Mr Chairman,

I have the honor to take the floor on behalf of Mercosur member States, Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay, and its Associated States, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela, to address the subject on Small arms and light weapons, currently being debated under the cluster Conventional Weapons.

Our sub region wishes to highlight the huge responsibility that lies upon the international community in acting more significantly in the struggle against the scourge of the illicit trade on small arms and light weapons. This subject keeps breeding domestic conflicts in many countries, which jeopardizes peace negotiations and post conflict stages, while worsening the situations of violence.

A persisting problem in this field is the easy access of civilians to weapons and ammunitions. The number of methods, means and ways to acquire weapons is very large, either through both, the licit and illicit way. Therefore, Mercosur and its Associated States deem necessary a stronger control and broader regulation on the side of state authorities with regards to those weapons in possession of civilians to avoid, not only the proliferation of violence, but the human, social and economic costs that the use of such weapons entails.

Our countries wish to reiterate the need to reduce the causes of demand in a way to develop a culture of peace in which the settlement of conflicts can be reached without violence, reducing the power granted by weapons in a society, and in particular, the recovery of the monopoly of force by the States.

Mercosur and its Associated States sees with concern that multilateral efforts in this regard have been far from the objectives established. Thus, the International Instrument on marking and tracing, convened to deal with such subject, remains far from reflecting the needs of those countries most affected by the scourge of the illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons. It was destined to be the first international agreement emanating from the Plan of Action to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects and entailed a credibility proof. The life of people from different communities around the world that suffer the consequences of armed conflicts in this field, depended on the result of such negotiations.

For these reasons, our sub region permanently seeked that the negotiations oriented towards a legally binding document which would include, at the same time, ammunitions. Such treaty should have included common provisions for an adequate marking of all arms and light weapons; detailed international provisions providing a register of transfers; provisions for the marking and tracing of ammunitions; strategies for the reinforcement of the operative capacities when enforcing such provisions; provisions which would allow the harmonization of such instrument with the national responsibilities which the States already within the field of international law; and mechanisms for a future review and improvement of such instrument.
Unfortunately it was not much what was achieved with the instrument agreed upon. For our countries, the result of such negotiations imply a very delicate precedent for future negotiations on the regulation of illicit brokering and an eventual treaty on firearms, which in our view, constitute two main elements of the integral vision we have on dealing with this problem.

Mr Chairman,

Mercosur and its Associated States consider of paramount importance to reflect on where we stand right now and where we are heading in the fight against illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons, in particular when considering the expectations before the Review Conference of the Plan of Action, which will be held next year.

In this respect, our sub region deems important to complement the Plan of Action adopted in 2001 with decisive agreements in areas such as possession of weapons by civilians and transfer of weapons to illicit armed groups. It is essential to determine the sources, resources and technical assistance to guarantee the sustainability of the programs on disarmament, demobilization and reinsertion, as well as to strengthen the instrument on marking and tracing, in order to work on those key areas which have not been dealt with appropriately.

To conclude, Mr Chairman, we wish to recall that one of our Associated States, Colombia, will introduce together with South Africa and Japan, a resolution entitled “Illicit Trafficking on small arms and light weapons in all its aspects”. Mercosur and its Associated States acknowledge the importance and relevance of this resolution, which has already been introduced for a number of years now.

Thank you.