Presentation at the First Round of Informal Consultations to Prepare for the First Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty

By

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Mr. Chair,
First of all, I would like to thank the Government of Mexico for hosting this informal preparatory meeting as well as for its next year’s First Conference of States Parties, or “CSP1”.

I also commend the Governments of Germany and Switzerland for offering to host additional preparatory meetings for CSP1.

Allow me also to welcome the various initiatives, projects and research papers on key issues that have been produced by think-tanks and civil society organizations. I am confident that all of this work will contribute to deliberations. The continued contribution of civil society is critical in ensuring the Treaty’s effective implementation.

The Arms Trade Treaty was borne out of United Nations Member States’ strong, shared desire to put an end to unregulated and irresponsible arms transfers; to promote responsibility, transparency and accountability in the global arms trade; and to prevent the diversion of conventional weapons. This landmark treaty will contribute to reducing the suffering of millions of civilians.

Moreover, the ATT will create a safer environment for the United Nations and other organizations to carry out humanitarian assistance, peacekeeping, post-conflict peacebuilding, and to attain globally agreed development goals. This is to the benefit of all countries and all people – and it explains why so many UN agencies, and the Secretary-General, have such a keen interest in the treaty.

I congratulate States for their overwhelming support to the ATT. The treaty was adopted by the General Assembly with 154 States voting in favour, virtually 80 percent of the UN membership.

As of today, the treaty has been signed by 118 States, from all regions; the list of signatories includes major arms exporting countries and many arms importers.

The break-down of signatories per regional group is as follows:
- African Group: 33
- Asia-Pacific Group: 15
- Eastern European Group: 17
- Latin American and Caribbean Group: 28
- Western European and Others Group: 24

Two months ago I sent a letter to all States that voted in favour of the treaty but have not signed it, encouraging them to do so before entry-into-force. As you know, signing the
ATT remains possible until that moment only. After its entry-into-force, States will still be able to accede to the treaty.

The number of deposits of ratification which the Secretary-General has received as depositary of the treaty, has been steadily increasing. The tally now stands at 45 deposits, a mere five ratifications shy of the fifty required for the ATT to enter into force 90 days thereafter.

There is considerable regional unevenness in deposits, but this is of less significance as some States need more time for ratification than others. The breakdown of deposits per regional group at the moment looks like this:

- African Group: 4
- Asia-Pacific Group: 2
- Eastern European Group: 9
- Latin American and Caribbean Group: 11
- Western European and Others Group: 19

We envisage that we will reach the milestone of 50 deposits later this month, as a number of States are planning to jointly deposit their instruments of ratification at a brief event scheduled to take place at United Nations Headquarters on 25 September.

This will mean that the Arms Trade Treaty can be expected to enter into force before the end of this calendar year, from which moment the clock starts ticking to organize CSP1 within 12 months.

The United Nations would like to acknowledge the efforts undertaken by States, international and regional organizations and civil society to expedite ratifications and to promote early entry-into-force. Looking at the speed of ratification of other conventions, we can see that the ATT is a true success story.

For instance:

Whereas the ATT had 37 ratifications deposited after a year;
- the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, an equally important UN treaty, had 15 ratifications within one year of its adoption;
- the Convention on Cluster Munitions saw 23 deposited ratifications within a year;
- and the “Firearms Protocol” under the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime had only 2

The rapid pace of ATT ratification attests to the will of so many governments to respond to the atrocious insecurity that often finds its origin in irresponsible arms transfers. These governments stand ready to follow the Treaty’s entry into force with vigorous action to ensure its swift, effective and complete implementation.
One of the most important topics for discussion, from my point of view, is how strong future States Parties want the treaty to have universal or close-to-universal membership. I think there is a good case for this, because the ATT is a normative treaty, that sets universal standards which we would like all governments to take responsibility of and to abide by. If global participation remains one of the core objectives of States Parties, this could possibly entail the development of a universalisation strategy, and of course the setting up of structures and rules of procedure that would maximally allow for different points of view to be accommodated.

Also, a few words about reporting requirements. The ATT negotiations have resulted in a Treaty of which the scope is basically identical to the main categories of the UN Register of Conventional Arms, plus small arms which are also in the Register but as voluntary “additional background information”. Note that ammunition and parts & components fall outside of the main ATT reporting obligation, just as they are not part of the Register.

Many countries have approached us with the question how to pragmatically combine, where relevant, the Register and ATT reports. The ATT explicitly mentions this in its Article 13.¹ I think this is a topic which would need further discussion. There are excellent technological solutions to this, which would retain the integrity of both instruments. I would be happy to contribute to this discussion if States so wish.

Allow me to end by underlining how encouraged I am by the commitment that a number of States have shown to support other countries on their path towards the ATT.

Some of that assistance is offered bilaterally, and some regionally. Also the United Nations has engaged in assistance for ATT implementation – always upon request. Our regional centres have programmes on awareness-raising and concrete legislative assistance. They are also implementing partners in a multi-year European Union ATT assistance package. At Headquarters we are finalizing an ATT Toolkit which offers good practices and practical steps that are essential towards adequate implementation. And we have set up, with a large group of donors, a competitive trust facility which funds the best projects from NGOs, academia, regional organizations and UN agencies: the UN Trust Facility Supporting Conventional Arms Regulation or “UNSCAR”.

Last year, UNSCAR funded 10 projects in Asia, Latin America and Africa. This year, we have received 57 applications, which are currently undergoing careful screening.

Please be assured that the United Nations will remain ready to provide whatever assistance the signatories and the States Parties of the ATT need during this critical process. I thank you.

¹ “[...] The report submitted to the Secretariat may contain the same information submitted by the State Party to relevant United Nations frameworks, including the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms.”