STATEMENT DELIVERED BY MR SHUAIB MAHOMED, FIRST SECRETARY AT THE SOUTH AFRICAN MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS IN GENEVA DURING THE THEMATIC DEBATE ON CONVENTIONAL WEAPONS, FRIDAY, 20 OCTOBER 2017

Chairperson,

In view of time constraints, I will limit my remarks to five issues, namely the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), the Certain Conventional Weapons Convention (CCW), the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM), Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS) and the UN Programme of Action (UN PoA) on Small Arms and Light Weapons.

Chairperson,

Since the entry-into-force of the ATT there has been an impressive growth in membership pointing to the great work State Parties have done aiming at the universalisation of the treaty. Despite the fact that the ATT sets high norms and criteria, many States share a common understanding to prevent the illicit trade in conventional arms. In this regard, South Africa welcomes States that have recently joined the ATT, in particular those countries from the African region, Benin, Cape Verde and Madagascar.

The full and effective implementation and universality of the treaty will contribute to promoting international peace and security by reducing human suffering caused by armed violence, most often affecting women and children. South Africa supports the ATT process establishing the Standing Working Groups agreed to at the Third Conference of State Parties aiming at the creation of a continuous platform for all States (both exporting and importing) to exchange views and share experiences on the implementation of obligations under the Treaty. To this end, South Africa calls on all States which have not yet signed and/or ratified, especially the major conventional arms producing and exporting countries, to do so in order to further promote its universalization.

Chairperson,

South Africa looks forward to the upcoming Review Conference of the UN Programme of Action (UN PoA) to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade Small Arms and Light Weapons in all its Aspects under the Presidency of France scheduled to take place in June 2018. We call for a renewed commitment to the full implementation of the UN Programme of Action on the national, regional and international level. Great progress has already been achieved through actions aimed at integrating the provisions of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Regional Protocol on the Control of Firearms, Ammunition and Other Related Materials. South Africa is honoured to support and co-sponsor the General Assembly
resolution (71/48) titled “the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects” that links directly to Goal 16 the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that seeks to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, to provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive Institutions at all levels.

Chairperson,

South Africa reaffirms its commitment to the Certain Conventional Weapons Convention (CCW) and the humanitarian principles enshrined in the Convention. We attach great importance to this framework Convention evidenced in our ratification of all Protocols annexed to the Convention. South Africa welcomes the outcomes of the Fifth Review Conference of the CCW that took place in December 2016 particularly the decision to convene a Meeting of the High Contracting Parties to the Convention, and to establish an open-ended Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) to discuss emerging technologies in the area of lethal autonomous weapons systems (LAWS). It is, however, a great concern that some CCW meetings for 2017 were unable to convene due to financial constraints. South Africa, therefore, encourages States that have not met their obligations with regard to assessed contributions to do so to ensure effective implementation and participation in future meetings.

Against the backdrop of the Meeting of State Parties on the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM), held in Geneva in September 2017, concerns remain about the use of cluster munitions in some countries. South Africa’s decision to join the Convention was informed by our conviction that these weapons have not only become obsolete as weapons of modern warfare, but that their recent use in conflicts has shown them to cause unacceptable harm to civilians, even long after the cessation of active hostilities. We remain fully committed to the full implementation of the provisions of the Convention and the outcomes of the Dubrovnik Action Plan of 2015.

I thank you, Chairperson.