Gracias Señor Presidente e Estimado Embajador,

At the outset, allow me to congratulate you for your appointment as President of the First Meeting of the States Parties of the Arms Trade Treaty. I am sure that under your able leadership, we will be promoting the goals of the Treaty with decisions that can gather an enduring consensus towards the future.

I would also like to address a word of appreciation to the Government of Mexico for hosting this Meeting and to extend the wishes of good cooperation to all participants in the Conference.

Portugal fully aligns with the statement that will be delivered by the European Union later and would like to make some additional points from a national perspective.
Mr. President,

It’s with great honour that Portugal is present at the first Conference of State Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty. This event represents the culmination of a long process that has mobilized the combined efforts of States, the international community and the civil society towards the objective of promoting a responsible arms trade in terms of conventional armament. This treaty is based on the principals of good-faith, cooperation, transparency and accountability.

For the first time, the United Nations will have at its disposal a legally-binding instrument that will formally regulate the conventional arms trade. This will have positive repercussions on global security, regional stability and the well-being of civilian populations. In fact, due to the humanitarian essence of the Arms Trade Treaty, we have been able to establish this fundamental linkage between Human Rights, Arms Trade and Humanitarian Law. Moreover, for the first time the link between gender-based violence and the global arms trade is enshrined in a multilateral treaty.

The role that civil society has carried out during the long process of the negotiations of the ATT had a great importance on the definition of the scope of this Treaty and has help to ensure that the humanitarian aspect of the ATT is not only contemplated but also
taken a step further, ensuring that the ATT could set a new paradigm in terms of Human Rights and Gender Equality. This cooperation between States, the civil society and the international community has proven fruitful and its benefits are clear, both in the letter and spirit of the ATT.

Mr. President,

Portugal shares the International Community concerns about the illicit traffic and collection of small arms and light weapons (SALW), giving the negative consequences of the proliferation of these weapons, especially in the poorest, vulnerable and more instable regions. Portugal believes that one of the best ways to prevent the proliferation of SALW is by regulating the traffic of those weapons, rendering it more transparent. Portugal has been supporting several initiatives which aim at armament control, in line with the United Nations Program of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Traffic of Small Arms and Light Weapons in all its aspects, resulting from the “2005 World Summit”.

Portuguese experts have been participating in seminars concerning the EU Strategy to Combat Illicit Accumulation and Trafficking of SALW and their Ammunition, which was adopted by the European Council on December 2005. We are also actively supporting the EU funded iTrace initiative, which allows an active
monitoring of the traffic of SALW. Portugal has been involved in the monitoring of SALW in Mali and the Sahel Region.

Portugal was proudly one of the first 50 states to ratify the Arms Trade Treaty. The Portuguese commitment to non-proliferation is undeniable, and we consider the monitoring of the trade of Small and Light Weapons as a major priority in the role that Portugal plays for global security. We stand ready to promote the universalization of the Arms Trade Treaty and we are fully committed to the efforts of promoting its ratification. Besides bilateral initiatives to promote the Treaty, Portugal was present in the EU regional seminars in support of the ATT implementation for Latin America and the Caribbean, for CEDEAO members and its neighbours, and also the national assistance programmes to Colombia and Senegal.

Mr. President,

In this Conference of States Parties, we need to produce concrete results and therefore enhance this relevant momentum of the ATT. Portugal supports all efforts leading to decisions on important topics such as the location and head of Secretariat, as well as on reporting, and also not ignoring the needed instruments for our common work. The first of these documents is the rules of procedures which we absolutely need to move forward and we are ready to work with the last version of the circulated document.
As for the head of the Secretariat we consider that merit and geographical balance are by no means contradictory and should be taken together. Regarding the location of the Secretariat, Portugal has taken the decision to support Vienna.

With the Arms Trade Treaty we have accomplished an astounding feat. Let us make sure that the ATT set an example and a new paradigm on the way the international community deals with global security and Humanitarian Issues.

Muchas Gracias Señor Presidente.