

(Non-Paper)

Summary of the informal consultation on the provisions of the terms of reference of the ATT Working Groups regarding the holding of closed meetings

Background

The Third Conference of States Parties (CSP3) to the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) agreed that the provisions regarding the holding of closed meetings by any of the ATT Working Groups and the rules applicable to any such closing of meetings would be considered during the informal preparatory process for the Fourth Conference of States Parties with a view to resolving this at the Fourth Conference of States Parties (paragraph 25, ATT/CSP3/2017/SEC/184/Conf/FinRep.Rev1).

Second CSP4 Informal Preparatory Meeting

During the second informal preparatory meeting of the Fourth Conference of States Parties (CSP4) held on 01 June 2018, one State Party raised concerns on whether additional arrangements should be put in place. After different views were expressed, further discussion was requested, and accordingly, the President agreed to call for an informal consultation during the intersessional period before CSP4.

Summary of the informal consultation

Against the above background, the CSP4 President held an informal consultation on 05 July 2018 at the Palais des Nations in Geneva. States Parties, Signatory States, Observer States, International and Regional Organizations, and Civil Society were invited to this consultation meeting. The CSP4 President also encouraged participants to submit written inputs prior to the meeting, if any. The meeting was attended by representatives of 20 States, 2 international organizations, and 1 civil society organization, together with the ATT Secretariat.

During the informal consultation, the CSP4 President explained that the consultation was convened at this time despite a holiday season due to other disarmament related events. All written inputs submitted in advance of the consultation meeting were distributed to the participants.

Various interventions were made during the consultation meeting including the following: the importance of promoting transparency within the ATT process; recognition of the importance of the role of civil society; retention of a continuous platform for all ATT stakeholders to participate and make contributions to the ATT discourse; maintaining closed meetings as an exception; the need to elaborate a balanced process to be followed in closing meetings including notice period, appropriate reasoning to hold such meetings, and decision-making procedure. In addition, the following views were expressed during the meeting: no need to change the ATT Working Groups' current terms of reference; since the ATT process has thus far not yet presented a circumstance necessitating the closure of meetings, it is premature to speculatively set up a process for closing meetings; the option of closing meetings should not be abused; and the current terms of reference should be retained but kept under review.

Having considered the written inputs submitted and interventions made during the consultation meeting, the President is of the sense that participants generally share the view that: 1) the current terms of reference of the ATT working groups form a good basis for the present operation of the ATT working groups, 2) the option of closing meetings, on exceptional basis, as contained in the terms of reference should be retained, 3) the option of closing meetings should not be abused, and, 4) the terms of reference be kept under review.