DRAFT STATEMENT
by the Chairmanship of the Forum for Security Cooperation on behalf of the OSCE at the Open-Ended Meeting of Governmental Experts

New York, 9-13 May 2010

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Delegates,

I am honoured to speak today on behalf of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), which my country currently chairs at the OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation.

The OSCE as a regional arrangement under Chapter VIII of the UN Charter, continues to play an important role in early warning, conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation and seeks to complement and reinforce commitments and action undertaken globally. Early since the adoption of the UN Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in SALW in 2001, the Organization has promoted its implementation at the regional level, taking into account the special needs of its 56 participating States in the area from Vancouver to Vladivostok.

By adopting the OSCE Document on SALW in 2000, the OSCE became one of the first international organizations that recognized the threats and risks posed by the excessive accumulation and uncontrolled spread of SALW. A decade after its adoption, the OSCE Document on SALW is still considered an apposite document in which participating States committed themselves to undertake measures to every stage of life of a weapon.

Among others, the SALW Document sets out principles for the marking of small arms and light weapons. Participating States must ensure that weapons are marked in such a way as to allow investigating authorities to be able to identify the year and country of
manufacture, and the weapon’s serial number. As almost all illegal weapons, including those used for criminal purposes, are originally transferred perfectly legally, these constitute essential elements which enable such weapons to be traced back to the supplier or to the point of diversion. Furthermore, as even well-marked weapons cannot be traced unless proper records of markings and transfers are kept, states agreed to keep full and accurate records of all small arms holdings.

Mr. Chairman,

The UN Programme of Action on SALW (2001) calls for the establishment of standards and measures at the regional level as well as for conducting regional programmes to strengthen laws and procedures to combat the illicit trade. In promoting the full implementation of the UN Programme of Action the OSCE has followed three main “C” principles: continuity, complementarity and cost effectiveness. Let me explain each of them in more detail and also present two specific OSCE initiatives, which are particularly relevant to our today’s agenda.

**Continuity.** Following the adoption of the UN PoA a lot has been done by the OSCE participating States to strengthen the implementation and further develop norms, principles and measures related to SALW control. However, in order to ensure the sustainability of the results, a cooperative approach and continued engagement is vital.

Since the adoption of the OSCE Document on SALW, the topic has taken a priority on the OSCE agenda. The Handbook of Best Practices on SALW that was subsequently developed by the OSCE provided a practical tool that could be used to implement the SALW Document also in the areas of marking and record-keeping. More recently a Plan of Action on SALW tasked the OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation to take concrete steps to (1) further the implementation of the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit SALW; (2) discuss national experiences in tracing requests and their outcomes; and (3) explore
the needs of OSCE countries to receive assistance on marking in the framework of stockpile management and security assistance. The implementation of the Plan is currently underway.

**Complementarity.** The OSCE closely follows and seeks to complement efforts undertaken at the global level while also tailoring its activities to the needs of 56 participating States. It applies both to norm setting and to the practical implementation.

An OSCE initiative on enhanced reporting can be given as the most recent illustration of this approach. Just earlier this year the OSCE has streamlined its reporting mechanism in concert with UN developments. Fully synchronized with the new UN reporting template of 2010, the updated OSCE questionnaire took on its format and its content. At the same time the section of the questionnaire dealing with marking and record-keeping has been expanded to reflect the OSCE commitments made in the area. Now it provides for more comprehensive information exchange on the implementation of the agreed commitments. At the same time it reduces the related administrative burden on OSCE States. Moreover, it also allows States to conduct self-assessment checks to ensure all key elements of controls, including those related to marking, tracing and record-keeping are incorporated in the national legislation and procedures.

**Cost efficiency.** Starting from 2003 the OSCE has provided practical assistance to its States with collection, destruction and improvement of SALW stockpile management and security. An efficient record-keeping system allowing monitoring movements of weapons at any time is an important part of such assistance initiatives. Due to the limited extra budgetary resources cost efficiency is a key principle for the OSCE in planning and execution of assistance projects, including the broader benefit of selected project results to other States with similar needs.

In this context, the latest joint OSCE-UNDP-Belarus initiative on electronic record-keeping is of particular relevance. Electronic record-keeping is an advanced form of SALW data management providing
for the most efficient, state of art accounting of availability, technical condition, movement, categorization and decommissioning of SALW with breaking down SALW accounting by types of storage, as well as for SALW record-keeping according to their production data.

The OSCE, UNDP and Ministry of Defence of Belarus developed special software to meet the most detailed requirements for the SALW and ammunition electronic record-keeping. Since 2010 the pilot version of the software has been tested at the SALW storage sites in Belarus as part of the joint OSCE-UNDP Project "Capacity Building of SALW Stockpile Management and Security" in the Republic of Belarus. As of 2012 the software and corresponding training should become available to other OSCE countries that use Russian as one of working languages. A possibility of making this software available in other languages in the OSCE area and beyond is also under consideration.

Mr. Chairman,

In concluding, let me stress that although immense progress has been achieved during the last decade in establishing norms, principles and measures to stop the proliferation of illicit SALW many States still face technical and financial obstacles in their implementation. As a regional organization, the OSCE will further seek to work closely together and complement the efforts of the United Nations in stopping the excessive accumulation and uncontrolled spread of SALW as well as continue to support States in transforming the global undertakings into concrete action on the ground.