

Arms Trade Treaty 4th Conference of States Parties

General Debate: Australian Statement

Agenda Item Four (4 mins)

Thank you Mr President.

As this is the first time I have taken the floor, I wish to express on behalf of Australia our warm appreciation for your leadership and tireless efforts in preparing for this Fourth Conference of States Parties over the past year. We look forward to working with you this week to achieve some concrete outcomes that further advance the ATT's objectives.

Over the past year the Treaty's three working groups – on Treaty Implementation; Transparency and Reporting; and Universalisation – have engaged in substantive discussions on the ATT's implementation under the able leadership of co-chairs Japan and Finland (for Universalisation), Belgium and Mexico (for Transparency and Reporting), and Switzerland (for Treaty Implementation). We welcome the constructive engagements by States in these discussions, and the contributions of civil society.

During the course of the working group and preparatory meetings a number of practical measures such as guidance documents have been put forward and discussed, which we should seek to take forward and endorse this week. These resources are valuable for developing a common understanding among States Parties of the Treaty's requirements and putting in place similar standards when developing our national control systems.

Australia has been pleased to be Facilitator of the sub-working group discussions on diversion this year. Preventing diversion of conventional arms is one of the fundamental objectives of the Treaty and is a key step in combatting the illicit arms trade and the violence it fuels. This is a priority for states both inside and outside the ATT. By achieving some useful outcomes in this area, we can combat the misperception amongst some States that the ATT is only about regulation of trade and protecting the interests of exporters. For this reason, as facilitator, we have focused on producing two documents as tools for States to use to strengthen their efforts to combat diversion – a list of possible measures to prevent and address diversion, and a list of reference documents.

We are grateful for the inputs we have received from states and civil society in developing these, and we hope States Parties will be prepared to endorse them this week.

Australia welcomes ongoing efforts to achieve full universalisation of the ATT in order to remove regulatory gaps and realise the Treaty's full benefits. These efforts have been led by the Presidency's outreach visits to Africa and Asia, complemented by the significant effort by civil society to raise awareness, build capacity, conduct advocacy, and provide technical assistance to prospective states. In recognition of the value we place on these efforts Australia supports the Voluntary Trust Fund, the UN Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation (UNSCAR), and the sponsorship programme.

Last year, together with the Centre for Armed Violence Reduction, we launched a compendium titled "Reinvigorating the Narrative – the Broader Benefits of the Arms Trade Treaty" that sets out comprehensively the benefits of participation for those sceptical about joining. Such benefits include improved human security, more sustainable development, enhanced national security, and greater business certainty. Tomorrow we will be co-hosting with Switzerland and CAVR a side-event at lunchtime to explore how this and other resources can support implementation of the ATT. Much of their work has focused particularly on the Pacific and we are pleased that our neighbour Samoa will join us to share its experiences on overcoming the implementation challenges.

Australia has been a long-standing champion of the ATT; we believe in its potential to deliver real results. The Australian Government's Foreign Policy White Paper reaffirms our commitment to protect and strengthen international rules and norms, the ATT being a key example where we can do this. The ATT can be a positive example of international collaboration to address transnational problems. Australia looks forward to this Fourth Conference of States Parties continuing the progress made since the ATT's entry into force.

Thank you Mr President.