Mr. Chairman,
Let me start by joining other delegations in congratulating you for your excellent chairmanship of the preparatory process of the Arms Trade Treaty and for assuming the chairmanship of this crucial UN Conference. Your draft paper of July 3rd, which is more focused and better structured than the previous text, offers a strong basis for productive negotiations and Estonia looks forward to achieving this goal within the given timeframe.

While fully aligning itself to the statement delivered by the EU this morning, Estonia would like to highlight some of the points that are of particular importance to my delegation.

Estonia is pleased to hear so many constructive proposals in the opening statements, which set a clear focus for the Conference. It gives full acknowledgement to the fact that along with trade and security considerations, humanitarian aspects must always be kept in mind and this should be reflected in the preamble and principles of the future treaty.

My delegation also finds that the preamble of the treaty should include the recognition that the absence of commonly agreed international standards for the transfer of conventional arms and their diversion to the illicit market is, along with the illicit trade in narcotics, a contributory factor to trade in human beings.

Estonia is concerned that the absence of commonly agreed international standards for arms transfers contributes to armed conflict, terrorism and crime. It also poses a threat to security, human safety, peace building and mediation processes as well as to the sustainable social, economic and environmental development. In the preamble of the future treaty, special attention should be given to the influence it has on the most vulnerable social groups, especially children.

We have experienced that the existing fragmented sets of control measures at national, regional and international levels are not capable of fully securing responsible international arms trade and disarming of the international illicit market. The international community needs an effective and credible global legal instrument that sets clear and adequate criteria for assessing arms transfers.

Estonia supports all the criteria identified in the Chair’s draft paper. They should be clear and concise and the assessments should be made by the competent national authorities of the States Parties. My delegation maintains that regarding the practicability of the envisaged control provisions, comprehensive criteria should be defined first and foremost for the evaluation of exports, including leases, loans and gifts, as well as of transit/transshipment and brokering. For these different types of transfers different forms of control could be envisaged.
As far as imports are concerned, Estonia believes that States Parties should validate adequate measures to prevent the diversion of imported items to unauthorized end-users and to the illicit market. States should be able to determine themselves at the national level how to use the criteria and how to best monitor and control imports of arms.

We share the deep concern expressed in numerous statements about the consequences of illicit trafficking in conventional arms. Estonia maintains that the treaty’s aim to promote greater transparency in arms transfers could be best achieved through regularly submitting mandatory reports on arms transferred. However, keeping in mind that this may not be achievable, annual reporting on authorized transfers could prove to be an appropriate option for the future treaty.

In view of the administrative burden of the envisaged control measures, we can foresee different levels of reporting requirements for different categories. For example, the mandatory reporting could apply in the first place to the categories of the UN Register of Conventional Arms plus small arms and light weapons. Estonia also recommends that reporting requirements on transfers should be considered taking into account already existing reporting obligations, such as the UN Register for Conventional Arms, in order to avoid unnecessary duplication.

Mr. Chairman,

Throughout the years of preparatory meetings and now, when we are about to start negotiations, we have heard many practical proposals to regulate arms transfers. In Estonia, we often say that well done is better than well said. My delegation is convinced that in cooperation and in good faith we can agree on a treaty which will provide a necessary contribution to responsible arms transfers. We hope that true negotiating spirit will guide us to the successful conclusion of a strong and effective treaty. Estonia stands ready to contribute to achieving an Arms Trade Treaty that will benefit the entire international community.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.