The UNPoA remains the single most important framework that the GA has to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in SALW in all its aspects. This together with the undertakings that States have made in previous biennial meetings of States, the MGE and the Second RevCon outweigh any resolution that may have been passed on this issue by any other UN Organ.

South Africa has long held the view that stockpile management is key to the full and effective implementation of the UNPoA. This is not simply a PoA on combating the illicit trade in SALW, hence the important qualifier in its title, “in all its aspects”.

Without the proper management of legally State-held SALW, particularly in terms of physical security measures, the diversion of these arms remains the single biggest source of the illicit arms trade.

My Government has also in the past emphasised the need to integrate stockpile management as part of post-conflict peace agreements, DDR programmes and related UN Security Council PKO mandates.

While we have noted that we agreed during the ITI negotiations to deal with ammunition as part of a separate process, South Africa firmly believes that when it comes to stockpile management, exactly the same treatment applies to ammunition as it does to SALW.
• In our holistic approach to stockpile management, we need to recognise the important contribution that is made by women in national arms control systems. This is not exclusively a male-dominated domain and the role of women, who are also directly affected by illicit SALW, cannot be overlooked in stockpile management implementation processes.

• As a country that believes that the only option to the so-called responsible disposal of SALW remains that of destruction, South Africa continues to destroy surplus, obsolete, confiscated and redundant SALW. We remain convinced that in the life-cycle management of stockpiles, this is the only sure way to ensure that such means of disposal will not run the risk of fuelling the illicit trade in SALW.

• The issue of applying standards, benchmarks and lessons learned seems to be quite a useful one, although it is not clear where the benchmarks should come from. The UNPoA clearly recognises that we made our 2001 undertakings based on the recognition that we are all faced with different situations, capacities and priorities. It was precisely for these reasons that the PoA does not include such standards and benchmarks. No-one can prescribe to another exactly how and by when they should reach certain undertakings on their UNPoA implementation.

• If we were to go along with any consensus on standards and benchmarks, it should be done on the clear understanding that these should be set at the respective national levels by the competent authorities dealing with stockpile management issues, or at the regional or sub-regional level within the context of instruments that may have established such agreed benchmarks.

• Finally, South Africa continues to value and support the important contribution made by civil society, in support of States, on the implementation of stockpile management processes and on the implementation of the UNPoA as a whole.