MR. PRESIDENT, DISTINGUISHED DELEGATES, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

Since am taking the floor for the first time, allow me on behalf of the Zambian delegation to join the speakers before me in congratulating you on your election as President of the Conference.

MR. PRESIDENT DISTINGUISHED DELEGATES, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

Let me take this opportunity to provide an overview of the extent of contamination from Explosive Remnants of War (ERWs) and Zambia's efforts to clear contaminated areas.

I also want to take this opportunity to thank all those that have welcomed Zambia to the family of the CCW. Further, I wish to express, on behalf of the Government and the people of Zambia, our sincere condolences to the families and the government of the Philippines on the tragic death of over 10,000 people.
You may wish to know that Zambia was a safe haven for freedom fighters from neighbouring countries fighting to free themselves from colonialism. After the cessation of these liberation wars, landmines and other Explosive Remnants of War (ERWs) were abandoned by retreating armies thus contaminating six of Zambia’s ten Provinces. Eastern, Southern, Lusaka, Western, North Western and Luapula provinces of Zambia were found to be contaminated in varying degrees.

Mr. President, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen

Zambia’s record of mine clearance, particularly of landmines clearance is well known and documented. You will recall that Zambia successfully cleared the known landmines ahead of schedule in 2009. This followed a conducted survey of the suspected areas by the Norwegian Peoples Aid between 2005 and 2009 and subsequent clearance by the Zambia Army.

It is however, important to state that although the survey for landmine contamination was conducted in the six suspected Provinces, the survey was not exhaustive due to several facts which included excessive flooding, inaccessibility, lack of funding and poor equipment. As such, the problem of ERWs and some unexploded
Ordinance remains unresolved in our country. In this regard, there is a need for a survey to be conducted in the known areas in order to establish the extent of the contamination and consequently clear the areas.

Mr. President, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen

In the last two years reports of ERWs and unexploded ordinance in the six known Provinces of Zambia have increased. Most of the reports about the presence of abandoned objects are coming from the isolated border areas. The presence of these deadly objects has negatively impacted the socio-economic wellbeing of locals by preventing residents of these areas from establishing sustainable livelihoods. ERWs have also hampered key national development priorities such as agriculture, tourism and infrastructure development in most of these areas. The Zambian Government has thus accelerated Mine Risk education in these areas and on the spot destruction has also been conducted accordingly.

Mr. President, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen

The Zambian Government is committed to clearing these sporadic areas of abandoned ordnance (AXO) and unexploded ordnance (UXO). It has also been working to promote behavioural change in the affected areas. There is a myth in these areas that ERWs contain
red mercury which if extracted can be sold for money. As a result some people go round “hunting” for ERWs which they later resale to unsuspecting villagers. This has caused many accidents resulting in deaths.

The above scenario has made the Zambian government to realize that ERWs are still an issue that need to be dealt with, hence the government’s decision to join other countries in coming up with ways to end human suffering from Conventional weapons. The Zambian Government will therefore be keen to learn from countries that have successfully cleared these dangerous weapons.

Finally Mr. President, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen, Zambia looks forward to the exchange of views on best practices and benefitting from international cooperation and assistance in order to make the lives of our people in the affected areas meaningful. Further Zambia will join other Members in promoting universalization of the Convention in order to achieve the objectives of the Convention.

I thank you.