

Third Conference of the States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty  
Geneva, 11-15 September 2017  
General Debate

Statement of Bulgaria

Mr. President,

At the outset, I would like to express our high appreciation for your leadership and dedication as a president of the Third Conference of the States Parties to the ATT, for setting the intersessional work on a right track and for successful transition from administrative phase to one aimed at effective treaty implementation and universalization. Our gratitude goes also to the ATT Secretariat, the co-chairs of the Working Groups and the chair of the Selection Committee of the Voluntary Trust Fund (VTF), as well as to the other members of the Bureau and the members of Management Committee, for the excellent work done in the preparatory process and in laying grounds for achievements in substance. The generous support of the host country, Switzerland, is highly valued.

Bulgaria aligns itself with the statement made on behalf of the European Union and will make the following remarks from national perspective.

As a treaty establishing sound legal regulations to govern the international trade in conventional arms, the ATT has undeniable contribution to the international peace and security, to promoting cooperation and transparency among states, preventing illicit arms trafficking and diversion and strengthening the respect for the humanitarian law and human rights. Its role is significant not only in reducing the human suffering but also in creating favourable conditions for economic growth and sustainable development. Curbing the illicit arms flows is one of the issues that need to be tackled in solving the problem with the gender-based violence and violence against women and children; the Arms Trade Treaty is instrumental in this regard as well.

The potential of the Arms Trade Treaty can be fully employed only through its effective and universal implementation. One year after the Second CSP adopted the decisions on establishing the Voluntary Trust Fund and the Working Groups on effective treaty implementation, on transparency and reporting and on universalization, we can say that these were right steps that helped to focus our efforts on fulfilling the key tasks.

The success of the Treaty depends on the universality of its adherence and the extent to which the States Parties comply with their obligations. We are pleased to see the number of ratifications growing after the Second CSP and would like to congratulate all countries that have recently ratified the Treaty. We would also like to commend the ATT President, Ambassador Korhonen, for the significant efforts he invested in promoting the universality of the Treaty. The rate of ratifications might not be growing as fast as we would wish to see it but indicates a steady progress. Different security and political considerations underpin the existing reservations

regarding the accession to the Treaty which require tailored approach and messages. The universalization and the implementation are intertwined processes; the most eloquent example for the benefits of the Treaty would be to demonstrate, through its effective implementation, how it can contribute to solving the complex security and development issues caused by weakly regulated transfers in conventional arms.

Although the treaty implementation is a national responsibility we need to employ all means to ensure that adequate assistance for effective implementation is in place. The countries have different starting points and the level of their national export control systems vary. International cooperation and assistance, exchanging best practices, information sharing and transparency play important role and in this regard we want to commend the hard work done by the Working Groups on Effective Treaty Implementation and on Transparency and Reporting which facilitated exchange of information and explored possibilities for cooperation. The discussions held during the last year and priorities identified by all three working groups for their future work demonstrate that at this initial phase of the treaty these are structures that we need to further deepen the debate and the work on important issues. We hope an appropriate decision will be taken by the Conference regarding the continuation of the three working groups.

For Bulgaria the ATT has been always among the priorities in the export and arms control area. We were among the states actively participating in the treaty negotiating process. Between the Second and the Third Conference of the States Parties we were privileged to work as one of the vice-presidents of the ATT. Our work has been guided by the will to contribute to achieving the treaty's objectives. We have been engaged with the countries from the region in universalization efforts and in sharing experience on export control systems. We are ready to continue this work and provide assistance under the new EU Outreach Programme agreed this year.

Last but not least, we would like to acknowledge the role of the civil society and academia in promoting the Arms Trade Treaty and their valuable assistance for its effective implementation.