



Small Arms Survey Statement to Arms Trade Treaty Working Group on Treaty Universalization

27th February 2025

Thank you, chair.

Excellencies, dear delegates, colleagues and friends.

As many of you already know, the Small Arms Survey has been engaged in ATT Universalization efforts for several years. Since 2023, we have been implementing a project in the Indo-Pacific, with support from Global Affairs Canada, and in partnership with Non-Violence International South East Asia (NISEA) and the Centre for Armed Violence Reduction (CAVR). As part of this project, we launched a report at CSP10 entitled “[Realities, Challenges and Opportunities: the Arms Trade Treaty in the Indo-Pacific Region](#)”, which identified key challenges that hinder treaty universalization and compliance in the region.

In line with the WGTU Work Plan, over the next two CSP cycles, we plan to continue our efforts to address these challenges in the region. For example, next month in Bangkok, we will be organizing an Experts’ Group Meeting for regional civil society actors and academia on the ATT in the Indo-Pacific, in partnership with NISEA. We look forward to sharing the results of this meeting with the WGTU in due course, and to collaborating with states parties, civil society, private sector and UN partners, as well as the ATT Secretariat, CSP presidents and working group chairs in promoting treaty universalization in this region in the coming years.

Having had the opportunity to discuss the topic of treaty universalization in depth at the Wilton Park event hosted by the UK earlier this month, and co-organised by Romania, we would like to highlight some of our key takeaways for discussion in this working group.

Firstly, there still seem to be security-related considerations that influence how states see the ATT. This includes misperceptions that ratifying the Arms Trade Treaty could limit a country’s capacity to import arms. Organizations like the Small Arms Survey can produce research demonstrating the possible benefits that ATT membership could bring to importing states. Current states parties can amplify this by sharing national examples indicating how ATT membership has not impacted negatively on their ability to engage in the arms trade. Moreover, if exporting states can demonstrate the trade benefits to those importing states that *have* ratified the ATT, this may help overcome hesitancy on the part of potential future states parties.

Secondly, there are clear linkages between the themes of the last two CSPs, namely the role of industry and interagency cooperation, and this year's theme of universalization. Interagency cooperation mechanisms are fundamental to addressing the reservations that some ministries – such as trade and foreign affairs, but also ministries of defence, interior, justice and gender – may have about the Treaty, and to facilitate the internal process of ratification or accession. While awareness raising is an important first step, providing spaces where key decision makers can openly discuss their reservations, and better understand the benefits of ATT membership, without fear of judgement, is also essential. This can involve dialogue among national counterparts, as well as thematic, peer-to-peer exchanges between ministerial staff in likeminded countries. In addition, it may also be useful for states to facilitate exchanges between representatives of

industry from state and non-state parties, given the influence they may have on government decision-making with regard to universalization.

Thirdly, as the ATT enters its second decade, there may be scope to reflect on what ATT meetings themselves offer to potential future states parties, given the significant cost of attending for capital-based delegates. For example, potential future states parties may be more likely to engage in technical discussions on topics that reflect their national policy priorities, such as maritime security, brokering, trade through large transit and trans-shipment hubs, and climate change. Moreover, government and civil society representatives from new states parties, as well as signatories and other states considering ratifying the treaty, could be invited to use the ATT as a platform to share specific security concerns related to the arms trade with exporting states.

Our study also highlights the potential of regional and sub-regional dialogues with potential future states parties, in order to address concerns, and demonstrate the benefits, of universalization. One example could be discussions on regionally-specific forms of arms-related gender-based violence, which could be considered in risk assessments, as discussed in the blog co-authored by the Small Arms Survey and NISEA entitled, [*The Dawning of a New Approach? Gender Dynamics of the Arms Trade in the Indo-Pacific region.*](#)

These are all activities that can be funded through mechanisms such as the VTF. VTF projects in Palau, Samoa and the Philippines made a significant contribution to the development of national capacities and legislative frameworks necessary for treaty ratification. The Small Arms Survey therefore encourages donors to continue supporting the VTF, and for the VTF Selection Committee to consider future projects that facilitate universalization through technical support, institution-building, and support to legal reform.

The Small Arms Survey is looking forward to supporting the work of the WGTU and the CSP chair over the coming years, and is open to receiving inputs from all delegations on how it can best collaborate in the implementation of the work plan, especially when it comes to engaging in the Indo-Pacific region.

Thank you.