



Parliamentarians *for Global Action*
Parlamentarios para la Acción Global
Action Mondiale des Parlementaires
برلمانيون من أجل التحرك العالمي

Statement by Hon. Thilanga Sumathipala, Member of Parliament of Sri Lanka

On Behalf Of

Parliamentarians for Global Action

4th Conference of States Parties (CSP) of the Arms Trade Treaty

Tokyo, Japan

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Ambassador Takamizawa, Your Excellencies, Members of Parliament, Ladies and Gentlemen

Please allow me at the outset to congratulate you and the entire ATT Secretariat Team for your very able stewardship of this 4th Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty.

We meet at a time when the importance and urgency of securing full universality and implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty has never been more painfully apparent.

5 Years after the Treaty was adopted, we continue to see and witness every day - in several global regions - the devastating and tragic consequences of a world where arms exports, driven by greed not compassion, continues to lead to breach of the most basic human rights and International Humanitarian Law.

As Chairman of the SDG 2030 Sustainable Development Select Committee in the Parliament of Sri Lanka, I am also all too aware of the profoundly damaging consequences that such exports have in our quest to achieve genuine sustainable development in our respective countries and regions.

I am particularly troubled that a number of States Parties to the ATT, including several early champions of this international convention, have seemingly yet to fully embrace the obligations they have legally undertaken to uphold.

We must lead by example. If we fail in this, the task of persuading those that have not yet joined the ATT becomes exponentially far more difficult to achieve.

I am confident that the 4th CSP, therefore, and mindful of the stark realities that we still confront, will rise to the occasion and identify and implement the steps the international community so desperately needs to achieve the still distant goal of a more responsible world where arms are not exported to conflict areas where human rights arising from such exports are all but guaranteed.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

From 2010 through 2012, I had the good fortune to attend a number of the Preparatory Committees at the United Nations leading to the adoption of the ATT - finally! - in April 2013. During this time, I also authored and introduced a Private Members Bill in the Parliament of Sri Lanka pushing for significantly improved domestic firearms regulation.

My country has lived first-hand the horrors of conflict. Joining the ATT and implementing it is just one step of many that can consign decisively to history any prospect of re-emergence of such conflict in Sri Lanka.

Since the adoption of the ATT in April 2013, I have consistently advocated for my country to join the Treaty.

While disappointed that signature was not possible within the prescribed period before the Treaty entered into force in December 2014, I remain hopeful that the Government of Sri Lanka of today will see fit to accede to the Arms Trade Treaty in the near future.

The ATT is not a disarmament Treaty. It does not seek to prevent the lawful conduct of the international trade in arms. It seeks only to ensure that it is conducted in a way that does not lead to serious human rights abuses and breach of International Humanitarian Law.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have a copy of the Plan of Action that we adopted here in front of me!

<http://www.pgaction.org/pdf/pre/Colombo%20Plan%20of%20Action.pdf>

In Section 5, we called upon our entire global Membership to support the adoption of the ATT.

Nearly 2,000 of our Members in over 100 countries did precisely that in signing a Global Parliamentary Declaration in support of adoption of the ATT that was presented to former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in 2013.

Since that time, PGA Members have made central, vital and catalytic contributions leading to ratification of the ATT in 41 of the 96 countries that have joined the ATT to date.

This is no small achievement and our Global Campaign for Universality and Implementation of the ATT remains as strong and as effective as ever.

I am pleased to report that, in the past 18 months alone, PGA Members, in close consultation with the PGA Secretariat in New York, have been front and center in achieving parliamentary ratification of the Arms Trade Treaty in Brazil, Mozambique and Guinea Bissau.

We anticipate that all 3 countries will deposit their Instruments of Ratification in the very near future.

Our PGA Campaign is currently intensively engaged with PGA Members in another 27 countries worldwide to promote universality and implementation of the ATT

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish to pause briefly here to highlight, more generally, the absolutely pivotal role played by all civil society in promoting universality and implementation of the ATT.

It is critical that the demonstrably effective efforts of PGA and many other international and national civil society organizations continue to be supported in a satisfactory way.

UNSCAR has played an important role here over the past 5 years.

However, overall, support for civil society has fallen far short of what it should be in promoting this vital treaty, and in spite of the extraordinary results achieved by civil society.

This is tremendously unfortunate and deeply short-sighted.

At this crucial crossroad in the trajectory of the ATT, now is the time to significantly step up, not diminish or downgrade, support for civil society that has – time and again – proven to be extraordinarily effective agents of change in promoting the ATT.

Without PGA and civil society worldwide, I have no doubt that the current impressive tally of States Parties to the ATT – adopted only 5 years ago - would undoubtedly be significantly less than what it is today.

Ambassador Takamizawa,

Please allow me to conclude on a more personal note.

Just a few months ago, I had the good fortune to meet with you and the ATT Secretariat on the occasion of an official visit you made to Sri Lanka.

Since that time, I know that you have also had the opportunity to have fruitful subsequent meetings with the Peter Barcroft and Thiago Carvalho in the PGA Secretariat in New York who have provided you with detailed assessments and read-outs of the current status of ATT in a number of countries here in Asia and around the world.

We in PGA stand with you and the entire ATT Secretariat in our collective and cherished goal of making the world a much safer place – and sooner rather than later.

Thank you.



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