Mr. Chairman,

The proliferation of conventional weapons is a matter of increasing concern, because it has been the major instrument of destruction. The improvement in production technology, the sophistication and the availability of limitless quantity of weapons is one of the most serious challenges to peace, security and development in most parts of the world.

The proliferation of and easy access to Small Arms and Light Weapons are not only sources of concern to peace and security, but also to the social and economic development of many countries. It is for this reason that Eritrea attaches great importance and sees no better instrument than the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eliminate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects since its adoption in 2001.

Mr. Chairperson,

The successful outcome of the Fourth Biennial Meeting of States on the implementation of the UN Programme of Action on Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons held in July, 2010, was an opportunity to renew the commitment and to seek additional measures to strengthen its implementation. My delegation strongly believes that the meaningful implementation of the programme could be realized only if collective and individual actions are taken in a coordinated manner at the international, regional and sub-regional levels. Eritrea is already working on a five year (2008 -2012) National
Action Plan on Small Arms and Light Weapons, covering stockpile management, marking and destruction. Moreover, the plan aims at harmonizing National legislation on Small Arms and Light Weapons with Eritrea’s International and Regional commitments, in particular the Nairobi Declaration. Eritrea is also an active member of the Regional Center for Small Arms (RECSA) established to coordinate action against the proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Region.

Mr. Chairperson,

As a legacy of the thirty year war for independence and the recent border conflict with Ethiopia, landmines and unexploded ordnance litter the countryside and in many areas continue to cause injuries and deaths. A National Landmine Impact Survey (LIS) was conducted and completed in June 2004. It conclusively identified and indicated that out of Eritrea’s 4,176 communities, 481 are affected by landmines and unexploded ordnance. This represents 914 Suspected Hazard Area covering approximately 130 square kilometer areas, impacting 655,000 people. Considering the assistance available for such endeavor from the UN agencies is limited, the Government of Eritrea has been using its meager resource to tackle the impact of mines and unexploded ordnance (UXO) with the objective of expediting the mine-clearing programme. So far Eritrea has been able to cover an estimated 10,258 anti-personnel mines, 997 anti-tank mines and 68,890 UXOs since the programme started in 2001. The total area cleared amounts to 54 square kilometers. This is significant but not sufficient to meet Article 5 mine clearance obligations. In this regard, Eritrea has requested for a ten years’ extension of the deadline to accomplish and ensure complete clearance and destruction of all landmines and UXOs in the country, according to Article 5 Paragraph 3 of the Convention. Eritrea remains committed to the full implementation of the Convention, and in this regard it seeks for the sincere international partnership to develop its capacities and strengthen its capabilities in the victim assistance, mine clearance and stockpile destruction.

Eritrea notes with great interest the entry into force of the Oslo Convention on Cluster Munitions on 1 August 2010 and appreciates the offer of the People’s Democratic Republic of Lao to host the First Meeting of States Parties to the Convention.

Finally, with respect to the ongoing discussions, on a future Arms Trade Treaty, my delegation wishes to underline that the international legally binding instrument must take into consideration the concerns of all states and should be consistent with the UN Charter, in particular article 51 which enshrine the right of states to self defense.

Thank you.