Mr. Chairman,

It pleases me to express to you at the outset the full collaboration of my delegation for a productive outcome to the efforts of the last session of the Preparatory Committee for the United Nations Conference on the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT).

With other States and the various actors of the international community, the Holy See shares the view that the principal objective of the Treaty should not be merely the regulation of the conventional arms trade but should be, above all, the disarming of the international illicit market.

An unregulated and non-transparent arms trade due to the absence on the international level of effective monitoring systems causes a series of humanitarian consequences: integral human development is retarded, the risk of instability and conflict is heightened, the process of peace is placed at risk and the spread of a culture of violence and criminality is facilitated. Responsible action, shared by all the members of the international community, is necessary to resolve such problematic realities. This includes States and international organisations, NGOs and the private sector. Such responsible action has become ever more urgent “in order to promote the establishment and maintenance of international peace and security with the least diversion for armaments of the world’s human and economic resources” (cfr. Art. 26 of the UN Charter).

Moreover, arms cannot simply be compared with other goods exchanged in global or domestic markets. The quest for a world more respectful of the dignity of human person and the value of human life must be the founding principle of the ATT.

Viewed from this perspective, the international community requires a strong, effective and credible legal instrument that is capable of regulating and improving transparency in the trade of conventional arms and munitions, including the trading and licensing of technologies for their production.

In order to guarantee this, my delegation is of the view that it is necessary to take into consideration five aspects:
1. The scope of the ATT should be broad, comprising not solely the 7 categories of arms which the U.N. Register of Conventional Arms considers, but also small arms and light weapons, together with their relevant munitions, which enter the illicit market often with greater ease and give rise to a series of humanitarian problems.

2. The criteria for application of the Treaty must maintain reference to human rights, humanitarian law and development. These are the three areas in which the impact of the illicit market in arms is particularly pernicious. Certainly, it will be necessary to find terminology which limits subjective possibilities open to political abuse, and which will facilitate the ascertainment of modalities for application of such criteria.

3. The capacity for the success of the Treaty will depend also on its ability to promote and reinforce international co-operation and assistance between States. This encompasses basic elements for improving relationships of trust between States as well as facilitating a correct implementation even on the part of States without sufficient capacity to assemble and maintain data, prepare Reports, and improve transparency in the arms trade, all of central importance for the effectiveness of the Treaty.

4. Provisions relating to assistance for victims must be maintained, and if possible, strengthened, giving attention also to the prevention of illicit arms proliferation, by reducing the demand for arms which often feeds the illicit market. It seems opportune, from this perspective, then, to introduce references in the Treaty to educative processes and public awareness programmes – involving all sectors of society, including religious organisations – that are aimed at promoting a culture of peace.

5. Mechanisms for treaty review and updating need to be strong and credible, capable of quickly incorporating new developments in the subject matter of the ATT, which must remain open to future technological developments.

Mr. Chairman,

The Holy See is convinced that the Arms Trade Treaty can provide an important contribution to the promotion of a true culture of peace through responsible cooperation between States, in partnership with the arms industry and in solidarity with civil society. Viewed in this light, current efforts to adopt a strong and effective ATT could represent a meaningful sign of the political will of nations and governments to ensure peace, justice, stability and prosperity in the world.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.