Statement by the Honorable Laura E. Kennedy,
United States Permanent Representative to the Conference on Disarmament,
Delegation of the United States of America,
to the Conventional Weapons Segment of Thematic Debate,
in the First Committee of the Sixty-sixth Session of the United Nations
General Assembly

(Prepared for Delivery)

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The United States Delegation takes the floor today to address important issues involving the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW), small arms and light weapons (SA/LW), and man-portable air defense systems (MANPADS).

Mr. Chairman, concerning the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, the United States continues to support negotiation of a comprehensive and binding protocol in the framework of the CCW that addresses all aspects of cluster munitions, including use, transfer, stockpiling, and destruction, and that will have a significant humanitarian impact on the ground.

We urge CCW High Contracting Parties to take the opportunity, at the CCW Review Conference this November, to conclude such a protocol that contains concrete and substantive provisions. CCW High Contracting Parties can achieve real and immediate humanitarian benefits with a protocol on cluster munitions, as reflected in the Chair of the Group of Government Experts draft text, and should not settle for a purely aspirational document that is unlikely to have any impact on the ground. The Chair’s draft protocol would extend a set of binding norms, rules and regulations to the major users and producers of cluster munitions, which represent 85-to-90 percent of the world’s cluster munitions stockpiles.

As a High Contracting Party to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and all its Protocols, the United States looks forward to this November’s Review Conference, not only for the opportunity to conclude a Protocol on Cluster Munitions, but also to reinforce our commitment to this important instrument of international humanitarian law. We encourage those states that have not yet become High Contracting Parties to the CCW or any of its current five protocols to consider announcing their intent to accede at the upcoming CCW Review Conference.
The United States continues to implement the CCW Protocols, and our national policies meet or exceed all the requirements of the CCW Protocols.

In addition, Mr. Chairman, while we continue to review our landmine policy, we have maintained our commitment to addressing the potential humanitarian consequences caused by landmines. The United States ended all use of persistent landmines, both anti-personnel and anti-vehicle, at the end of last year. These are the landmines that can remain active years or even decades after a conflict ends and, if left in the ground and improperly maintained, present a serious threat to civilians.

The United States also continues its strong support for eliminating aging, surplus, loosely-secured, or otherwise at-risk conventional weapons and munitions, as well as explosive remnants of war. We have provided more than $1.9 billion in aid in 81 countries for conventional weapons destruction programs, including clearance of landmines and unexploded munitions.

Mr. Chairman, concerning small arms and light weapons (SA/LW), the United States is dedicated to the full implementation of the 2001 UN Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat, and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (POA). We are a global leader in providing assistance to fulfill the program’s objectives.

The United States supports implementation of the “International Tracing Instrument” (ITI) to enable the timely marking and tracing of illicit small arms and light weapons as well as recommendations of the UN Group of Government Experts (GGE) on small arms and light weapons brokering.

The United States signed the Inter-American Convention Against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials in 1997, and the Obama Administration is seeking advice and consent to ratification by the U.S. Senate.

The United States also supports the inclusion of small arms and light weapons in the UN Register of Conventional Arms, a confidence-building measure where states annually report on conventional arms transfers.

The United States works to enhance global and national mechanisms for controlling weapons by assisting states in improving their export-control practices,
providing physical security and stockpile management (PSSM) for at-risk arms and munitions, and destroying excess weapons and munitions around the world. These efforts include supporting initiatives of the UN and other international and regional organizations to address illicit transnational arms transfers through the marking and tracing of small arms and light weapons and strengthening controls on arms brokers.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, the United States is committed to working closely with numerous countries and international organizations to counter the proliferation of MANPADS.

In the hands of terrorists, criminals, or other non-state actors, MANPADS—also known as shoulder-fired anti-aircraft missiles—pose a serious threat to global passenger air travel, the commercial aviation industry, and military aircraft around the world.

Since 2003, the United States has cooperated with countries around the globe to destroy more than 32,700 excess, loosely secured, illicitly held, or otherwise at-risk MANPADS in over 30 countries.

Mr. Chairman, our Delegation looks forward to collaborating successfully with other delegations on these important issues, as well as on the remaining work of this session.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.