

Arms Trade Treaty Second Conference of States Parties

22 – 26 August 2016

Opening Statement of Australia

Delivered by Ambassador John Quinn, Australian Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Geneva and Ambassador for Disarmament.

Mr President, Ministers, Excellencies, Head of Secretariat Mr Dladla, and other distinguished delegates.

Mr President, on behalf of the Australian Government, I would like to express our deep gratitude to you and your team, as well as Mr Dladla, assisted by Ms Sekkenes and Ms Chladkova of UNDP, for the commendable efforts to organise this Second Conference of States Parties. We look forward to a productive and positive conference. I would also like to reaffirm Australia's warm appreciation to Mexico for its outstanding hosting of the historic First Conference of States Parties last year in Cancun.

Australia warmly welcomes the recent ratifications and accessions to the ATT. As the numbers of States party to the Arms Trade Treaty increase, implementing the ATT becomes a truly global effort to stem the illicit trade in conventional arms.

We would also like to highlight the excellent work done by international organisations and civil society partners with whom Australia has collaborated over the last year. [In particular, we are pleased to have supported the work of Control Arms on the ATT Monitor, the Stimson Centre and Paul Holtom on the ATT Baseline Assessment Project, the Small Arms Survey on the Transparency Barometer, and the UN Regional Centre for Peace and Development and the Pacific Small Arms Action Group on workshops in the Asia-Pacific region.] All of these partners have made a valuable practical contribution to states' implementation of the ATT. They have provided independent analysis and the capacity building, notably through regional technical training workshops.

As we conduct our discussions this week we should keep in mind the true reason for which we have gathered here in Geneva. Our objective is to save lives and to reduce the suffering caused by the illicit trade in conventional arms. In Australia we are very fortunate to have generally avoided the scourge of violence which a number of other states have suffered as the result of high levels of illicit arms in circulation.

While this may be partly related to our geography, it also results from strong border controls and comprehensive domestic firearms laws. We recognise that a strong and successful ATT relies on effective implementation at the national level. This relies on cooperation of government, industry and civil society, who, working together can halt the flow of illicit arms while safeguarding legitimate trade.

Australia is a strong supporter of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, adopted since the Cancun First Conference of States Parties. In the context of the Arms Trade Treaty, the Sustainable Development Goals set a benchmark for action on illicit arms. We would like to draw attention to SDG 16 and Target 16.4, under which we set as our objective to, by 2030, significantly reduce illicit financial and arms flows, strengthen the recovery and return of stolen assets and combat all forms of organized crime. Australia believes the ATT has an important role to play in achieving these objectives.

Australia remains committed to assisting states to accede to or ratify the ATT. We are willing to share our experiences in legislation, border controls and coordination between agencies.

Since the First Conference of States Parties in Cancun, Australia has funded and/or participated in implementation workshops in Fiji, Solomon Islands, Cambodia and Thailand. We are also funding, with New Zealand, a regional workshop in Samoa this September run by the UNRCPD.

At the Cancun First Conference of States Parties, Australia committed to contribute AUD 400,000 over two years towards developing country participation in the ATT. We have already exceeded this amount with a further AUD 200,000 to the Baseline Assessment Project and AUD 499,000 to UNSCAR. These voluntary contributions will assist other states, especially from our own Asia-Pacific region, to implement the ATT.

This year Australia has contributed a further AUD 80,000 to UNDP towards sponsorship of the 42 sponsored delegates attending this meeting. This is significantly more than the amount recorded for Australia in the Secretariat Report produced for CSP2. With the experience of Australia's strong arms export controls, Australia has, and will continue to offer practical help to other countries to develop such systems.

Consistent with our concrete efforts to support the implementation and universalisation of the ATT, we look forward to sharing views on national experiences and the assistance required by states in these areas in our discussions under relevant agenda items later this week. We thank those states that have submitted papers to facilitate those discussions.

However, there are also still some significant matters we need to decide this week to finalise the procedural framework for implementation of our treaty obligations.

In this regard, we wish to thank Ambassador Biontino of Germany, Facilitator on the Voluntary Trust Fund, for leading the drafting of the proposed Terms of Reference for the Fund. We will work constructively this week towards a decision which enables the establishment of a Fund which has as its primary objective the provision of assistance to requesting States Parties requiring international assistance to implement the ATT, consistent with Article 16.

We wish also to thank Ambassador Beijer of Sweden, Facilitator on Reporting, for leading the drafting of templates for states parties' initial and annual reports under the treaty and in which Australia was constructively engaged. We trust we will be able to endorse these templates, while allowing states parties the flexibility in the modalities of reporting consistent with Article 13.

We welcome the opportunity this week to shift gears to move our focus away from the administrative issues on which we have necessarily been engaged so far towards the substantive work of realising the object and purpose of the treaty.

Conventional weapons, especially small arms, outside state control, do not just maim and kill, but enable rape, theft, extortion, terrorism and insurgency. Moreover, they present a means for the commission of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, which the international community committed to protecting populations from under the responsibility to protect principle at the 2005 UN World Summit. The framework provided by the ATT for prevention and eradication of the illicit trade and diversion of these weapons can help us protect populations against these atrocity crimes.

Our goal is now to maintain the strong momentum towards the ATT's global implementation, to contain the threat the illicit trade in conventional weapons poses to global peace and security.

Thank you, Mr President.