

ATT First Conference of States Parties, Cancun 24-27 August 2015

High-Level Segment

Opening Statement of SWEDEN

(Check against delivery)

Mr Minister, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

My Foreign Minister, Ms Margot Wallström, was not able to attend this gathering due to other commitments, but she has asked me to convey her best wishes for a successful conference, and to underline to you Sweden's commitment to the ATT process.

Let me begin by thanking the Government of Mexico, for its long-standing commitment to the ATT process and for its generosity in taking responsibility for the preparatory process leading to this first Conference of States Parties, and, finally, for hosting us here this week. Special thanks are due to Ambassador Jorge Lomonaco for his skilful leadership of the preparatory process. A large number of Governments have made important contributions to the ATT process, but we also need to recognize the role played by civil society in the many steps leading up to the Treaty's entry into force, and equally for their future contributions to the effective implementation and universalization of the ATT.

Today's Conference is an historic moment. Rarely has an international Treaty moved so quickly from adoption in the UN General Assembly to entry into force. This should not be a surprise to anyone in this room. We know that from its inception, the Arms Trade Treaty has enjoyed the political support of an unprecedented number of countries, spanning the entire globe and transcending the usual divides and groupings of the United Nations.

The ATT has enjoyed that support because it is an important idea. Designed to provide norms for the responsible trade in conventional arms, it does much more. With a significant increase in the geographical scope of control comes a reduction in the volume of unregulated trade, because many more countries will be putting the necessary legislation in place. The potential for successfully tackling the illegal trade in conventional arms will also increase. With more countries exercising control and with day-to-day cooperation between the States Parties' responsible authorities, the illegal dealers in arms will find their business increasingly hard to conduct undetected and unhindered.

And there is no question that these benefits will be welcomed by people everywhere, across every geographical boundary, every political persuasion and every religious belief. Because uncontrolled flows of arms are now recognized by all as the global scourge that it is. Flows of arms do not in themselves cause conflicts, but they actively destabilize sensitive situations, exacerbate existing conflicts and significantly aggravate human suffering in conflict zones. At the same time, in other countries, nominally at peace, the ready availability of small arms has led to a sustained escalation of levels of violence and human suffering.

Many armed conflicts today know no borders. Civilians, including humanitarian workers and health personnel, are increasingly targeted. Women are not only unintentional victims of armed conflicts. In many cases they are deliberately targeted and atrocities committed for the purpose of removing

dignity and weakening the social fabric. It is no accident that serious acts of Gender-based violence and serious acts of violence against women and children feature in this Treaty.

The consequences of uncontrolled and irresponsible flows of conventional arms go far beyond the immediate human impact of violence. The destruction and dislocation generated by armed conflict and armed violence, the climate of uncertainty that follows the threat of violence like a shadow, seriously hamper any attempts at economic and social development or growth. Future generations are being robbed of their heritage by the events of today.

Arms in the wrong place at the wrong time can become the tools of unbridled violence. Improved control over arms flows helps to promote peace and stability, which in turn allows societies to more effectively address the root causes of conflict and of the erosion of social stability. Prevention is always preferable to cure. As we gather for this first Conference of States Parties, we need to be very clear about how important the results of our efforts are in a broader perspective.

A successful conference will help to *maintain* the positive political momentum that the ATT process has enjoyed so far. It will *reinforce* our arguments for universalization and help convince governments that are still hesitant towards the ATT that this Treaty is here to stay. It will *demonstrate* to colleagues working in other sensitive areas within the UN framework that progress is possible if states are prepared to re-examine their traditional positions and join in a shared effort. A strong and well-functioning ATT will also be a support to those states currently engaged in implementing their obligations under the Treaty. Above all, moving ahead on the issues we have on the table for this meeting will bring the day closer when the ATT will start to have a truly practical impact. That, when all is said and done, is why we are gathered here today.

But we also face a challenge. We have a comparatively large number of issues on the table that need to be addressed and resolved within a very limited space of time in order to achieve a successful First Conference of States Parties. We will all need to show considerable restraint and we will all need to work together in a spirit of compromise. This is the time to move ahead quickly, in the knowledge that there will be opportunities later on to further refine many of the issues we are looking at here in Cancun.

Sweden is convinced that a successful outcome of this conference is both necessary and possible, and we will do everything we can to contribute to such an outcome, which I am sure is our shared top priority.

Thank you