

Arms Trade Treaty Third Conference of States Parties

General Debate

Statement by Australia

11 September 2017

Thank you Mr President.

At the outset, Australia wishes to express our warm appreciation for your outstanding and tireless leadership in preparing for this Third Conference of States Parties over the last year. As a Vice-President of the Conference, we look forward to continuing to work with you, in the collaborative spirit you have fostered in the ATT Bureau, to advance the effectiveness of the Arms Trade Treaty through constructive deliberations over the course of this week. We would also like to thank other members of the Bureau for all their hard work, and the Secretariat for its outstanding support.

Over the past busy year, under the Presidency's oversight, the Treaty's three working groups - on Treaty Implementation, Transparency and Reporting, and Universalisation - have made excellent progress in moving discussions under the Treaty from a focus on administrative matters to dealing with substantive issues and concrete implementation of the Treaty.

Progress in the working groups has been the result of the vision and tireless work of Co-Chairs Costa Rica and Switzerland (for Treaty Implementation), Sweden and Mexico (for Transparency

and Reporting) and Finland and Nigeria (for Universalisation), the active and constructive engagement of States, and ongoing active involvement of civil society.

We look forward to the Conference approving the Working Groups as Standing Working Groups, and endorsing the substantive topics proposed by the Co-Chairs for further discussion ahead of CSP4, so that we can take discussions on substantive implementation even further.

Australia welcomes ongoing efforts towards full universalisation of the Arms Trade Treaty, including because of its connection with effective treaty implementation, highlighted by ICRC President Maurer and others in the high-level segment of our CSP. These efforts have been led by the Presidency through outreach visits to Africa, Asia and the Americas over the past year. Australia has actively engaged in this endeavour, especially with regard to an Asia-Pacific region which remains significantly under-represented with regard to signatories and States Parties. We are pleased to speak after the distinguished representative of Samoa given his country's leadership in the Pacific on this issue.

We recognise the excellent work done by many other states and civil society organisations to increase participation in the Treaty and to support its effective implementation. In this regard, we also note the importance of the VTF and sponsorship funding to assist developing countries engaging with the treaty.

As we are all aware, the illicit trade in arms has far-reaching negative effects across a broad spectrum of communities throughout the world. For the majority of people in this room, the benefits of the Treaty are a given. However, we have work to do to convince states outside the Treaty of the benefits of participation. The rate of accessions and ratifications have slowed since the Treaty came into force in December 2014. Most of the current membership joined early. States which are yet to accede perhaps remain sceptical about the value of participation or have concerns about their capacity to implement the Treaty provisions.

Over the course of 2017, the Australian Government, working with the Centre for Armed Violence Reduction, has developed a 180 page compendium on the benefits of participation and the support mechanisms which are available to support implementation. We look forward to launching this compendium, titled *Reinvigorating the Narrative – the Broader Benefits of the Arms Trade Treaty*, at a side-event this Wednesday 13 September in Room 3 of the CICG.

This *Broader Benefits Brief* should be an asset to anyone interested in armed violence reduction. It comprehensively explains the advantages, especially to those who remain sceptical about participation. From arms traders to civil society activists, from governments and global development agencies to the smallest of communities, from investors to tourists, this Treaty promises improved human security, greater business certainty, enhanced governance, more sustainable development, and less

personal suffering. We look forward to discussing this initiative more fully later this week.

Consistent with Australia's interest in highlighting the broader benefits of the ATT for the international community, we will also be hosting an event entitled *The prevention agenda, illicit arms flows and the SDGs – How do they connect?* at the Graduate Institute at lunchtime tomorrow 12 September. This panel-led discussion will explore further how the ATT and other international frameworks can contribute to the prevention of conflict, reduce the risk of atrocity crimes and human rights violations, and support implementation of the SDGs. The discussions in the high-level segment of our CSP earlier today emphasised the wider context of our treaty.

Our aim at this event at the Graduate Institute is to bring the arms control and disarmament community together with those from the human rights, humanitarian and development sectors in Geneva, to raise awareness of the linkages between our efforts to reduce illicit arms flows and other global challenges, and to identify some concrete actions that can be taken here in Geneva on the prevention agenda. We look forward to reporting outcomes from this event in tomorrow afternoon's special plenary session on the SDGs.

As a penultimate point, we note that there are differences of view within the ATT community over interpretation of the phrase "UN regional groups" in the Terms of Reference for the Management

Committee. We agree this issue requires further discussion and clarification.

In conclusion, Australia remains convinced that efforts under the ATT to curb the illicit trade in arms will have enormous positive effects on people's lives, as well as on global prosperity and security. The Arms Trade Treaty has the potential to be one of the most important normative initiatives of our time. Australia looks forward to this Third Conference of States Parties continuing the remarkable progress made since the Treaty entered into force in 2014.

Thank you Mr President.