Japan’s statement on
“Follow-up to the UN Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects”

Madame Chair,

Japan has submitted a working paper on a “Follow up mechanism of the UN PoA” in order to facilitate discussion on this issue. We are grateful for many positive comments already expressed in this session on our working paper, which has already been posted on the website of the UNODA. Today, I would like to briefly elaborate the substance of our proposal.

First of all, before discussing meeting formats, we think it is important to identify priorities for the next six-year cycle. Japan would like to put forward “stockpile management and destruction” as one of the urgent issues to be tackled in the next six-year cycle. Given the high possibility of the diversion of small arms to illicit markets as well as a number of incidents involving stockpile explosions, we believe this is one of the most serious and urgent issues that requires our attention. The most recent accidental explosion in the Republic of Congo in early March is a clear example of why building capacity among Member States in this area is so vitally important. Ways for improving cooperation at the bilateral, regional and global level can be discussed among Member States.

The other issue Japan would like to propose as a priority is the reporting mechanism. Japan has already submitted its national reports via the new online template, and we have found that it has significantly reduced our reporting burden. At the same time, we can always look for ways to further improve the template, reflecting on the views of Member States. For instance, the questions in the template could be made more specific in order to assess and find gaps in implementation. If the reporting mechanism can be used to identify areas where Member States need to strengthen their capacity for implementation, it would allow better coordination between those States and assistance providers including international organizations. Japan finds it particularly important that the reporting should not become an end in itself. It is essential that there are incentives for Members States
to submit their reports in the form of tangible benefits. Also, it should be pointed out that online reporting can be a difficult process for some Member States with limited technical expertise and the necessary infrastructure. Other Member States as well as the UNODA should be responsive to the technical challenges faced by these States.

How and at what forum should we address issues is the next question. Above all, we have to be mindful about how to most efficiently structure the six-year cycle by maximizing the existing resources. Many Member States share the view that a technical meeting among experts, like a Meeting of Government Experts (MGE), would be useful under the PoA process. A Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) could also be an option for the Member States to elaborate technical issues among a limited number of experts in a few successive meetings. At the same time, feedback from such technical discussion should be made to the policy-planning level of the PoA, and deliberated on at venues such as the Review Conference and the Biennial Meeting of States (BMS).

In our working paper, we have introduced four options for the next six-year cycle of meetings: options 1 and 2 place focus on MGEs, while Option 4 is more or less the status quo as it currently stands. Among these four options, we think Option 1 would be the most appropriate format, but of course, we are open to any other suggestions we have set out in our paper. The sole purpose of submitting this working paper is to stimulate discussions with all Member States in order to contribute to the achievement of an outcome on these topics.

I thank you, Madame Chair.