Mister President,

Let me start by congratulating you on your appointment. We see it as a privilege to work with you.

It is a historic moment for the international community. In 1925 the League of Nations negotiated a Convention on the Arms Trade that never was adopted. Now, almost a century later, we have the chance to succeed where our predecessors failed.

In delivering this speech, I align myself with the statement made by the European Union.

All of us come well prepared. We have been engaged in an active preparatory process where the scale of the problem we will be trying to solve has become crystal clear. The lack of common international standards on arms control leads to irresponsible arms transfers, contributes to human suffering and the prolongation of conflicts, and fuels the illegal arms market. We know why we are here. We know the arguments for a strong treaty. Now it is our task to live up to the expectations.

Mr. President, our delegation hopes to work with all delegations in an ambiance of respect. We will do our utmost to help you. The work load is enormous and the time is short. That is why we think we need to focus on some of the most contentious matters, and creatively look for solutions.

The Netherlands is a country of many canals and rivers. We know how to build bridges. And we will try to do the same here as well. We will be looking for means to solve existing controversies. However, we will not give up on our main conviction and reason for coming here: we need an effective arms trade treaty, a treaty that will make a real difference.

This means a broad scope: all conventional weapons including small arms and light weapons, ammunition, dual use items in particular when related to conventional arms and tear gas should fall under the scope of the treaty. Criteria should at least include human rights, international humanitarian law, the internal situation and social economic capacity of the importing country.
Then we have the issue of transparency. In order to know how State Parties will implement the treaty we need transparency mechanisms. Reports on relevant legal measures and on issued export licenses are required.

On these and other matters the Netherlands will express itself during the coming weeks. Always in the spirit of building bridges, and convinced that we need to do our utmost to make the world a little bit safer.