Mr. Chair,

Developments in manufacturing, technology and design of small arms and light weapons have been on the agenda of meetings under the Programme of Action and International Tracing Instrument since 2011. There is much discussions and agreements from previous meetings that States can and should build upon, when addressing this topic further.

Important common ground for States to build upon is notably the recognition that the ITI remains relevant to ensure traceability of small arms and light weapons, also in the context of technological developments. My delegation strongly supports that States reconfirm the applicability of the ITI for marking, record-keeping and tracing regardless of the materials and methods used in the manufacture of small arms and light weapons. Indeed, the objectives of marking rather than specific marking methods should be the guiding principle, as it is set out in the ITI. While marking methods can evolve over time, the objectives of marking such as durability or readability remain intact whatever method is chosen.

Switzerland supports the continued exchange on technological developments, especially at a technical level, with a view to assessing in greater depth whether and which actions could be required to address challenges from such developments. In this context, the issue of 3D printing has gained greater attention in recent years. My delegation currently considers that this technology poses challenges for the prevention of the illicit manufacturing of small arms and light weapons more than from a tracing perspective. We therefore see greater relevance for this discussion in the framework of the PoA rather than of the ITI.

At BMS7, Switzerland advocated for a step-by-step approach to address technological developments, allowing for incrementally substantive discussions. Such an approach still remains an appropriate and pragmatic way forward. An open-ended technical expert group could be an appropriate platform to advance our understanding of the issue, without prejudice to the outcome of such exchanges. It will be
relevant to put States’ experiences with proven, pragmatic and implementable measures at the centre of future discussions.

Before considering the establishment of such an open-ended technical expert group, it seems important and necessary that States reach common understanding on the mandate, funding, time frame and modalities of such a group, potentially with the support of the Secretariat. Switzerland believes that we can only advance globally in our discussions, if we do so as collectively as possible, despite the challenges this may bring.

Mr. Chair,

Technologies can also provide new means to facilitate the full and effective implementation of the ITI. In this regard, it is important to ensure that technology transfers meet local needs, be target-oriented and become an integral part of the national frameworks, structures, processes and capabilities of the recipient State. Switzerland welcomes related language in the draft outcome document.

I thank you.