Thank you Mr. Chair.

Even as the COVID-19 pandemic remains a global challenge, in 2021 more than 30 armed conflicts continued unabated, and others intensified in places like Ethiopia, Palestine, and Myanmar.

The consequences of these conflicts are devastating: 82.4 million people were displaced worldwide at the end of last year¹ while the number of people requiring humanitarian assistance in 2021² increased by 40%.

Armed violence, including gender-based violence, has also increased, with for example record numbers of homicides in Mexico and gang-related shootings in Jamaica.

Conflict and armed violence contribute to negative indicators of social well-being, perceived insecurity, and lower degrees of institutional capacity. It also limits access to justice systems, especially for vulnerable groups such as women, youth and LGBTQIA community, forcing them to seek greater security elsewhere.

Yet, arms and ammunition that fuel conflict and armed violence continue to reach countries where a high risk of misuse persists. For example, despite documented violations of international human rights and humanitarian law, arms exports to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) for use in Yemen continue.

The Arms Trade Treaty was adopted to stop the illicit and irresponsible trade and diversion of arms that fuel conflicts, human rights abuses, terrorism and organized crime in order to promote transparency, reduce human suffering and contribute to international peace, security and stability.

In addition to its own reporting system, to help achieve and maintain transparency in the international arms trade, the ATT is supported by a variety of independent international investigative efforts. For example, over the past four years, the Group of Eminent Experts (GEE) on Yemen provided vital and impartial information on the devastating impact of the conflict on civilians and put forward recommendations to address the Yemen crisis, including a clear call to halt transfers of arms that could be used in the conflict.

¹ https://www.unhcr.org/flagship-reports/globaltrends/
² https://goo.unocha.org/
The regrettable, inexplicable decision taken yesterday by the Human Rights Council not to renew the mandate of this critical investigative body will significantly limit the international community’s ability to protect the lives and livelihoods of the Yemeni people and is a direct attack on transparency and accountability writ large.

Mr. Chair,

Now more than ever, ATT States Parties have both the responsibility and the power to ensure that they do not supply arms that could be used to commit or facilitate violations of international human rights and humanitarian law. It is time for states to honor these commitments and use them to strengthen international security -- not by sending more weapons to areas where civilians are in peril -- but by placing controls on arms transfers to ensure that human rights are respected and innocent lives are protected.

The human cost of unregulated and illicit arms transfers is simply too heavy. As we discuss achievements, obstacles and challenges to implementing disarmament and arms control instruments this month, let us also be sure to set goals and measures that will make a meaningful impact on human security.