Thank you, Mr. Chair. Distinguished delegates, representatives of international organizations and civil society,

The Small Arms Survey, an associated programme of the Fondation pour l'Etude des Relations Internationales et du Développement in Geneva, Switzerland, welcomes progress made in the development of the BMS8 outcome document. We believe an outcome document that acknowledges, encourages and supports the synergies between implementation efforts that take place at different levels—national, regional, and global—and between different forums—including PoA national commissions and focal points of other bodies—will strengthen overall PoA/ITI implementation and contribute to the ultimate violence-reduction objectives that underlie these instruments.

The draft Outcome Document highlights both the challenging nature of fighting the scourge of illicit arms proliferation and the detrimental impacts of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons on conflict and armed violence, as also stressed in the UN Secretary General’s latest report to the Security Council (S/2021/839). In early July, the Survey will release the latest update of its Global Violent Deaths dataset, as part of its longstanding efforts to document and monitor the use of small arms in violence worldwide.

1 An associated program of the Fondation pour l’étude des relations internationales et du développement, accredited to BMS8 (A/CONF.192/BMS/2022/INF/1).
The UN Secretary-General’s most recent dedicated report to the General Assembly (A/77/77) also underlines the importance of integrating small arms control considerations into the wider security and development frameworks. Nevertheless, bringing coherence to the mosaic of relevant initiatives and approaches does not happen organically. This is particularly relevant in West Africa where the Sahel crisis has now become a regional and multidimensional one that continues to expand towards the coastal states of the Gulf of Guinea. In the sub-region, the proliferation and misuse of illicit small arms has been an enabler of armed violence in its various forms, including violent extremism, transitional organized crime, and community conflicts, and has resulted in loss of human life and human rights violations, including sexual and gender-based violence. Although it is critical, improving national small arms laws, import/export controls, and stockpile management alone will not solve the crisis. Creating a secure environment for sustainable development in West Africa will require addressing, in a comprehensive and inclusive manner, all the drivers and enablers of this multilayered crisis.

Navigating and responding to these complex dynamics requires coherent and coordinated policies across levels and domains. With this vision in mind, in West Africa, the Small Arms Survey is partnering with actors including the National Commissions on Small Arms of Sierra Leone and Burkina Faso, with the Mine Action Group and collaborating with relevant UN agencies, civil society organisations as well as with the ECOWAS Commission. Together with our partners, we are developing “second generation” national action plans that connect policies against the illicit trade in small arms to other relevant initiatives, including those related to the governance of the Security Sector, the Women, Peace and Security agenda, and efforts to address transnational organized crime. As was discussed in yesterday’s BMS8 side event with Sierra Leone, these experiences can provide an important points of reference for international cooperation and assistance.

Thank you, Mr. Chair, for the opportunity to make this intervention and we wish you and all the delegations success in completing negotiations on the outcome document.