Mr. Chair, distinguished delegates,

The following groups have endorsed this statement:
- Students and Youths Empowerment Forum (Cameroon)
- Bold Generation (Burundi)
- Women for Peace and Democracy (Nepal)
- Réseau des Femmes pour l’Action et le Développement Social (DRC)
- Gun Free South Africa

I am Faith Washington, from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. I speak on behalf of IANSA Youth. As a 15-year-old girl, I have been affected deeply by the gun violence I see and hear about every day. Every time I turn on the news, I see that a kid my age has been harmed or killed by the hands of someone with a gun. I can’t go outside without being fearful for my life, knowing I could be hit by a stray bullet at any time. In Philadelphia this year alone, there have been 843 non-fatal shootings and 209 fatal shootings as of last week. Most of these shootings have happened in West and North Philadelphia areas, which is where most of my friends and family reside.

Someone who is very close to me is a survivor of gun violence. When I first heard the news, I was devastated. I didn’t know if they were going to survive, and that was all I could think about. I was worried for myself, my family, and everyone who knew them-- especially their kids. I thank God every day that they are okay, but I know this is not the case for everyone who is affected by gun violence. I speak today to demand a change on behalf of all of the teenagers in Philadelphia and across the world who have been affected by gun violence with no one to advocate for them.

In my advisory at The Workshop School, I worked on a project about gun violence, where we looked at the root causes, including housing, poverty, education, and racism. This project inspired me to go on further and work with Humanium Metal, which is a Sweden-based organization that collects illegal firearms from police departments all over the world and, through the process of destruction, melts the guns down into Humanium metal and turns them into different items like watches and pins. As a program, we wanted to recruit other teenagers and schools in Philadelphia to join us in our action to help end gun violence.

Mr. Chair, today, I speak on behalf of many of the young victims and survivors of gun violence across the world from traditionally underrepresented groups. I speak in front of this assembly acknowledging the great strides that have been made to include language on youth, victims and survivors in the last BMS outcome document. Today, I urge this assembly to increase the number of youth, women, people of other gender identities and underrepresented groups - especially those most vulnerable to the effects of armed violence - in the discussions and processes on peace and disarmament and small arms control. We need urgent collective action by governments, including my own, that will contribute effectively to ending gun violence and saving lives. Meaningful inclusion of underrepresented voices, not used as a token or just to prove a point, will help shift us from conversation into action. Youth between the age of 10 and 19 years old make up 16% of the world’s population. Today, I am one voice among these millions of young people. Our lives and future are being threatened by armed violence. We are urging you to do whatever you can now to achieve much stricter gun control.

Mr. Chair, we need to have a voice in the decisions that will shape our future. This outcome document needs to represent us: youth, victims, and survivors. Starting today, this assembly can no longer let us down.

Thank you.