Mr. Chairman,

My delegation associates itself with the statement made by the distinguished representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

The widespread use of conventional weapons has been responsible for immense loss of life across the globe. The illicit trade and unregulated use of these weapons, especially in the hands of non-state actors, pose a serious threat to global security and imperils the lives of populations the world-over.

Having experienced, first hand, the destruction that can be caused by the illicit trade in such weapons, Sri Lanka is acutely aware of the ramifications that conventional weapons could pose to a nation’s security and its population.

Mr. Chairman,

During an internal conflict spanning 3 decades, terrorist groups in Sri Lanka made ample use of the easy access to small arms and light weapons globally,
to procure and use such weapons, on the democratically elected Government and the people of Sri Lanka.

In the post conflict phase, Sri Lanka is beginning to uncover not only the extensive overseas networks that have facilitated the illicit transfer of conventional weapons, but also the extensive arsenal that terrorists have been able to acquire. The massive stockpile of weapons recovered bears testimony to the ease in which terrorists could procure such weapons globally.

Mr. Chairman,

Sri Lanka is deeply committed to combating the illicit trade and unregulated spread of these weapons. Following the eradication of terrorism, we have embarked on a nationwide campaign to recover illicit arms and make a fresh analysis on small arms and light weapons, particularly in the areas where illicit arsenals were maintained by the terrorists.

Sri Lanka regards the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) as an important legal instrument that contributes towards the protection of both civilians and combatants from excessively injurious and indiscriminate effects of conventional weapons, while taking into consideration the legitimate security concerns of States.

As a signatory to the UN Programme of Action to Combat the Proliferation of Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects, Sri Lanka established the National Commission against the Proliferation of Illicit Small Arms. The main objective of the Commission, at present, is to establish a national database on the civilian use of Small Arms and Light Weapons in the country.
The Commission, has received the support from a variety of actors, including the United Nations. We firmly believe that developing countries need to be provided, upon their request, such assistance for capacity building in managing this critical issue.

Mr. Chairman,

Sri Lanka, being in agreement, in principle, with international measures to address the proliferation of conventional weapons, believes that it is important to ensure that any measures taken by the United Nations and its Member States to curb the proliferation of such weapons, do not affect the inherent rights of States to legally procure and hold weapons for self-defense and the safety of its citizens. It is our view that international measures to curb proliferation should also focus on small arms and light weapons.

In this context, Sri Lanka believes that countries which produce such weapons have greater responsibility to monitor and control their disbursement.

Mr. Chairman,

Sri Lanka urges urgent and meaningful collective action to address this critical issue, in order to ensure the safety and well-being of our people and global peace and stability.

Thank you.