Mr. Chair

It is an honour to address this audience and allow me to start by congratulating you for your appointment as Chair of the Eighth Biennial Meeting of States and wish you every success in your efforts in taking this important agenda forward.

Mr. Chair

Today we meet against the background of Russia’s illegal and unjustified war on Ukraine. This unprovoked aggression against a sovereign independent nation poses the biggest threat to security in decades and is causing enormous human suffering and destruction. It has shattered peace in Europe and poses a severe threat to the rules-based international order. NATO and Allies continue to provide Ukraine with strong political and practical support.

Mr. Chair

The illicit manufacture, transfer and circulation of small arms and light weapons and their excessive accumulation and uncontrolled spread continue to have a wide range of negative security, humanitarian and socio-economic consequences. The UN Programme of Action plays a unique role in addressing the negative consequences at the international, regional and national levels.

Important progress has been achieved but there are still a lot of challenges and this demands a sustained engagement. This meeting therefore plays an important role in in further strengthening the Programme of Action implementation.

**NATO is a strong partner** and is committed to supporting the full and comprehensive implementation of the Programme of Action.

Mr. Chair
NATO has a long track record of supporting Arms Control, Disarmament and Non-Proliferation efforts that contribute to peace and security.

In the field of small arms and light weapons control, NATO works with 40 partners and other international organisations to support the full implementation of the Programme of Action. It has developed regular information-sharing mechanisms to continually address key elements for strengthening the PoA, and key challenges.

The Alliance undertakes concrete actions by following two paths: one that looks at short-term solutions, and one that considers long-term institutional and capacity building. Our efforts are guided by the principles of local ownership, inclusiveness, tailored cooperation and sustainability.

In the short-term, NATO aims at enhancing safety and security of stockpiles; through Trust Fund projects. NATO has helped partners to destroy excess SALW and ammunition. These efforts have reduced the number of surplus weapons and improved lifecycle management.

Over the long-term, through strategic partnership bilateral agreements, NATO provides education, training, equipment and infrastructure support for the development of national capacities. For instance, NATO has helped countries in the MENA region train staff and upgrade facilities and is committed to continuing this support.

Moreover, NATO has also established a new initiative for small arms and light weapons within the Partnership Trust Fund that supports tailored efforts for comprehensive life-cycle management processes to counter diversion and proliferation.

Finally, NATO is also fully aware that to be effective in the long-run, SALW control must be holistic and address societal issues. To this end, NATO has acknowledged the importance of mainstreaming a gender perspective and has developed guidelines for gender mainstreaming in SALW projects. These guidelines provide clear and comprehensive advice to policymakers, practitioners and other stakeholders on the ground and since June has developed an e-learning course on how to apply these guidelines.

Mr. Chair
To conclude, NATO has been and will continue to be a reliable partner in global, regional and national implementation efforts. NATO remains committed to preventing, combating and eradicating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons thus contributing to achieving our common goal of peace, security and development. I wish you, your team every success for this Biennial Meeting of States that will pave the way for setting a robust agenda for upcoming Review Conference.

I thank you.