention, are interconnected. Therefore, we expect that that fact will be reflected in the final documents of the Conference.

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Delegates,
We feel that the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons frequently takes its beginning from legal trade, especially if the latter is not properly controlled. Hence, Poland's emphasis on concentrating the work of the Conference on "all aspects" of the problem of small arms and light weapons.

Poland attaches top priority to effective export controls for strengthening international security and peace. National export control systems should be harmonized and mutually compatible in order to restrict freedom of action in the "gray area". It is high
time for the countries that have not done this so far - particularly those on the demand side of the arms trade - to institute, as rapidly as possible, efficient export-control systems. Their efforts ought to be supported by multilateral aid programs - as an expression of international solidarity. Poland, as a country that has established over the past eleven years an export control system meeting the most advanced standards, is ready to share its experience.

Poland attaches high significance to transparency. We feel that introduction of regional registers of legal transfers of small arms and light weapons, as well as confiscated arms, would contribute to determination of the actual scale of the problem.

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Delegates,
Poland has taken active part in the preparations for the Conference as one of the co-chairs of the Preparatory Committee. At this point I would like to convey my government's congratulations to Ambassador Dos Santos, whose efforts ensured success of the Committee's endeavours.

I also wish to congratulate Ambassador Peggy Mason of Canada, chairwoman of the UN governmental experts group, which prepared a feasibility study on restricting trade and manufacturing of small arms and light weapons to the manufacturers and dealers authorized by states. That is the first ever analysis on this scale of the activity of arms-trade brokers. We therefore call on the Conference participants to adopt the report.

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Delegates,
Poland is involved in numerous international initiatives devoted to small arms and light weapons at the United Nations, the Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe, and the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council. Confiscation, storage and destruction of small arms and light weapons within the framework of the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration process are key objectives of our peace forces, particularly in the Balkans. Poland's commitment to the work of the EAPC, as well as the KFOR and SFOR peace operations in the Balkans, reflects our striving to widen the zone of stability around Poland. Emphasizing the importance of regional initiatives, we call for support of the moratorium declared by ECOWAS. As part of the preparations for the Conference, the Polish government last year co-hosted two regional conferences in Warsaw, devoted to small arms and light weapons. The first had as its subject "Controlling Small Arms and Light Weapons Flows from and through an Enlarged EU: Developing a Joint Action Program for EU and Candidate Countries". It was organized jointly with SAFERWORLD and reflected our commitment to closer cooperation with nongovernmental organizations. The conference adopted the "Warsaw Call for Action" - a document in which the participants appealed for greater collaboration between European countries in combating the uncontrolled spread of small arms and light weapons. The second conference, convened jointly with Canada, under the EAPC initiative "Disarmament and Peacekeeping Operations", reflected the significance we attach to incorporating the issue of small arms and light weapons in the mandates of peace-keeping operations.
Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Delegates,

International cooperation is of enormous importance for resolving the problem of small arms and light weapons. The relevant threats are primarily of an international character. Mutual contacts between international forums involved in initiatives dealing with small arms and light weapons, could make it easier to combat those threats. At the OSCE seminar on small arms and light weapons, held in April 2000, Poland proposed the creation of an international network of national contact points and liaison officers of regional organizations, designed to facilitate such collaboration. In Poland small arms and light weapons are subjected to the same strict licensing procedures as other types of arms. Certain categories of small arms and light weapons, because of their potential use by terrorists, are subjected to particular security measures. We attach special importance to proper marking of weapons, safeguarding of storage facilities and the procedures for destroying redundant weapons.

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Delegates,

Poland believes the Program of Action should include the following provisions:

- that the arms trade will be restricted exclusively to entities authorized by states,
- that arms exports will be verified according to the so-called export criteria, foremost among them - the question of respecting human rights by the importer. The adoption, in the year 2000, of the OSCE Document demonstrated that the member countries of that organization, representing highly diversified regions, are capable of reaching broad agreement concerning the criteria,
- that export controls, also applying to arms-trade brokers, will become a standard element of the structure of every state;
- that the violation of international arms embargoes will be treated as a crime by all countries and will be severely punished;
- that all small arms and light weapons being the object of trade will be properly marked, to facilitate the struggle against illicit trade in arms.

The conference is the long-awaited culmination of efforts by the respective countries, regions, as well as political and non-governmental organizations. We believe that the Conference, while concluding a certain stage of endeavours, will initiate coordinated actions on a global scale, leading to improved international security, and most of all - to less suffering by the defenceless civilian population.