NGO Presentations
Speaker: Héctor Guerra, Mexico (Spanish)

Dear delegates,

My name is Héctor Guerra, and it is a pleasure to address you in my new role as Network Coordinator for IANSA.

At this Review Conference, in addition to looking back as my colleague has noted, governments cannot squander the opportunity to look forward in a productive and creative manner. In this sense, looking forward is not only to the future, but also to act immediately to overcome the PoA’s weaknesses and challenges - in order to ensure it has a future at all.

Civil society shares the concern noted by Ambassador Jim McLay of New Zealand in his recent brief for the Small Arms Survey, that the PoA - (quote) “now faces a more insidious threat (than paralysis) — that of a gradual, but sustained slide into indifference and obscurity, with national awareness of and commitment to the process ebbing away...” — (end quote) - He pointed out that another acrimonious failure — such as we saw in 2006 — would be damaging to the credibility of the PoA process. But equally damaging would a RevCon that simply and blandly restates existing commitments.

Inspired by this urgent concern, we need to ask: what exactly has been achieved? A decade has passed since the PoA was adopted, and, in turn, specific measures to curb the illicit trade in small arms were laid out. We need to go beyond assessing how well States may or may not have implemented the PoA, to also addressing this question: did that implementation have a measurable impact on levels of armed violence and in the daily lives of people?

To answer honestly and simply, determining whether the PoA has had a significant impact on changing the world around us remains elusive. Thus far most national assessments have lacked the essential element of evaluation of impact.

Even if national reports on PoA implementation were universal, comprehensive and analytical – which they are not – anecdotal self-assessment is never a sufficient tool to monitor, measure and analyse the actual impact of any “program of action”. Therefore, the PoA’s lack of an independent mechanism to assess its actual implementation on a national level poses a threat to its relevance.

The High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Angela Kane, recently stated that the PoA (quote)“suffers from the absence of measurable benchmarks and concrete targets for implementation” (end quote). Indeed, the key components for assessing the PoA’s
effectiveness have been reporting and follow-up mechanisms, which have been irregularly and inconsistently applied.

This critical gap must be effectively overcome during the next two weeks, with the creation of a credible blueprint to bring into existence an independent implementation assessment mechanism as soon as possible. To ascertain whether the PoA is serving its purpose, we need the right evidence to allow an analysis from a fact-based, comprehensive and comparative perspective. Recent efforts on the matter from UNIDIR, the Small Arms Survey and UN CASA, for example, suggest this is clearly achievable.

Therefore, this RevCon must deliver as one of its outputs a mandate for the comprehensive, independent, and objective monitoring of PoA implementation – beyond national reporting of achievements or requirements – with the development of measurable benchmarks and concrete implementation targets to analyse the fulfilment of States’ commitments.

Let us recall that in the BMS4 outcome document, all States in this room “recognized the need for a comprehensive assessment of progress in the implementation of the Programme of Action, 10 years following its adoption, as an input for the 2012 Review Conference”.

The RevCon should also establish cycles of meaningful, manageable and mandatory reporting to ODA, an exercise that, if taken seriously, will offer important insights into national implementation.

We note the many calls in this meeting for continued and strengthened cooperation and assistance to States to support their implementation efforts. A number of states have called for the establishment of a United Nations Multi-Donor Trust Fund to support projects in the context of the PoA. IANSA shares the concern of member states that there are not enough financial resources at present. We therefore support the call for the mobilization of additional funds for organizations involved in promoting the goals of the PoA, through projects such as capacity building, improving stockpile management, providing information and support etc.

However, we feel that a UN Multi-Donor Trust Fund is not the appropriate vehicle. Any new funding mechanism must be directly accessible to all actors involved in supporting the Program of Action: national governments, international organizations and civil society.

In the current draft language of the implementation plan, we note with concern the ambiguity of the language in all 4 sections of the paper with reference to (quote) “member states, where they not yet done so, undertake”(quote), followed by the whole series of steps listed. We wish to suggest that this language could lead to the impression that implementation of the
PoA is a one-off achievement by states - whereas our understanding is that implementation is a permanent process for States to engage in.

Finally, civil society shares the disappointment expressed by the majority of member states in the failure to agree the Arms Trade Treaty in July. Nonetheless, we are confident that States will secure the ATT in the very near future and look towards this October at the UNGA to advance this goal. Importantly, we are glad there was consensus agreement to include small arms and light weapons firmly within the ATT. We are also encouraged that ammunition had overwhelming majority support for its full inclusion within the ATT’s scope and are confident this support will be translated into the ATT text we hope will shortly be reality.

Dear delegates,

We take note of the important aspirational nature of the draft “Declaration”. We urge that States carefully assess whether the steps proposed in the documents on the implementation of the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument will in fact be sufficient for the achievement of those aspirations and the re-commitment by States to action that they imply. Do the suggested steps go far enough in addressing the (quote) “challenges and obstacles that still remain to the full implementation” of the PoA and the ITI?

Over the next days, we must collectively focus on how to deliver those “clear and tangible results” in order to create the conditions for a very different RevCon in six years. At the next RevCon, we must have a much clearer, evidence-based assessment of real-life implementation, to be able to minimally answer the question “has the PoA reduced levels of gun violence on the ground?”

Thank you for your attention.