
Arms Trade Treaty
Third Conference of States Parties
Geneva, 11 – 15 September 2017

WORKING PAPER ON PARTICIPATION IN THE ATT PROCESS

A general conclusion from the process leading up to the Third Conference of States Parties has been that a greater participation of transfer control specialists (mainly from capitals) could be beneficial to the process. This is particularly relevant for specialists from States Parties and Signatories in the Global South. In many cases, these countries are closer to the problems that the ATT was designed to tackle. At the same time, many of them are in the process of developing national control systems for the first time. The presence of experts from the Global South therefore has a twofold purpose. Firstly to bring to the table insights into the ways in which different actors try to circumvent the controls already in place in exporting and transit countries, as well difficulties experienced in establishing and maintaining new systems of controls. Secondly for the purpose of networking in order to share insights into the many ways in which national systems can be configured, as well as to gradually build the international partnerships necessary to effectively tackle unregulated and illegal trade flows.

Dialogue between States Parties has shown that the obstacles to participation are manifold. Some are of a practical nature, others relate to the challenge of maintaining a sense of ownership in the ATT process and securing the necessary prioritization of national efforts in this area in the face of many competing needs.

Sweden would support several practical steps that could be taken to work towards an increased participation in the ATT process from capitals, not only in the Global South, as well as an increased sense of ownership across the board. As background, please see the recently circulated report from an informal meeting on participation held on May 30 2017 in the margins of the third Preparatory meeting for CSP3. The proposals are formulated as bullet points.

1. The Meeting Schedule of the ATT Process

A longer planning horizon for participation in meetings is an important means of facilitating participation by all States Parties, simplifying visa issues, and enabling important cost savings at the national level by allowing the early reservation of air tickets and accommodation in Geneva.

- The Conference of States Parties should endorse, on a trial basis, a fixed meeting schedule for the preparatory process leading up to CSP4.

2. The question of translation and interpretation

The desirability of involving specialists from capitals in the ATT process lends a particular urgency to the question of translation of documents and interpretation at meetings. According to decisions already taken, the Conference of States Parties benefits from the translation of documents and interpretation into the official ATT languages currently in use. But for the preparatory process leading

up to a CSP, where much of the substance of Treaty work is developed and discussed, no such facilities are available. The ability of many States Parties and Signatories to participate actively in the ATT process, and their sense of ownership of the process, would undoubtedly benefit from preparatory process documents being translated into the official ATT languages currently in use, and meetings being interpreted into the same languages. Such an expanded availability of language services would however have resource implications. Some translation work into other ATT languages is already being provided on a voluntary basis by States Parties in a position to do so. These contributions are highly appreciated, but ideally the cost of translation and interpretation work should be covered by assessed contributions in order to ensure long-term stability in the provision of such services. Currently, it is difficult to hold a meaningful discussion on this issue in the absence of at least a rough idea of what the actual cost would be for expanding language services to different levels of ambition. It is proposed that the Secretariat should be tasked with developing such estimates as a contribution to further discussions of the issue.

- The Conference of States Parties should consider positively the inclusion in the conference budget of document translation- and interpretation services for the preparatory process.

3. Increasing awareness in capitals of ongoing ATT work

The responsibility for following the ATT process rests, in many cases, with State Parties' permanent missions in Geneva or New York. Because representatives tasked to follow the ATT process from New York may experience the same difficulties as capitals in participating in Geneva meetings, CSP Chairs to date have shown a willingness to hold, when circumstances permit, briefings on ongoing ATT work in New York. This is a practice that should be encouraged and that will hopefully evolve into a permanent feature of the ATT process. There is also a more direct channel for communication with capitals, in that States Parties in accordance with Article 5.6 "shall designate one or more national points of contact to exchange information on matters related to the implementation of this Treaty". The Secretariat could be encouraged to explore ways of keeping national points of contact informed of the work ongoing in the ATT process beyond the mere distribution of agendas and documents, for instance through a periodic newsletter. To the extent that it is shared at the working group level, information could also be provided to points of contact on the possible roles they could play at the national level based on actual practice in different State Parties.

- The Conference of States Parties should encourage the Secretariat to, within current resource constraints, explore the possibility of providing national Points of Contact with periodic updates regarding ongoing work in the ATT process, and background information on the possible roles that can be played by the POC function at the national level.
