Mr President

It is a pleasure to see you – my trans-Tasman colleague and my next-door neighbour in Geneva - in the Chair for this most important meeting. You have New Zealand’s full support as you guide us forward.

We all know why we are here. The case for regulation of the arms trade was put most compellingly by Archbishop Desmond Tutu when he noted last year that “in many parts of the world it is easier to buy a machine gun than it is to make an appointment to see the doctor”.

Our Arms Trade Treaty must not simply enshrine the status quo. Our sights must be set higher than this. We must work for a Treaty that contains strong, uniform, and comprehensive standards in order to prevent irresponsible arms transfers and to forestall diversion to the illicit trade.

We have been working towards this Treaty for several years now. Considerable progress was made over the course of the July negotiations under the adroit chairmanship of Ambassador Roberto Garcia Moritan. The text now before us contains positive elements but much work remains still to be done if our Arms Trade Treaty is to offer a real prospect of contributing meaningfully to global as well as regional peace and security.

If it is to do so, the ATT must cover the full range of conventional weapons which are transferred internationally, including small arms and light weapons as well as the ammunition and parts and components that service them.

The full range of transactions whereby arms can change hands must also be covered and the criteria against which these are assessed must be strong enough to achieve our humanitarian goals and objectives.
Our work here is not an abstract exercise. The unregulated arms trade has a very real human cost. We see its catastrophic consequences in communities around the world – in Africa, in South America, in the Caribbean and indeed in my own region, the Pacific.

We have an opportunity to address this situation now by negotiating a strong and meaningful Arms Trade Treaty.