Mr. Chairman, Ambassador Manalo

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish to extend warm congratulations to the Chair on his election. I also wish to extend to all delegations, on behalf of the Office for Disarmament Affairs, a warm welcome to BMS8.

Despite considerable progress made in achieving the objectives of the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument over the past decades, the threats posed by the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons remain critical. Much work still has to be done.
Millions of these weapons continue to be in circulation, playing a central role in initiating, exacerbating and sustaining armed conflict, pervasive violence and crime. In this reality, effective small arms control remains as urgent as ever.

Distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

The Programme of Action is not a static, but a dynamic and a living framework. It must evolve to be fit for purpose by taking into account and addressing current challenges. I trust States will make use of BMS8 to pursue concrete and forward-looking actions on how to achieve progress in preventing, combating and eradicating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

Specifically, in light of the priorities of BMS8, I encourage Member States to take concrete steps towards bolstering international cooperation and assistance, ensuring sustainability of programmes that support the full and effective implementation of the PoA. In this regard and as reiterated and requested by BMS7, States should consider increasing contributions for dedicated funding mechanisms such as SALIENT and UNSCAR that demonstrate and enhance the complementarity between programmatic approaches and quick-impact funding mechanisms.

I also welcome States’ consideration to establish a fellowship training programme for small arms control. Such an initiative would increase the technical knowledge and expertise of national practitioners, with a view to strengthening capacity for national implementation efforts.

I strongly encourage BMS8 to adopt a forward-looking decision to address the challenges posed by recent developments in weapons technology, manufacturing and design, such as polymer and modular weapons. Building on the elements of a technical annex to the ITI proposed in the 2019 report of the Secretary-General on
small arms and light weapons, and the deliberations initiated at BMS7 on an open-ended technical expert group on this subject, it is, indeed, possible for BMS8 to agree on a higher-level progress on this matter.

I understand that while some divergences of views have persisted on the above issues following the several months of informal consultations, gaps have substantially been narrowed and compromises are within reach. I commend the Chair for his commitment and relentless search for progress. I also commend you, distinguished delegates, for your spirit of compromise on both the substantive and procedural matters throughout the informal process. This is a good basis for meaningful advancements and achievement of concrete outputs this week.

BMS8 constitutes the last major global forum in the lead up to the PoA 2024 Review Conference. The achievement of concrete outputs this week would, therefore, also lay the groundwork for facilitating the review and decisions to be taken at the Review Conference. I am confident that the efforts you will invest during this week will contribute to a robust RevCon4.

I wish the Chair and all delegations successful deliberations and assure you of the full support of the Office for Disarmament Affairs.

I thank you very much for your attention.