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Arms Trade Treaty National Statement at CSP6

Australia warmly welcomes progress made in the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) since the 2019 Conference of States Parties, including the addition of six new States Parties: the Maldives, Namibia, China, Sao Tome and Principe, Afghanistan, and Niue.

The ATT was the first legally binding instrument negotiated in the United Nations to establish common standards for the international transfer of conventional arms, marking a significant achievement.

The Treaty's objective is as relevant today as it was seven years ago: to 'establish the highest possible common international standards for regulating or improving the regulation of the international trade in conventional arms and to prevent and eradicate the illicit trade in conventional arms and prevent their diversion'.

When Australia ratified the ATT in 2014, illegally traded conventional weapons claimed more than half a million victims every year.

For the ATT to be effective, it is essential that every member play its part in implementing robust defence export controls and enforcement mechanisms that detect illegally traded conventional weapons. Australia strongly encourages all States Parties to ensure their national controls are effective.

ATT working groups are important fora to discuss effective implementation mechanisms and controls. To that end, we share recent experiences in a paper for the Diversion Working Group on work by the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission National Firearm Trace Program.

Another key aspect of the effective implementation of the ATT is recognising that men, women and children experience armed conflict differently. We know women play a valuable role in the prevention and resolution of conflict – and we need to acknowledge and support the women who take on these important peacebuilding roles, including through projects supported by the Voluntary Trust Fund. They provide a platform for women in their communities to contribute meaningfully to the Arms Trade Treaty, by working locally for the greater peace of their nations and their regions.

We note with concern that the United Nations has verified over 25,000 'grave violations' against children, as stated in the Report of the United Nations Secretary-General on

Children and armed conflict.¹ When making assessments under Article 6 and Article 7 of the ATT, we encourage States to consider the risk of violations against children – including the recruitment of children.

COVID-19 has had an impact on so many aspects of our lives and our work this year. We are all rethinking how diplomacy can be conducted safely and effectively. While the full financial impact of COVID-19 will not become apparent for some time, it is clear that resource constraints will be with us all for many years to come. We must all find as many efficiencies as we can. One such efficiency is to harmonise the ATT transparency report with the UN Register of Conventional Arms (UNROCA). Given the clear overlaps, creating a format which works for both fora would prevent duplication of effort and, hopefully, increase national compliance with the ATT and UNROCA reporting.

International security challenges have also been magnified by COVID-19. Australia considers that the ATT can play a valuable role in addressing these challenges, especially through strengthening the existing synergies with other arms control and peace-building initiatives, and looking for creative ways of fostering new links.

Australia looks forward to working with Ambassador Lansana Gberie, and his vice-presidents from Cyprus, Germany, Latvia and Peru, in this endeavour

¹ In S/2020/525 at footnote 4, the Secretary-General states that ‘The use of the term ‘grave violations’ or ‘violations’ refer to each individual child affected by recruitment and use, killing and maiming, sexual violence¹ In S/2020/525 at footnote 4, the Secretary-General states that ‘The use of the term ‘grave violations’ or ‘violations’ refer to each individual child affected by recruitment and use, killing and maiming, sexual violence and abductions, while the number of incidents is used for attacks on schools and hospitals and the denial of humanitarian access.’