

**ATT – Arms Trade Treaty**  
**Working Group on Treaty Implementation**

**Remarks by Ambassador Anda Filip, Director for External Relations, Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)**

Thank you for the opportunity to address this meeting today on behalf of IPU.

From the outset – please let me say that I do not have particular expertise in the area of the ATT.

What I would like to do is talk about the IPU approach to the global commitments undertaken at the United Nations in general and discuss some of the good practices that we think can be developed to bring a parliamentary dimension to the work of the UN, with a view to enhancing national ownership and implementation of these commitments.

The IPU - as you may know - is the world organization of national parliaments, which currently brings together 178 national parliaments and basically all the regional and other parliamentary assemblies, as Associate Members and Permanent Observers. From that perspective, it is a unique convener of the global parliamentary community.

The IPU historically has been a facilitator of political dialogue and a convener of MPs around issues. The core mandate of the organization revolves around the promotion of parliamentary democracy, with operational programs geared towards capacity building of parliaments, gender equality and the political empowerment of women, youth participation in politics, defense of the human rights of parliamentarians and – more recently – implementation of the SDGs (with a special focus on climate change and on health).

About 20 years ago, we began developing a more structured partnership with the United Nations. On one hand, this came from the realization that one of the most significant challenges facing the UN was its implementation gap. A multitude of Treaties, Conventions, Agreements were being entered into by the UN Member States (ie the Governments), but the translation of international commitments into national realities was problematic. It was therefore important to make sure that MPs were aware and supportive, so that legislation could be amended or drafted, budgets could be allocated, and effective oversight could be carried out so as to monitor progress in terms of national implementation.

In parallel to that, it was important to make sure parliamentarians were part of the global conversation on the main issues of the international agenda. They after all, are the representatives of the people, with a keen sense of the realities and perceptions on the ground, and who are uniquely placed to help bridge the gap between the global and the local.

One very recent example that I would like to refer to is the current process under way towards the two Global Compacts on migration and respectively refugee protection, which we expect will be adopted later this year. We have alerted all Parliaments to the process, placed the issue on the agenda of some of our main meetings and reached out to all parliaments inviting their input. A general debate will be held on the occasion of our forthcoming IPU Assembly later this month on *Strengthening the global regime for migrants and refugees: the need for evidence-based policy solutions*. Workshops will also be organized in the context of the Assembly, so as to help provide the MPs with the information and tools they need to effectively engage on the issue. The Parliamentary Hearing at the United Nations, convened two weeks ago jointly by the IPU and the President of the UN General Assembly, also helped articulate a parliamentary contribution to the ongoing UN consultations.

As we have seen with the process leading up to the adoption of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, there are very tangible benefits of involving parliaments and parliamentarians in the discussions from a very early stage. At home in consultations with the authorities of their own country and internationally, they have been among the most active promoters of the governance goal which has taken the form of Goal 16 on peace, justice and strong and effective institutions at all levels. Whereas back in 2000 very few MPs knew what the MDGs even represented, this time around the consultation process has been much broader and inclusive, which I think has been reflected in a lot more momentum towards implementation.

We, too, are working with our Members at the national, regional and global levels: developing tools, self-assessments and activities to make sure parliaments are fit for purpose in this implementation phase. MPs are involved in the annual High-level Political Forum on the SDGs, as a multi-stakeholder exercise, and they are engaging in Voluntary National Reviews. We are taking good practices back to the full membership so as to help mobilize further parliamentary action. When we all convene again in two weeks' time for the IPU Assembly in Geneva, our Standing Committee on UN Affairs will be taking stock of developments over these past six months and formulating recommendations on the way ahead. In addition, we will be convening an inter-active session with other parliamentary organizations involved on the SDGs, to map out what is being done and by whom, to identify gaps and to try and forge greater coherence and effectiveness in our respective interventions.

I cannot under-state how important it is, on the one hand, to bring the voice of parliamentarians to the deliberations on global issues and secondly, to involve them closely in the implementation of the global commitments. This is a two-way relationship. For the MPs to have a voice, they need to have access to information, they need to be having conversations at home within their select parliamentary committees and with their respective governments (this is not always the case), and sometimes they need to be included on national delegations to major UN meetings (there are several UNGA resolutions that welcome this practice, but not all Member States avail themselves of this opportunity). As a UN permanent observer, we at the

IPU also try to feed the resolutions and decisions from our specialized parliamentary meetings into the relevant UN processes and outcomes.

Secondly, when it comes to monitoring implementation, we have some good experiences that we can build on. In the case of the Human Rights Treaty bodies, for example, the vast majority of recommendations have implications in terms of legislation that needs to be drafted or amended. CEDAW has understood the critical role of parliaments and the Committee – in cooperation with the IPU - has developed modalities whereby:

- parliaments are informed when their country is coming up for review,
- if a parliaments need assistance to better understand the CEDAW process we are there to help them,
- very often MPs are included on the delegation coming to Geneva for the CEDAW review,
- the CEDAW recommendations are formally shared with the respective parliaments, and
- once they go home the MPs are empowered with the knowledge they need to be actively involved in the follow-up process.

This is a practice we are trying to replicate in the context of the Universal Periodic Review conducted by the UN Human Rights Council. Incredibly, there are still many parliaments around the world that are totally unaware on the national reports submitted by their Governments to the United Nations on the human rights situation of their own citizens.

Coming closer to the scope of our discussion here today, I would like to share with you our experience in the area of nuclear disarmament, and highlight the importance of partnerships. Over the years, our Members have adopted several resolutions on weapons of mass destruction, including resolutions on chemical weapons, on securing the entry into force of the CTBT and more recently in 2014, on the role of parliaments in achieving a nuclear weapons-free world.

Together with PNND, we developed a Handbook for Parliamentarians on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament, taking stock of model legislation and good practices at various levels. With the Resolution and our institutional relationship with parliaments, we were able to open the door for substantive discussions in several parliaments. Very often, it was PNND, with their expertise and network of devoted MPs, which undertook various initiatives and specific activities. In the case of the French National Assembly for example, after decades in which the issue of nuclear disarmament was virtually taboo, we are seeing some very interesting discussions now about the role of nuclear weapons in the national security doctrine. And together with PNND we have tried to keep the issue alive on the IPU agenda, with the organization of side events and various panel discussions on the occasion of the IPU general Assemblies.

And I can say that there has been some momentum. The 2014 parliamentary Resolution specifically called on Governments to start negotiations on a nuclear weapons convention or on a package of agreements to help achieve a nuclear-weapon-free world. In June 2017, the IPU welcomed the adoption by UNGA of the Nuclear Weapons Ban Treaty and in October convened a special joint session of the IPU Standing Committee on Peace and International Security and of the Standing Committee on UN Affairs, with the participation of Ambassador Whyte-Gomez and other leaders, to further raise awareness of this new international instrument and help mobilize parliamentary support for early ratification. When we meet again in March, the IPU general Assembly will hear a joint intervention of the Director General of OPCW and the Director of ICAN on the urgent need to prohibit all weapons of mass destruction. IPU and ICAN will also hold a practical workshop for MPs on the process for ratification.

With this, I would like to turn to the Arms Trade Treaty, which perhaps we have neglected at the IPU in recent years. And yet, while for many politicians nuclear war may still appear to be a very remote possibility, it is small arms and light weapons that are wreaking havoc and devastation in families and communities. In years past we did have opportunities to dwell on this issue – through a resolution adopted in Bangkok in 2010, a photo exhibit at our Assembly in Panama City in 2011, and a Guide for Reducing Gun Violence through Parliamentary Action (produced together with the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue). The Parliamentary Forum on Small Arms and Light Weapons has also organized a number of side events in the context of IPU Assemblies. Perhaps the time has come for us to revisit this issue with renewed vigor.

We are thrilled that Ambassador Takamizawa has accepted to join us for the forthcoming IPU Assembly in a fortnight, and address a group of Speakers of Parliament on this important issue. Together with the Parliamentary Forum on Small Arms and Light Weapons and the ATT Secretariat, we also hope to identify new areas of cooperation and engagement.

Thank you for your attention.