Cross-border crime is a major challenge for the international community and requires coordinated action. The Firearms Protocol is an important instrument in this respect, as it establishes legally binding rules on the production and trade of firearms and ammunition.

Germany is strongly committed to combating illegal proliferation. In this regard, we have been supporting projects and initiatives worldwide. To name a few: Together with France, we have initiated the Small Arms Initiative in the Western Balkans that has made excellent progress. All six countries show extraordinary ownership in this process, with guidance and support from numerous partners like the EU and UNODC. Germany has financially supported UNODC activities in the Western Balkans since 2017.

The successful Western Balkans Roadmap served as a role model for other regions: together with ECOWAS we are working on a Small Arms initiative for Western Africa. There, UNODC has been our project partner since 2018. The same applies to Ukraine, where the development of a roadmap has been underway since 2019. Finally, under the auspices of Germany in June the CARICOM member states have agreed on a Small Arms Roadmap for the Caribbean. UNODC was present at this event and will hopefully contribute to this initiative in future.

Against this backdrop of German engagement against illegal proliferation, I am pleased to announce that Germany will start procedures to ratify the Firearms Protocol and hopes to conclude them until next year.