Mr. Chair, Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, allow me to thank the African Union for inviting the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs and the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament (UNREC) to participate in this meeting.

The Arms Trade Treaty was borne out of United Nations Member States’ strong, shared desire to put an end to unregulated and irresponsible arms transfers; to promote responsibility, transparency and accountability in the global arms trade; and to prevent the diversion of conventional weapons. This landmark treaty will contribute to reducing the suffering of millions of civilians.

The Arms Trade Treaty entered into force on 24 December 2014, and currently, we have 130 signatories and 69 ratifications.

Please allow me to salute the efforts already undertaken by African States through their expressed commitment and political support to the ATT process, including the various sub-regional common positions and the AU Common Position on the Treaty.

Among the 130 signatories, the African Group leads with 37 signatures. However, with regard to ratifications, the Western European and Others Group leads with 21 ratifications, followed by the Latin American and Caribbean Group with 18, the Eastern European Group with 16, the African Group with 10 and finally the Asia-Pacific Group with 2.

This means that Approximately 18 per cent of the members of the African Group have ratified it.

The United Nations would like to acknowledge the efforts undertaken by States, international and regional organizations and civil society to expedite ratifications and to promote early entry-into-force. Looking at the speed of ratification of other conventions, we can see that the ATT is a true success story.

The rapid pace of ATT ratification attests to the will of so many governments to respond to the atrocious insecurity that often finds its origin in irresponsible arms transfers. These governments stand ready to follow the Treaty’s entry into force with vigorous action to ensure its swift, effective and complete implementation.

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is heartening to see the States Parties taking the Arms Trade Treaty process forward. We have had informal meetings in 2014 and 2015 in Mexico City, Berlin and Vienna. Earlier this year we had the First Preparatory Meeting in Port of Spain, and from 6 to 8 July there will be a Second Preparatory meeting in Geneva. Some
important outstanding issues should be settled soon, particularly with regard to the rules of procedure, the Secretariat of the ATT, reporting and the financial arrangements for the conferences of States Parties and the Secretariat.

Here lies the importance of the engagement of African States and the reason why we are having this meeting. This meeting will provide a unique opportunity for African experts to share their views on these outstanding issues. It is also an opportunity for African States to voice once again their support for the ATT.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The United Nations Secretariat has actively supported the ATT from the inception of its process, including the substantive servicing of the two Diplomatic Conferences by our Conventional Arms Branch in New York. Ahead of the two negotiation conferences, UNREC supported the organization of consultations for African Member States here in Addis Ababa in 2012 and 2013 and which proved useful in providing a common background and the opportunity to share specific concerns. We expect that this meeting will serve a similar purpose. We also stand ready to provide further services if requested.

In addition, UNREC has programmes on awareness-raising and concrete legislative assistance. At Headquarters our colleagues are finalizing an ATT Toolkit which offers good practices and practical steps that are essential towards adequate implementation. UNODA has also set up, with a large group of donors, a competitive trust facility which funds the best projects from NGOs, academia, regional organizations and UN agencies: the UN Trust Facility Supporting Conventional Arms Regulation or “UNSCAR”.

To close my remarks, I wish to express my appreciation to the African Union for their hospitality in these premises and for their many efforts in making this meeting possible.

I am sure that we will have a very interactive meeting and trust that we will be successful in sharing perspectives. Thank you.