Thank you Mr. President,

I am Jasmin Nario-Galace, director of the Center for Peace Education at Miriam College in the Philippines. I am a member of IANSA and Coordinator of the IANSA Women’s Network.

I am here to talk about the importance of integrating gender perspectives in small arms initiatives. To do this, we need to understand the role that gender plays in relation to small arms and light weapons. Considering gender can help us develop a better understanding of gun cultures, conflicts, security conceptions and policies, as well as obstacles to arms control and disarmament.

As research from Reaching Critical Will demonstrates, conceptions about gender affect the way people view weapons. Societies expect men and boys to be aggressive. When conflicts arise, men are taught to fight back – leading them to believe that force is the way to approach conflicts, and to view guns as necessary tools.

Given such conceptions of masculinity, it is not a surprise that most of the world’s guns are in the hands of men and that gender-based violence is prevalent. These weapons have been used to facilitate violence including sexual violence, femicide, harassment and intimidation, domestic violence, rape, trafficking, and forced prostitution.

Men tend to equate guns with power, domination, and control. Masculinity is often defined through the possession of arms. This contributes to the normalization of arms ownership and stockpiling, which have enabled and sustained armed conflicts and armed violence throughout the world.

Gender analysis helps us to see these links between socially constructed masculinities and a culture that tolerates arms proliferation. We believe that gender analysis can help in developing future policies and actions on arms control.

These culturally constructed masculinities have facilitated men’s domination over processes relating to peace, conflict and security in general – and disarmament, in particular.

When women are given the opportunity to participate in consultations, their voices are often undermined, and their contributions undervalued. Underrepresentation of women also hinders the articulation of diverse perspectives and affects policy outcomes.
However, we have seen some improvements. The General Assembly has adopted Resolution 65/69 on “Women, disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation”; and also Resolution 67/48. This resolution urges states and other actors to promote equal opportunities for women in disarmament decision-making, and to support and strengthen the effective participation of women in disarmament.

Thankfully, too, the outcome documents at the last two Biennial Meetings of States have strongly reflected the call for women’s greater participation in small arms control processes.

We appreciate the work of the Office of Disarmament Affairs to ensure that the template for reporting on the PoA now has questions to help us see whether States are implementing these resolutions.

In the Philippines, our network called Women Engaged in Action on 1325 has trained women in conflict-affected areas on small arms control. Prior to the training, women were supportive of weapons accumulation and use by men in their families and communities, arguing that this was part of their culture. The women perceived weapons stockpiling as necessary for protection and security. The training helped women to become more open to alternative approaches to conflict resolution and security. After the training, some of the women organized themselves as community peacekeepers. Others reported that they have been helping to mediate conflicts in their communities.

Unfortunately, many governments have lacked the political will to implement policies addressing these concerns, or to repeal laws that conflict with their commitments to reduce small arms proliferation.

The IANSA Women’s Network has the following recommendations:

1. Challenge the associations among small arms, violence, power, and masculinity. Challenging these associations requires a commitment to gender equality and prevention of gender-based violence. This can be done through peace, gender, and disarmament education, and other programs that educate on gender norms and that promote tolerance, nonviolent expressions of masculinity, gender equality, and nonviolent resolution of conflicts.

2. Governments, including National Commissions on Small Arms, must address glaring gaps in policy-making, planning and implementation, particularly to ensure women’s active engagement, representation and leadership. We also need information and analyses on the gendered causes of arms accumulation and proliferation, and the links with armed violence. Women’s experiences should be documented and shared, particularly the good practices and success stories.

3. Women’s technical capacities must be strengthened in order to equip them with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to engage in what usually are male-dominated spaces.
4. Governments should collect and use data that is disaggregated by sex and age to inform small arms control interventions.

5. We need resources to support education and capacity building, research, analysis, and advocacy, implementation and monitoring of relevant policies. We also need funding for work on humanitarian disarmament that saves lives.

6. PoA reports should be a source of data to measure the relationship between illicit arms transfers and gender-based violence, while also measuring the extent of women’s participation and leadership in small arms control processes.

The aim of the Program of Action and other small arms control initiatives is to increase the security of all – women, men, girls and boys – by reducing the illicit trade, uncontrolled proliferation, and misuse of small arms. Considering gender in the Review Conference can help us to address the causes and effects of the irresponsible transfer and use of these weapons and ammunition.

Thank you very much.