Thank you Mr Chair.

I want to outline why it is so important for the international community to prevent the proliferation and abuse of weapons, in order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals to end poverty by 2030.

Member States recognized this necessary link last year when they adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This includes Goal 16 – To promote peaceful and inclusive societies.

SDG target 16.4 relates to weapons, namely:

- Significantly reduce illicit financial and arms flows, strengthen the recovery and return of stolen assets and combat all forms of organized crime.

Four other targets under Goal 16 are closely related:
- 16.1 – Significantly reduce all forms of violence.
- 16.3 – Promote the rule of law.
- 16.5 – Substantially reduce corruption and bribery
- 16.a – Strengthen institutions to prevent violence, terrorism and crime

Mr Chair, the research of IANSA’s affiliates and experts leads us to a simple truth – if illicit arms flows are not significantly reduced, it will torpedo the efforts to achieve the SDGs.

Pervasive armed violence, whether in conflict or in crime, denies millions of people access to justice and incapacitates institutions, leading to further armed violence.

The deployment and proliferation of weapons undermines not only Goal 16, on peaceful and inclusive societies, but also other goals on:

- Poverty
- Health
- Education
- Gender equality
- Employment
- Reducing Inequality
- Safe cities
Arms traffickers are fuelling corruption, money laundering, and assisting those who commit atrocities.

Meanwhile, unscrupulous politicians turn a blind eye to the fundamental principles of the rule of law and the need to uphold human rights.

The UN standards for the use of force and firearms are routinely ignored. When conflicts erupt, the Geneva Conventions and other International Law obligations are violated.

On our tv sets, we see millions fleeing the terror inflicted by lawless men with guns, bombs and mines. We see homes destroyed and abandoned. Costly offices, factories, warehouses, hospitals, schools, community centers and vehicles are left mangled, along with human flesh.

Such destruction is the exact opposite of sustainable development.

Unless we can together silence the guns and the bombs, the SDGs will remain in the domain of wishful thinking. But by fulfilling their commitments to arms control, States will also be advancing the SDGs.

I remind Member states of their commitment under Article 26 of the UN Charter, to divert the least amount of the world's resources into armaments.

The obscene amounts currently being spent on armaments of all types, represent a massive diversion – one could say a theft – of resources from the 2030 agenda for sustainable development.

Mr Chair, this is why WAANSA calls on Member States to redouble their efforts to:

1. Fully implement and strengthen the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons and related instruments.

2. Use sustained diplomacy to resolve violent disputes, and establish legal and enforcement measures everywhere to prosecute violators of arms embargoes and crimes.

3. Make resources available to build political commitment, institutional capacity and public awareness, consistent with the rule of law and human rights, to prevent armed violence, terrorism and crime.

4. And finally, we urge States to deploy new technologies to better combat arms trafficking and to prevent the spread and use of inhumane weapons.

I thank you.