

Canada – statement to the 3rd ATT Conference of State Parties

General:

As this is our first time taking the floor, on behalf of the Canadian delegation, I would like to express our appreciation to Finland for the manner in which you've prepared the work of this meeting and for your efforts, including your extensive outreach, in support of this treaty over the past year, along with our appreciation for the work of the Secretariat. Please be assured of the full support of my delegation.

The Arms Trade Treaty is fundamentally important. It seeks to address a longstanding challenge for the international community: the challenge of balancing legitimate international commerce in conventional weapons with the risks posed by these activities when they take place without appropriate checks and balances; without transparency; or, without accountability.

Indeed, the proliferation of weapons, and particularly of small arms and light weapons, is one of the greatest security challenges faced by the international community. Destabilizing accumulations of conventional weapons are a critical factor affecting the onset, severity and duration of conflict, and its negative consequences. Armed conflicts know no borders and civilians, including women and children, are too frequently targeted.

The consequences of illicit or irresponsible flows of conventional arms also go beyond the immediate threat of death, injury or violence. Proliferation and illicit weapons trade contribute to a climate of persistent fear and insecurity, which undermines socio-economic growth and stability. And weapons, too often, land in the hands of criminals or terrorists, threatening not only the immediate security of countries in conflict, but also global peace and security.

The Arms Trade Treaty has an important role to play in addressing these issues and Canada is prepared to be part of this effort. Canada already conforms to the spirit of the Treaty and has strong export controls in place. However, as there are elements of the ATT that Canada does not yet fully meet, notably in regulating brokering, we are making the necessary changes, and in keeping with Canada's approach to international treaties, we will not accede to the ATT until we are fully compliant with it.

Indeed, we have learned through our own experience that accession to the ATT offers an opportunity to review existing export control legislation and further strengthen it. However, Canada also recognizes that undertaking our domestic obligations alone is not enough. Our government understands that establishing new legislative systems and implementing export controls can be difficult, particularly for states that may not have significant previous experience in this field. We are therefore committed to assisting other states who wish to join the ATT or who have become State Parties but are unable to fully implement the Treaty.

Canada has therefore contributed one million dollars to the UN Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation. Through this program, Canada is working with other international partners and with the UN to help States accede to and effectively implement the ATT.

It is unfortunate that, to date, there are still low numbers of ATT State Parties in several regions of the world where illicit flows of conventional weapons contribute to high levels of conflict. The UN Trust Facility can also help these states improve their legislation, end-user controls and management of weapon stockpiles. The Trust Facility's inclusion of gender and children further supports the goals of the ATT and can make a real contribution to the protection of those who are too often the victims of illicit trade in conventional weapons.

Indeed, Canada very much values the role that the ATT can play in assessing the risk that conventional arms could be used against women and children, particularly the risk of arms being used to perpetrate or threaten violence, including sexual and gender-based violence. The ATT offers the international community an additional tool, in addition to the Security Council, the International Criminal Court, and Universal Periodic Reviews to address these issues. We encourage all ATT states to examine how this Treaty can integrate gender throughout its work and develop gender-sensitive options to support the further implementation and universalization of the Treaty. For our part, it is Canada's intent, in our own domestic implementation of the Treaty, to go further than the strict requirement of the ATT by assessing gender based violence and violence against women and children alongside other criteria outlined in the ATT.

We also welcome the important role transparency plays in this Treaty. It is for that reason that I am proud to say that Canada has/will shortly submit its initial report on implementation to the ATT Secretariat. While we are not yet a state party, we are submitting this report to demonstrate our commitment to openness and as a sign of our on-going commitment to accede to the Treaty once all necessary domestic changes are in place.