Mr Chair,

Norway believes that improved security for all can be achieved with considerably lower levels of armament than is the case today. Arms control, conventional disarmament and non-proliferation are therefore integral elements of Norway’s security and foreign policy. The efforts to reduce armed violence and human suffering caused by both conventional weapons and other weapons are essential for improving the national and global security environment and for development. The humanitarian dimension in disarmament and arms control must be a key element in our discussions and efforts, because at the end of the day, it is the consequences for the people on the ground that our policies will be measured against. We need global and regional instruments that help us achieve such results.

The Arms Trade Treaty has the potential to become such an instrument. The adoption of the ATT by the UN General Assembly on 2 April this year was historic. Not only because this is the first legally binding instrument that regulates trade in conventional arms, but also because the international community demonstrated that it is possible to achieve results without being tied to a restrictive consensus framework in decision making. The Treaty is not perfect, but it has the potential to become a powerful instrument, provided it is implemented effectively and thoroughly, and with the best intentions. The ATT should, when it enters into force, be a dynamic and living instrument, open for future improvements and changes.

Concerning the scope of the Treaty, let me reiterate Norway’s view: The ATT should, in principle, cover all conventional weapons. We therefore urge all States Parties to apply the Treaty’s provisions to the broadest range possible of conventional arms, as Article 5 (3) in the Treaty encourages us to do. We have also argued that the Treaty’s provisions should apply to all kinds of transfers, not only commercial, as the mode of transfer has no bearing on the weapons’ capabilities or potential to do harm.

(Check against delivery)
We are pleased that the ATT prohibits conventional arms transfers when they would violate relevant international treaty obligations, including those set out in human rights treaties. The Treaty also prohibits all transfers of arms that would be used in the commission of genocide, crimes against humanity or war crimes in all types of armed conflict. Norway also attaches importance to the provision on Export and Export Assessment, which requires that a transfer that has the potential to lead to any of the negative consequences listed in that Article, for example serious violations of human rights or international humanitarian law, shall not be authorised.

We are also pleased that the risk of gender-based violence and violence against women and children is among the criteria that have to be assessed before authorising an export of arms, and also that the risk of diversion has to be assessed.

Norway will work towards making the ATT universal. To achieve this and to ensure effective and thorough implementation, those states that are in a position to do so should provide assistance to states that need support to establish well-functioning systems, with adequate institutions, resources and expertise. This will be crucial for the success of the Treaty.

The most important task ahead is to ensure rapid entry into force and lay the ground for thorough and effective implementation of the ATT. Let us all join forces to achieve these goals and let us work together with civil society in this process. Civil society and multilateral and international organisations, such as the ICRC, have been valuable partners throughout the ATT process, and we should continue to make good use of their expertise and commitment in the future.

Mr Chair,

The Mine Ban Convention and the Convention on Cluster Munitions are examples that demonstrate that it is possible to negotiate multilateral instruments in the field of disarmament that strengthen the protection of civilians and have an immediate humanitarian effect on the ground. The Third Review Conference for the Mine Ban Convention in Maputo in 2014 will be a good opportunity to take stock, look ahead and ensure that we are working in the best possible way to fulfil the objective of the Convention: a world free of landmines and the necessary support to victims.

The Convention on Cluster Munitions has generated similar results. As President of the Convention’s Third Meeting of States Parties, Norway has continued to focus on effective implementation of the Convention’s obligations on the ground, as well as universalisation of the Convention and its norms. As was confirmed by the Lusaka Progress Report of September this year, the States Parties have made considerable progress since the entry into force of the CCM in 2010.

Another important result of this Convention is that its very adoption five years ago led to an immediate and dramatic reduction in the use of cluster munitions worldwide. Considerable human suffering has thus been averted.
This last year, however, we have witnessed the first instance of intended and sustained use of these weapons since the Convention was adopted in 2008. As President of the 3MSP, Norway condemned the use of cluster munitions in Syria on several occasions. While deeply shocked by these unacceptable actions, we found the reaction by the international community encouraging. A total of 107 UN Member States voted in favour of General Assembly resolution 67/262, which strongly condemned the use of cluster munitions in Syria. This underlines the extent to which the use of cluster munitions today is considered illegitimate, and unbecoming of responsible members of the international community.

Norway would like to congratulate Zambia on the successful Fourth Meeting of States Parties which was held in Lusaka in September. We are confident that under the leadership of the Zambian Presidency, our community will make further strides towards the universalisation and effective implementation of the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

Mr Chair,

The Second Review Conference of the United Nations Programme of Action in August/September 2012 gave reason for some optimism. Although Norway argued for a stronger outcome document, we should now take full advantage of its potential. We should use it to re-energise our global, regional and national efforts to combat illicit and irresponsible use of and trafficking in small arms and light weapons, which are considered by many as the real weapons of mass destruction of our time. We now have a unique opportunity to coordinate our work with the SALW process and the ATT, to see these instruments and processes together and in totality, and search for potential synergies with a view to strengthening our efforts to reduce armed violence and human suffering caused by conventional weapons and ammunition.

Over the past years we have increased our understanding of how use of explosive weapons in populated areas have significant humanitarian impact. Reports show how a broad group of conventional weapons have profound similarities in their effects, causing a consistent pattern of humanitarian harm. This is an issue that warrants a comprehensive and systematic response by the international community, on normative, regulatory and operational levels. Norway have taken note of the concerns expressed by the Secretary-General of this matter, and will support and encourage efforts to develop better responses than those available today.

Mr Chair,

Finally, let me briefly touch upon the question of toxic remnants of war. Some substances commonly used in conventional munitions could potentially be harmful to health due to their toxicity or environmental behaviour. However, to this date, considerable gaps in our knowledge about the risks such toxic remnants of war may pose to civilians. The international community should address these questions, including the data gaps on toxicity, environmental behaviour and civilian exposure, through research, monitoring and assessments.

Thank you Mr Chair.