



SIERRA LEONE

ARMS TRADE TREATY THIRD CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES

General Debate

11 September 2017

STATEMENT BY SIERRA LEONE

Mr President,

Distinguished Delegates,

Sierra Leone would like to start by expressing condolences to all those affected by the recent string of natural disasters around the world and also by expressing gratitude to the Finnish and Swiss Governments, as well as the ATT Secretariat, for organising this conference.

Mr. President,

Sierra Leone ratified the Arms Trade Treaty on 12 August 2014, the 43 UN Member State and 4th African Country to do so.

Sierra Leone is still recovering from the trauma of the civil conflict, which it experienced more than 15 years ago. Many people were murdered, maimed and raped because weapons found their way into the wrong hands. Sierra Leone firmly believes that the ATT has the potential to reduce the capacity to wage civil war and conflict and reduce insecurity worldwide, and calls on all UN Member States that have not yet done so to ratify or accede to the ATT, without delay.

Sierra Leone has made great strides to address the regulation of arms supply. The National Commission on Small Arms was set up by an Act of Parliament in 2010. The Arms and Ammunition Act of 2012 replaced the Arms and Ammunition Act of 1955, to provide for the control of the transfer of small arms and light weapons, their ammunitions and other

related materials from, to or through Sierra Leone; to provide for the regulation of the manufacture of small arms and light weapons, to provide for institutional and operational capacities to regulate possession and use of small arms and light weapons within Sierra Leone and to provide for other related matters, institutional and operational capacities to regulate possession and use of small arms and light weapons within Sierra Leone. The act has provisions for the registration, management and security of stockpiles, possession and use within Sierra Leone, transfer and manufacture and sale of small arms and light weapons. Our efforts in small arms control have had a visible impact on the prevalence of armed violence within the country.

In relation to the ATT, Sierra Leone is currently in the process of identifying gaps in its Arms legislation that need to be addressed to bring it in conformity with the ATT, and is therefore pleased to have benefited from the Voluntary Trust Fund of the ATT that will enable it to do so.

Sierra Leone would like to stress the importance of regional and sub-regional bodies, Parliaments and civil society in addressing arms control in general and the ATT, in particular.

The Economic Commission of West African States (ECOWAS), to which Sierra Leone is a member, has made commendable efforts in addressing arms control in West Africa. ECOWAS is the only regional body to have adopted a moratorium on the import, export and manufacture of small arms in 1998, but poor monitoring and the fact that the moratorium was non-binding, undermined its effectiveness. Consequently, *the ECOWAS Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, their Ammunition and other Related Materials* was adopted in 2006 and came into force in 2009. ECOWAS has also been instrumental in the ratification/accession of 13 of its 15 member states to the ATT.

Civil society also played an important role in ratification of the ATT, within the West Africa region. The lobbying and activism campaign was led by the West African Action Network on Small Arms, a regional body of civil society organizations and an association of journalists led the campaign. Parliamentary bodies have also supported the efforts in West Africa.

The relationships between the ATT and the Sustainable Development Goals are evident and Sierra Leone is pleased that this subject has been included in the work of CSP3.

Sierra Leone is committed to the implementation of the ATT, a fact demonstrated by its willingness to serve as the Vice President of the Third Conference of the Parties, in which position, under the able leadership of President Korhonen, Sierra Leone gained useful insights on the ATT. We will continue our interest not only in terms of its implementation within Sierra Leone, but in its universalization.

In this connection, the good experience of ECOWAS needs to be shared with other countries of the world.

We believe that the ATT is crucial to ensure international peace, security and stability, reduce human suffering and promote cooperation and transparency to foster a responsible trade in conventional arms.

Mr President, I thank you.