Mr. Chairman,

I have the honor to speak on behalf of the Member States of the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR).

Member States of UNASUR recognize the contribution and qualitative difference made by the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Aspects, to providing a comprehensive and multidimensional response to the problems arising from these illicit activities.

Nevertheless, we remain concerned about the effects of illicit production, transfer and circulation of firearms and ammunition, and their uncontrolled spread in the hands of civilians, which, in many regions, have various consequences and pose a challenge to the sustainable development of our societies. We also reiterate our concern at the close link that exists between the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and organized crime.

The effective implementation of the Programme of Action is a matter of high and urgent priority for UNASUR.

We consider it important to continue promoting the consolidation of international cooperation and assistance and national capacity-building. Their cross-cutting and multidimensional nature make them essential tools for the effective implementation of the measures recommended in the Program of Action.

While we recognize the contribution made by the Program of Action, UNASUR States wish to reiterate that by referring to the issue of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons “in all its aspects”, it must necessarily include ammunition and explosives.
We therefore consider that one of the remaining challenges for the implementation of the Programme of Action is the comprehensive consideration of the issue. UNASUR States consider ammunition to be an integral part of small arms and light weapons, which also include explosives.

Furthermore, we have reiterated that the non-legally binding nature of the Programme of Action is an obstacle to its effective implementation.

Mr. Chairman,

Member States of UNASUR consider that the central role of the Programme of Action in the field of small arms and light weapons makes it necessary to have a close and continued follow-up of its implementation by the international community.

In that regard, UNASUR Member States welcome the positive outcome achieved during the Fifth Biennial Meeting of States, held in New York from 16 to 20 of June 2014, through the consensual adoption of the final document. In our view, the BM5S constituted an excellent opportunity to deepen our discussions on international cooperation and assistance, and on marking, record-keeping and tracing in the framework of the International Tracing Instrument.

Taking into account the primary responsibility of States in the prevention, combat and eradication of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects across borders, in the framework of MERCOSUR, a Working Group on Fire Arms and Ammunition of Member and Associated States of MERCOSUR was established in 2001 with the aim of sharing national experiences, working on the harmonization of national legislation to control firearms and ammunitions, as well as coordinating policies in the field. This forum of exchange has become a useful tool for the coordination of the positions of Member and Associated States.

Further to this agenda item, Member States of UNASUR continue to express their support to Colombia, South Africa and Japan for their annual initiative to introduce the draft resolution entitled "The Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects".

Mr. Chairman,

Along the same lines, Member States of UNASUR underscore the need to address the issues related to the unregulated trade in conventional arms and its diversion to the illicit market.

In April 2013, the Arms Trade Treaty was adopted by the General Assembly. UNASUR expects that this first legally binding instrument on the arms trade can contribute to providing an effective response to the serious consequences that the illicit and non-regulated arms trade and trafficking poses for many people and States, in particular through the diversion of arms to unauthorized non-state actors or users, often linked to transnational organized crime and drug trafficking.
It is expected that this Treaty can contribute to the prevention of armed conflict, armed violence and violations of international law, including international human rights instruments and international humanitarian law. At the same time, in anticipation of the entry into force of the Arms Trade Treaty on December 24th 2014, UNASUR calls for the Treaty to be implemented in a balanced, transparent and objective manner that respects the sovereign right of all States to guarantee their self-defense, in accordance with Article 51 of the United Nations Charter.

Mr. Chairman,

Member States of UNASUR reiterate their support to the efforts of the international community to regulate Cluster Munitions, with the purpose to significantly reduce the humanitarian, social and economic consequences of the use of these weapons to civilians, in accordance with international humanitarian law.

Likewise, UNASUR Member States reaffirm the need to eliminate anti-personnel mines. In that regard, they highlight the efforts, as well as the results in the field of demining and victims assistance of anti-personnel mines in the region, which has been possible because of the existing cooperation among our countries, like the case of joint demining of Peru and Ecuador, by Peru and Chile. We also highlight the international assistance given by countries of the region for demining, such as the assistance given by Brazil in South and Central America.

Member States of UNASUR attach utmost importance to the consideration of international cooperation and assistance in the framework of the Ottawa Convention. In this regard, they welcome the documents adopted at the Third Review Conference, held in Maputo from 23 to 27 of June 2014, and consider the Maputo Plan of Action and the Maputo Declaration + 15 to be providing a road map for States that would strengthen the mechanisms for implementation and operation of the Convention.

Mr. Chairman,

Member States of UNASUR reiterate the importance of continuing to promote an enabling environment for arms control and limitation of conventional weapons, which allow each Member State to devote more resources to their economic and social development, taking into consideration the compliance with the international commitments and their legitimate defense and security needs.

Mr. Chairman,

In the Special Meeting of Heads of State and Government of UNASUR in Bariloche, Argentina, on 28th August 2009, the Heads of State and Government decided to strengthen South America as a Zone of Peace, committing to the establishment of a mechanism of mutual confidence in the field of security and defense, upholding their decision to refrain from the threat or the use of force against the territorial integrity of another State of UNASUR.
Likewise, they reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening the cooperation and the fight against terrorism and transnational organized crime and their related crimes, namely, drug trafficking, the illicit trade of small arms and light weapons, as well as the rejection of the presence or action of illegally armed groups.

In addition, they reaffirmed that the presence of foreign military forces could not, with its means and resources related to its own objectives, threaten the sovereignty and territorial integrity of any South American nation and, consequently, the peace and security of the region.

As a follow-up of that decision, the South American Defense Council decided to establish the Mechanism to Implement Confidence and Security Building Measures, including the development and improvement of national systems for marking and tracing of weapons as well as active cooperation among Member States of UNASUR in the solution of cases of diversion, smuggling and illegal use of weapons under their custody or from their territory.

Likewise, with the purpose of promoting transparency in military expenditures, UNASUR launched in May 2012 the South-American Register on Defense Expenditures, compiling for the first time official information by the twelve UNASUR Member States, based on a common agreed methodology developed for that effect.

Finally, Mr. President, by means of the "Declaration on South America as a Zone of Peace", adopted in December 2012, the Heads of State and Government of UNASUR affirmed their resolve to undertake actions with a view to establishing South America as a zone free of anti-personnel landmines and to continue to negotiate a Protocol on Peace, Security and Cooperation within the framework of the South American Defense Council.

Thank you.