Samoa’s Statement:
Delivered by H.E Aliioaiga Feturi ELISAIA,
Permanent Representative
First Committee on Agenda Item – Conventional Weapons Thematic Discussions

Mr. Chairman,

The unregulated and illicit trade of conventional arms fuels conflicts, supports criminal activities, disrupts the peaceful lives of communities and contributes to human rights abuses. Conventional weapons are the most common types of weapons employed in armed conflicts and are responsible for the untold injuries, deaths and human suffering of millions of people which undermine political stability and economic development, critical foundational blocks for countries to achieve the SDGs and the 2030 agenda.

Mr. Chairman,

Samoa is an island nation with only a civilian police force. We don’t have a military force because we don’t need it, and even if we have one, it won’t guarantee us peace and security. Our only security is the rule of law to protect us. The Arms Trade Treaty has the potential to make a real difference in reducing the deadly consequences of the illicit global trade and protect innocent civilians. True, the ATT itself cannot stop all unlawful arms transfers, but, if effectively implemented, it can contribute to transparency in the arms trade and can make it substantially more difficult and more expensive for weapon buyers and suppliers to defy rational and commonsense standards. We truly need a strong ATT to prevent and combat the diversion of arms and ammunition which are causing human suffering around the world, including the
Pacific region.

Mr. Chairman,

Our faith in the rule of law was the underpinning which led to Samoa being one of the first Pacific island states to sign and ratify the Arms Trade Treaty. As a party to the ATT, we are committed to honour our obligations.

Firstly, our reporting obligation.

Despite our limited human, technical and financial resources, Samoa has submitted its reports for the implementation of the Programme of Action to prevent, combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects.

Secondly, the development of relevant national legislation.

Samoa’s Conventional Arms Bill 2017 is before our Parliament for its third and final reading. The Convention Arms Bill addresses gaps in existing legislation and ensures the translation and implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty in the local context.

Thirdly, continued investment in our border control measures.

Samoa continues to invest in building the capacity of our law enforcement and border agencies on international standards on transferring Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW), cross border collaboration and maintaining of registry and data in a centralised information management system to assist in our reporting obligations and in strengthening and securing our borders against illegal arms trade and to control the transfer of conventional arms. We acknowledge the ATT Voluntary Trust Fund which supports capacity-building of our small island states and regional programmes.
Mr. Chairman,

Despite progress made so far, challenges remains for Samoa in the full implementation of the Programme of Action in terms of human, technical and financial resources. Our challenges are also shared by other Pacific island states. With our individual national efforts we can only achieve limited success; therefore these must be complimented by a regional approach with the cooperation of other Pacific countries as the most effective and efficient way for us to combat the problem. A regional approach would mean cross-border collaboration, information and data sharing, resource sharing in terms of surveillance all combined would assist our Pacific small island states to ensure regional security with benefits to flow-over to national efforts.

Mr. Chairman,

We welcome the progress made at the 3rd Conference of State Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty, particularly the establishment of the standing Working Groups on Effective Treaty Implementation and on Treaty Universalization. The work of both groups is critical for the early realization of our cherished hope for a peaceful and secure world. SIDS have a valuable contribution to make at our forthcoming discussions and we welcome the sponsorship program that would support our participation so that we are able to provide such needed input.

Let me conclude by appealing once more to those member states that have yet to become states parties to the Arms Trade Treaty, to do so soon, both to ensure its early universalization but importantly, its effective and efficient implementation.

I thank you.