STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR RODOLFO BENITEZ VERSON, REPRESENTATIVE OF CUBA TO THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON THE ARMS TRADE TREATY. New York, 5 July 2012.

Mr. President,

We are in a complex and extremely ambitious Conference. There is no precedent, in at least many years, for all UN Member States to be gathered to negotiate and adopt by consensus, in only 4 weeks, a legally-binding instrument on armaments; and all that without having a single core document.

Additionally, the Treaty under discussion is particularly complex, since it refers to weapons possessed by almost all States. In fact, for the vast majority of countries, conventional weapons constitute an important component of their national defense and security strategies.

We do not share the position of those who identify the success of this Conference with the adoption of any Arms Trade Treaty next 27 July, at all costs.

To Cuba, the true success will be to accomplish an instrument resulting from an inclusive and transparent process that duly takes into account the positions and concerns of all States and that can be acceptable to all delegations. That would be the only way to achieve a solid, universal, and hence effective Treaty.

Mr. President,

The first necessary step our delegations should take is to clearly define the objective of the Treaty. To Cuba, such objective is to contribute to preventing, combating and eradicating the illicit arms trade, whose negative effects are suffered by many people and States worldwide.

Any instrument to be adopted should include a section of solid Principles to guide its implementation. We wish to make clear that Cuba will not support any Treaty affecting the legitimate national defense and security interests of our State; neither will it support an instrument that is not fully consistent with the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, including the non-interference in internal affairs, the respect for sovereign equality, political independence and territorial integrity of all States.

It is also a prerequisite that the future instrument in no way affects or restricts the right of self-defense enshrined in Article 51 of the UN Charter.
Mr. President,

We note with concern that some insist on excessively ambitious and unrealistic proposals, and seek to minimize or even disregard the legitimate concerns of others. Continuing to reiterate those same positions in this Conference will not bear different results, and instead of contributing to consensus, they will lead us away from it.

We call upon all of you to act on the basis of reasonable and practical goals with a view to an effective and viable instrument. We favor a text as simple as possible, which does not become an additional burden that is difficult to implement by countries with limited resources.

The Treaty should not generate unnecessary reporting requirements that may entail new obligations for States or endanger their national security. The information flow in the future Treaty should be based on information provided by States on a voluntary basis.

Any Criterion or Parameter for the arms transfer included in the Treaty should be precise, objective, transparent, predictable and applicable in a consistent manner. Cuba will not support any Criterion that can be discriminatorily and selectively applied or easily manipulated by some to establish conditionalities and exert pressure.

We will advocate an instrument that fully preserves and guarantees the right of all States to manufacture, import and possess weapons for their self-defense and security needs.

We attach great relevance to the criterion relating to the prohibition of the transfer of arms to non-State actors or those not duly authorized by the States. That should be clearly reflected by the Treaty. Likewise, we will promote as a criterion the prohibition of the transfer of arms to States carrying out actions in which they use the force or threaten to use the force, in violation of the Charter of the United Nations, including acts of aggression.

There is a close interrelation among all elements of the Treaty. Therefore, it is important to use, during the Conference, discussion and negotiation procedures ensuring the review of the various components of the instrument in their actual interaction. That is why Cuba does not favor the holding of parallel meetings, for it always mostly affects small delegations which are not in a position to attend them properly and puts them at a serious disadvantage. We hope, Mr. President, that you will take these facts into account.

I would like to conclude, Mr. President, by wishing you every success and by offering you the full cooperation and support of the Cuban delegation for your important responsibility.

Thank you